

# Force Field Analysis

Force field analysis is a management technique developed by Kurt Lewin, a pioneer in the field of social sciences, for diagnosing situations. It will be useful when looking at the variables involved in planning and implementing a change program and will undoubtedly be of use in team building projects, when attempting to overcome resistance to change.

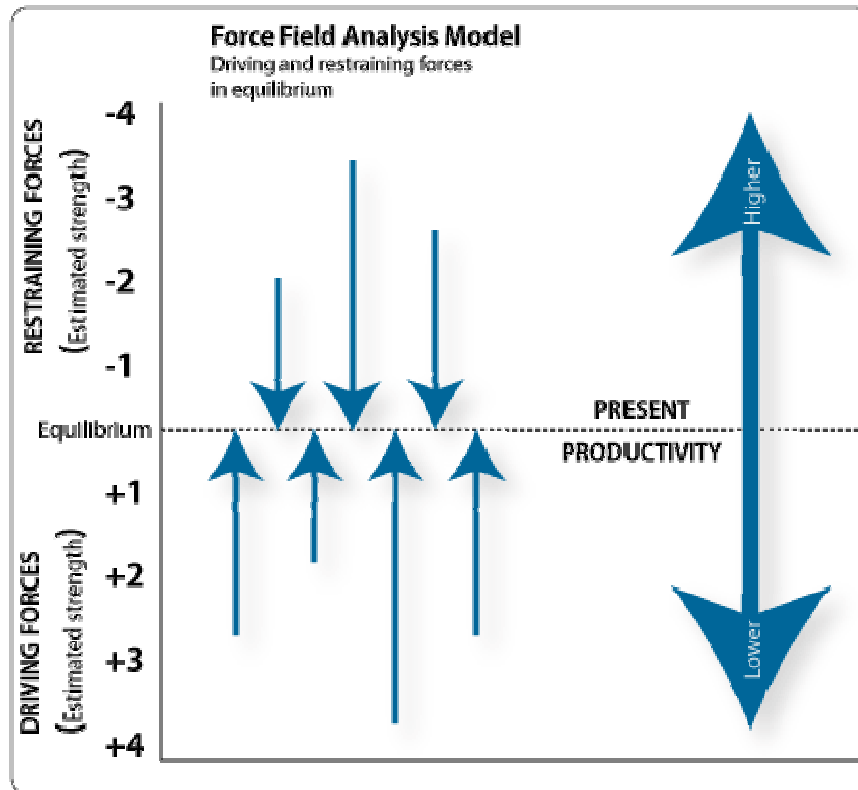
Lewin assumes that in any situation there are both driving and restraining forces that influence any change that may occur.

## **Driving Forces**

Driving forces are those forces affecting a situation that are pushing in a particular direction; they tend to initiate a change and keep it going. In terms of improving productivity in a work group, pressure from a supervisor, incentive earnings, and competition may be examples of driving forces.

## **Restraining Forces**

Restraining forces are forces acting to restrain or decrease the driving forces. Apathy, hostility, and poor maintenance of equipment may be examples of restraining forces against increased production. Equilibrium is reached when the sum of the driving forces equals the sum of the restraining forces. In our example, equilibrium represents the present level of productivity, as shown below.



## Equilibrium

This equilibrium, or present level of productivity, can be raised or lowered by changes in the relationship between the driving and the restraining forces.

For illustration, consider the dilemma of the new manager who takes over a work group in which productivity is high but whose predecessor drained the human resources.

The former manager had upset the equilibrium by increasing the driving forces (that is, being autocratic and keeping continual pressure on subordinates) and thus achieving increases in output in the short run.

By doing this, however, new restraining forces developed, such as increased hostility and antagonism, and at the time of the former manager's departure the restraining forces were beginning to increase and the results manifested themselves in turnover, absenteeism, and other restraining forces, which lowered productivity shortly after the new manager arrived. Now a new equilibrium at a significantly lower productivity is faced by the new manager.

Now just assume that our new manager decides not to increase the driving forces but to reduce the restraining forces. The manager may do this by taking time away from the usual production operation and engaging in problem solving and training and development.

In the short run, output will tend to be lowered still further. However, if commitment to objectives and technical know-how of the group are increased in the long run, they may become new driving forces, and that, along with the elimination of the hostility and the apathy that were restraining forces, will now tend to move the balance to a higher level of output.

Managers are often in a position in which they must consider not only output but also intervening variables and not only short-term but also long-term goals. It can be seen that force field analysis provides framework that is useful in diagnosing these interrelationships.

## Goal Congruence

### *Integration of goals and effectiveness when team building*

The extent that individuals and groups perceive their own goals as being satisfied by the accomplishment of organizational goals is the degree of integration of goals. When organizational goals are shared by all, the term goal congruence can be used. (Read this [case study](#).)

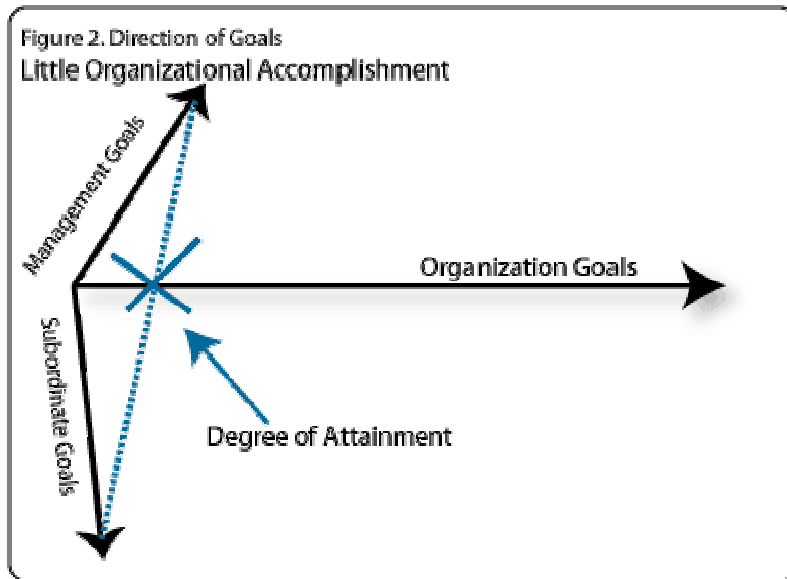
To illustrate this concept, we can divide an organization into two groups, management and subordinates. The respective goals of these two groups and the resultant attainment of the goals of the organization to which they belong are illustrated in Figure 1.



In this instance, the goals of management are somewhat compatible with the goals of the organization but are not exactly the same. On the other hand, the goals of the subordinates are almost at odds with those of the organization.

The result of the interaction between the goals of management and the goals of subordinates is a compromise, and actual performance is a combination of both. It is at this approximate point that the degree of attainment of the goals of the organization can be pictured.

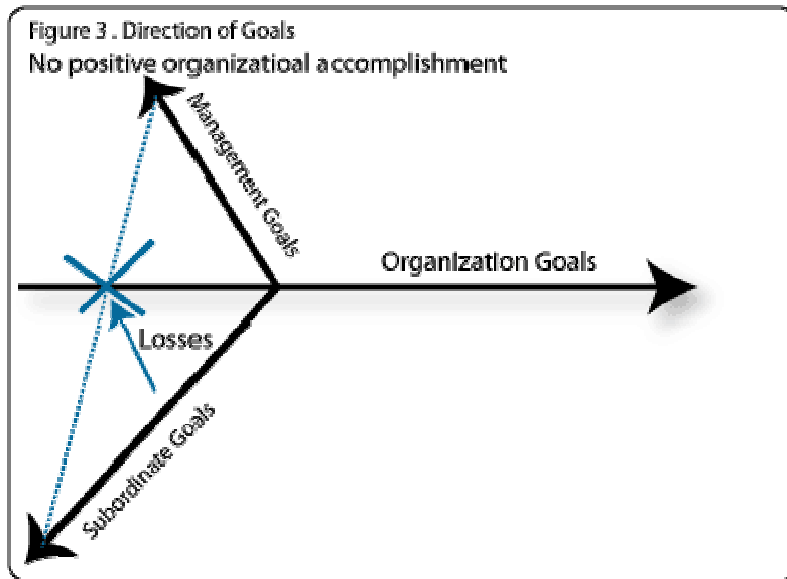
This situation can be much worse when there is little accomplishment of organizational goals, as illustrated in Figure 2.



In this situation, there seems to be a general disregard for the welfare of the organization. Both managers and workers see their own goals conflicting with those of the organization.

Consequently, both morale and performance will tend to be low and organizational accomplishment will be negligible. In some cases, the organizational goals can be so opposed that no positive progress is obtained.

The result often is substantial losses, or draining off of assets (see Figure 3). In fact, organizations are going out of business every day for these very reasons.



The hope in an organization is to create a climate in which one of two things occurs. The individuals in the organization (both managers and subordinates) either perceive their goals as being the same as the goals of the organization or, although different, see their own goals being satisfied as a direct result of working for the goals of the organization.

Consequently, the closer we can get the individual's goals and objectives to the organization's goals, the greater will be the organizational performance, as illustrated in Figure 4.



One of the ways in which effective leaders bridge the gap between the individual's and the organization's goals is by creating a loyalty to themselves among their followers. They do this by being an influential spokesperson for followers with higher management.

These leaders have no difficulty in communicating organizational goals to followers and these people do not find it difficult to associate the acceptance of these goals with accomplishment of their own need satisfaction.