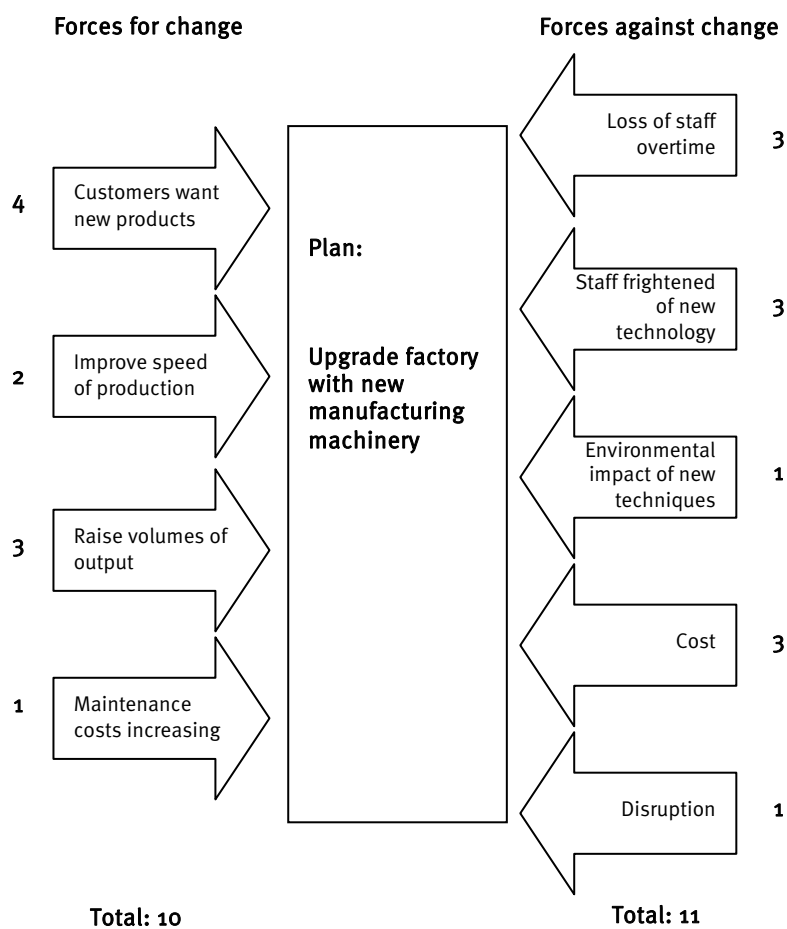


Force Field Analysis

Introduction

Force Field Analysis was developed by Kurt Lewin (1951) and is widely used to inform decision making, particularly in planning and implementing change management programmes in organisations. It is a powerful method of gaining a comprehensive overview of the different forces acting on a potential organisational change issue, and for assessing their source and strength.

Figure 5: Force field analysis example



Detailed description of the process

Force field analysis is best carried out in small group of about six to eight people using flipchart paper or overhead transparencies so that everyone can see what is going on. The first step is to agree the area of change to be discussed. This might be written as a desired policy goal or objective. All the forces in support of the change are then listed in a column to the left (driving the change forward), whereas all forces working against the change are listed in a column to the right (holding it back). The driving and restraining forces should be sorted around common themes and then be scored according to their 'magnitude', ranging from one (weak) to five (strong). The score may well not balance on either side. The resulting table might look like the example above (this figure comes from www.psywww.com/mtsite/forcefld.html).

Throughout the process, rich discussion, debate and dialogue should emerge. This is an important part of the exercise and key issues should be allowed time. Findings and ideas may well come up to do with

concerns, problems, symptoms and solutions. It is useful to record these and review where there is consensus on an action or a way forward. In policy influencing, the aim is to find ways to reduce the restraining forces and to capitalise on the driving forces.

Example: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adapted force field analysis, adding an extra element of the organisation's control over a situation. For example, in an attempt to improve success in afforestation and reforestation programmes, the agency in question might list all the driving forces and restraining forces. It then rates each force by its importance and by the degree of control it exerts over that force. The totals are then calculated and a table developed (Table 2). This means that for each force, the higher the total of importance and control, the more impact the agency *should* have in trying to address that force. In addition, if the agency can find some forces that explain others, the effectiveness of its actions will be greater. For example, suppose that 'improved operational planning' can reduce 'losses to fires and grazing' as well as 'poor procedures for hiring and paying field workers'. Because it has these cross-impacts, in this example, the agency decided to give special attention to 'operational planning'.

Table 2: Force field analysis for success in afforestation and reforestation programmes

	Importance	Agency control	Total
Driving forces			
Rising prices of wood products	2	2	4
Genetically improved planting stock	2	4	6
Improved operational planning	4	5	9
Increasing public support	2	2	5
Restraining forces			
Decreasing agency budget	2	2	5
Irregular annual precipitation	5	1	6
Poor procedures for hiring and paying field workers	4	4	8
Losses to fires and grazing	5	3	8

Sources and further reading

- Hovland, I. (2005) *Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, ODI Working Paper 227, London: ODI.
- One case study comes from *PLA Notes* (1999) Issue 36, pp 17-23 from IIED, see: www.worldbank.org/participation/PRSP/plna/plan_03604.pdf.
- Another case details the use of force field analysis in a school situation to assess the potential to change from teacher-centred methods of working to greater pupil participation in planning: www.crossroad.to/Quotes/brainwashing/force-field.htm.
- For original literature of force field analysis, see: Lewin, K. (1951) *Field Theory in Social Science*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Simple step-by-step guides to carrying out force field analysis, with examples of the use of force field analysis in management, see: www.mindtools.com/forcefld.html.
- Simple step-by-step guides to carrying out force field analysis, with examples of the use of force field analysis in psychology, see: www.psywww.com/mtsite/forcefld.html.
- For a brief overview, see: www.mycoted.com/creativity/techniques/forcefieldanal.php.
- Examples of the application of force field analysis in change management, see: www.accel-team.com/techniques/force_field_analysis.html; in health (MSH and UNICEF), see: <http://erc.msh.org/quality/example/example5.cfm>.
- For computer software to conduct force field analysis, see: www.skymark.com/resources/tools/force_field_diagram.asp.