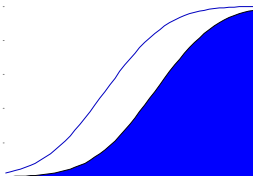


Planning to Overcome Obstacles to Change:
Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning



GOTTFREDSON ASSOCIATES, INC.
Behavioral Science Research and Development

Planning to Overcome Obstacles to Change: Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning

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A training resource for increasing the skills of planners and change agents in
facilitating change in organizations and communities.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives	1
How the Learning Will Be Organized	1
Learning Points: Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning	2
Explanation and Examples: Principles for Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning	3
A Structure for Conducting a Force Field Analysis	11
Steps for Force-Field Analysis	11
Step 1: Obstacles	12
Step 2: Identify Most Important Obstacles	13
Step 3: Identify Resources	13
Step 4: Develop a Strategy	15
Step 5: Specify Critical Benchmarks	15
Appendix A: Self-Test	17
Appendix B: Strategy and Benchmark Worksheet	18
Figures	
1. How the Status Quo is Maintained	4
2. How the No Pass–No Play Policy Is Maintained	5
3. How the No Pass–No Play Policy Might Be Changed	6
4. A Person or Group Is Likely to Pursue a Goal Only If a Path to It Is Perceived	9
5. When Previously Unperceived Parts of a Path are Revealed, A Person or Group Is More Likely to Pursue Goal 2	9

Introduction

In this training module you will learn a set of skills for helping groups to exchange an existing situation with a new, more desirable condition capable of being maintained. The techniques involve the application of some principles of the social psychology of groups and individuals in a structured way to overcome some of the common limitations of ordinary human problem solving.

Objectives

The objectives of this learning module are to help you improve your skills in

- G** managing and responding to objections by group members when contemplating new procedures or arrangements,
- G** identifying forces that are maintaining the status quo in an organization or community,
- G** anticipating and resolving obstacles to bringing about desired organizational changes,
- G** gaining group support for adopting desired changes,
- G** developing action plans to achieve new arrangements that can be sustained over time, and
- G** creating mechanisms that reward people for progress towards desired goals.

How the Learning Will Be Organized

1. You will be presented with a set of “learning points.”
2. The learning points will be explained, with examples provided.
3. A structure for conducting an analysis of constraints on and possibilities for change will be provided and explained in reference to the learning points.
4. A structure for generating a plan or *strategy* will be provided and explained in reference to the learning points.
5. You will complete a self-test covering the learning points and the use of the structured methods.
6. You will apply the principles and methods to analyze a concrete problem in implementing a program in your own community.

**Learning Points:
Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning**

1. The status quo is maintained by a balance of forces, some restraining against movement in the desired direction and others impelling activity in the desired direction.
2. To conduct an analysis of these forces (*a force-field analysis*), it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the direction the organization wishes to move—the nature of the desired state of affairs.
3. To move an established status-quo in a desired direction it is useful to reduce the influence of restraining forces—or to change their direction.
4. The force-field is best analyzed by the group of persons experiencing the forces—including the persons making decisions and those affected by the changes to be made.
5. Effective problem-solving involving a change in the status quo usually requires consensual public commitment to a goal by members of the group.
6. Commitment to a goal is unlikely unless a feasible path to its achievement is perceived by all members of the group. Perceptions are not always objectively correct, but they nevertheless constrain action just as do any other elements of the force field.
7. Standards for performance, feedback, and the expectation of follow-up enhance action directed towards the goal.

Explanation and Examples: Principles for Force-Field Analysis and Action Planning¹

The status quo is maintained by a balance of forces, some restraining against movement in the desired direction and others impelling activity in the desired direction.

Psychologist Kurt Lewin and his colleagues and students have provided a set of concepts and procedures for understanding the process of social change that has come to be known as *force-field analysis*. This refers to the analysis of the physical, social, economic, or psychological forces that affect behaviors or choices in an organization.

The status quo in an organization is best regarded—according to this perspective—as a *process*. For example, any given organizational activity occurs with a reasonable degree of regularity and predictability because of a social “quasi-stationary equilibrium.” The words “quasi-stationary equilibrium” are used because it is not true that there is no change or variability in what is done, but rather because a balance of forces ensures that an approximate steady state will persist within a certain latitude of movement.

This balance of forces is illustrated in Figure 1. Forces impelling towards change in one direction are equaled by forces in the other direction. Whenever activity or practices move very far from the status quo in either direction, the balanced forces restore the equilibrium.

To conduct an analysis of these forces (a *force-field analysis*), it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the direction the organization wishes to move—the nature of the desired state of affairs.

Force-field analysis is useful for discovering what is anchoring an organization or program in place and what resources and obstacles may exist for moving in a certain direction. But it is not a method that is of much value in determining what the direction or nature of change should be. That function is served by *needs assessment*. Therefore, force-field analysis presupposes as a starting point a clear idea about the changes or innovations that are desirable.

Force-field analysis is often a useful adjunct to needs assessment, however,

¹The principles discussed here are drawn from many sources, the most important of which are: (1) Lewin, K. (1947). Group decision and social change. In T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (Eds.). *Readings in social psychology*, NY: Holt. (2) Coch, L. & French, J. R. P., Jr. (1948). Overcoming resistance to change. *Human Relations*, 11, 512-532. (3) Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). Work motivation and satisfaction: Light at the end of the tunnel. *Psychological Science*, 2, 240-246. (4) Practical experience in applying these methods with groups. Other influences are specifically cited at relevant points.

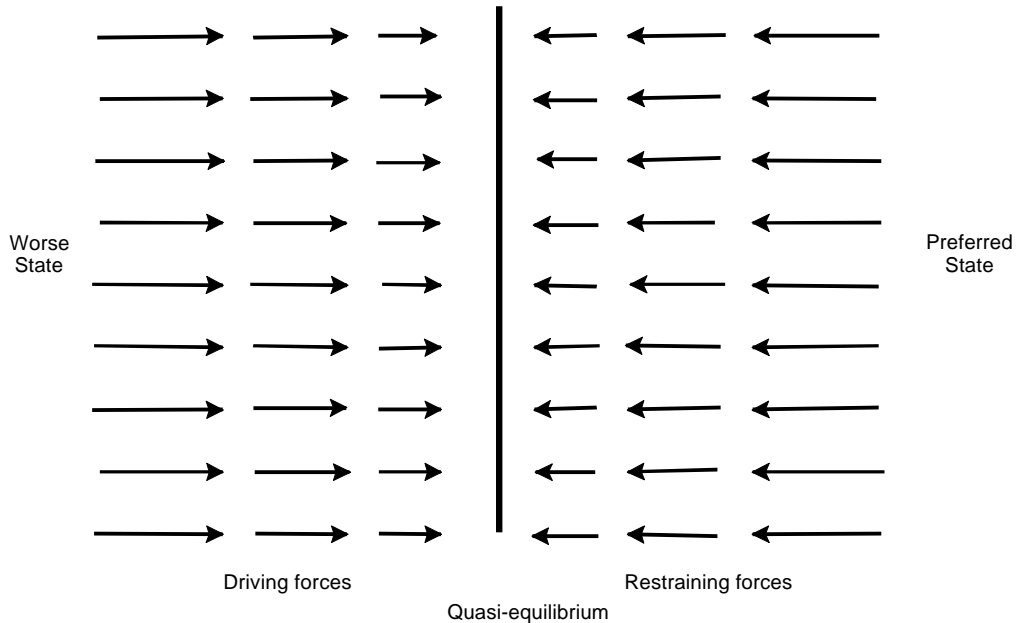


Figure 1. How the Status Quo Is Maintained

because there are usually several alternative program design choices that would meet the objectives identified in the assessment of needs. Some of these alternatives may be more feasible than others, and force-field analysis can often reveal that a choice initially regarded as infeasible is in fact feasible or that a choice regarded as feasible is burdened by previously unanticipated obstacles.

To move an established status-quo in a desired direction it is useful to reduce the influence of restraining forces—or to change their direction.

Because the balance of forces is what maintains the state of quasi-equilibrium, that balance must be altered to change the status quo. One approach to change that is often attempted is to increase the strength of the forces impelling in the desired direction. By itself, this is generally a flawed method. In many social organizations, the strength of forces resisting a shift in the status quo increase the greater the deviation from the status quo becomes. This likelihood was illustrated in Figure 1 by the use of shorter arrows in the region of the status quo and longer arrows (indicating more powerful forces) the farther conditions deviate from the quasi-equilibrium.

What often occurs when an attempt is made to apply new or greater forces to alter an existing equilibrium is increased tension, just as tension increases when one exerts force against a coiled spring.

To change the status quo, it is usually more effective to render existing restraining forces irrelevant, to diminish their force, or to change the direction of their force. Because this idea is often difficult to grasp, an example will be helpful.

An example: In recent years it has become common for school districts to impose a “no pass–no play” rule that forbids students who fail to meet an academic performance standard (often grades of “C” or better) to participate in organized school sports. These policies are applied in the expectation that they will improve academic performance by emphasizing academic standards and punishing poor performance. Such policies are almost surely misguided, however, because their primary effect is to remove an important resource for school personnel: incentives for students to expend effort on school work that can be applied on a daily basis. A school that links *daily* participation in athletics to *daily* satisfactory completion of homework or to school conduct is able to respond routinely to student performance. But a school that revokes the privilege of participation for a semester at a time loses this important source of social control. A change agent wishing to substitute the daily withdrawal of the athletic privilege for the existing semester-long withdrawal of that privilege might encounter the force field illustrated in Figure 2.

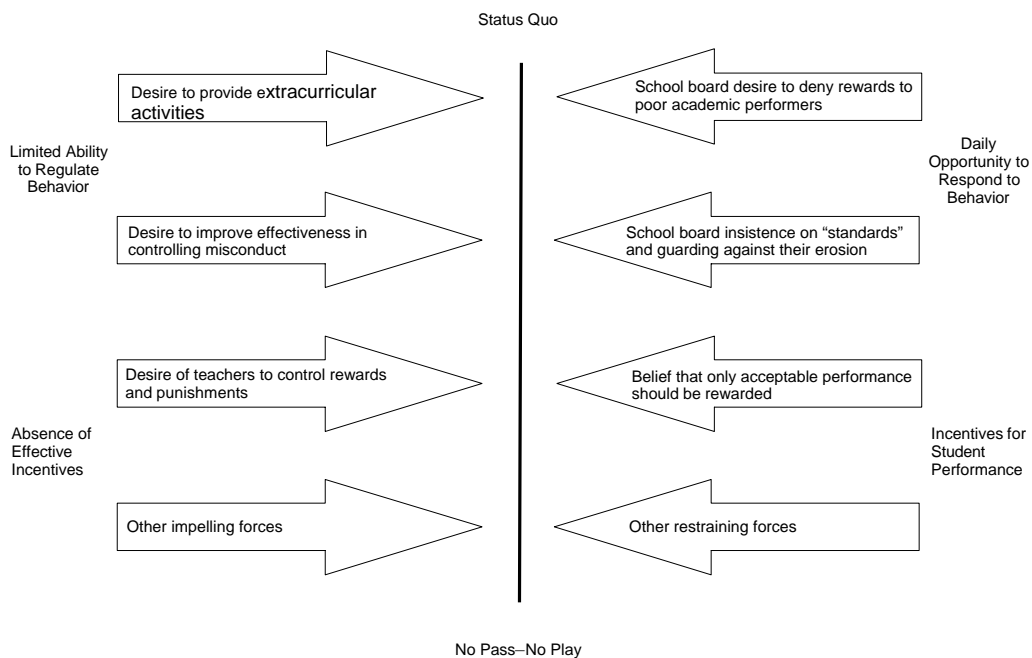


Figure 2. How the No Pass–No Play Policy Is Maintained

How might one diminish the influence or change the direction of some of the restraining forces? Perhaps some members of the school board could be convinced that the immediate (daily) denial of the reward of athletic participation may accord even more with their desires to punish poor school effort than does punishment applied only once each semester. Such a re-construal would tend to change the direction of this force. Similarly, some members of the board could be persuaded

that daily attention and responses to academic performance *may* be more effective in maintaining academic standards than a once-a-semester review, so that they would support an experiment to learn whether this is the case. This would create a new impelling force, and one source of resistance would be diminished. If enough

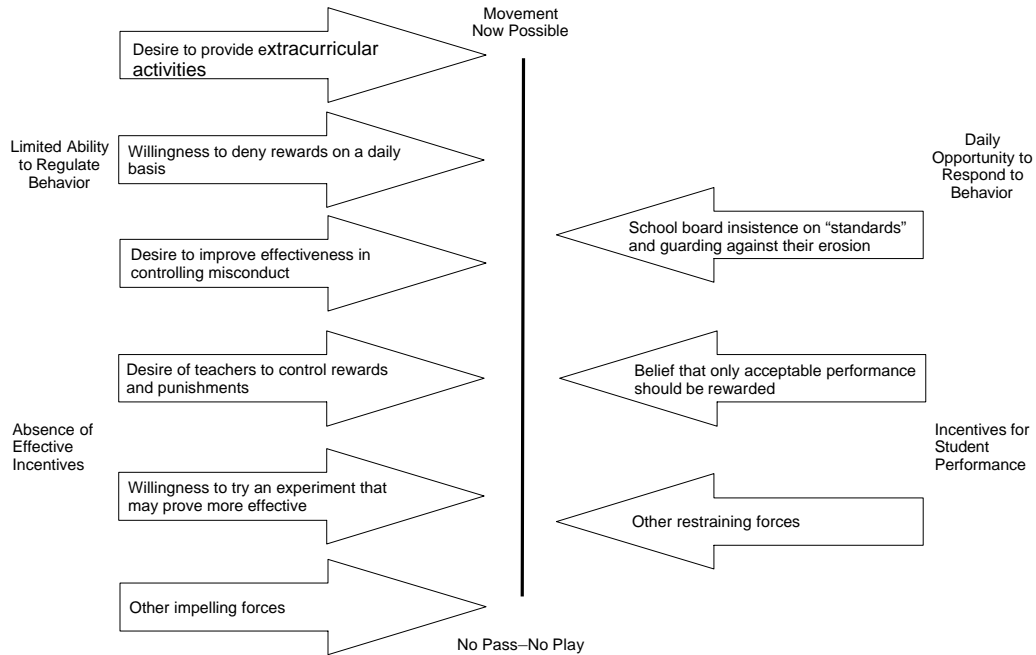


Figure 3. How the No Pass–No Play Policy Might Be Changed

board members could be persuaded in these ways, a new force field would be that illustrated in Figure 3.

Reducing the influence or changing the direction of a restraining force will generally result in more lasting change than increasing a driving force, because any change induced by such an increase could be maintained only by the continued expenditure of effort.

The force-field is best analyzed with the help of the group of persons experiencing the forces—including persons making the decisions and those affected by the changes to be made.

To achieve organizational change, it is the psychology *of the persons whose behavior must be altered* that is most important. Accordingly, it is important to analyze the force field as it is perceived by *these* actors. Very often, these persons share a common set of perceptions or understandings of the force field that are objectively incorrect. For example, it is a common experience for a change agent to discover that most or all members of a group hold incorrect beliefs about laws, regulations, or policies—and these incorrect beliefs restrain against moving in the desired direction. Simply asking, “who made that rule?” or “who established that

policy?” can upon quick investigation lead to the conclusion that there is no such rule except in the beliefs of those constrained by it. A similar phenomenon (known as “pluralistic ignorance”) occurs when members of a group have incorrect perceptions of the views of others, and these incorrect perceptions restrain against change in the status quo.²

Even in the realm of “objectively correct” perceptions, it is again those who are themselves concerned with the force field who may be in the best position to identify the forces operating on their behavior.

A *group* who will be involved in implementing the change should be involved in analyzing the force field, because the psychology of groups is different in important ways from the psychology of individuals. Attempts to change the opinions or intentions of individuals either through lecture presentations or through individual persuasion both approach the individual in the context of his or her private thoughts and perceptions. Yet we know that individuals are very likely to conform to their perceptions of the expectations of others in their social group.³ Furthermore, we know that individuals tend to seek information from and be more susceptible to influence by others whom they perceive as similar to themselves.⁴

If group interaction can be structured in ways that allow group members to safely reveal information about their perceptions and views, observe others rehearsing new positions,⁵ and conform to a newly emerged group consensus, then commitment to a new course of action is more likely to be achieved (than through similar analysis conducted individually).

Finally, group process can be structured in ways that harness pressures for group members to play socially defined roles in a productive sequence that can be more difficult to achieve in one-to-one interaction. An example of how such structure in group process is helpful is in coping with negativism and the “yeah, but” phenomenon when attempting to plan for change. This is explained below when the structure for conducting a force-field analysis is described (in the instructions

²Daniel Katz and Floyd Allport called this phenomenon “pluralistic ignorance.” See Toch, H., & Klofas, J. (1984). Pluralistic ignorance revisited. In G. M. Stephenson & J. H. Davis (Eds.), *Progress in applied social psychology*, Vol. 2. London: Wiley.

³(1) Asch, S. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgments. In H. Guetzkow (Ed.), *Groups, leadership, and men*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press. (2) Festinger, L., Schachter, S., & Back, K. (1968). Operation of group standards. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.), *Group dynamics: Research and theory* (3rd ed.), pp. 152-164. NY: Harper & Row.

⁴Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity, and compliance. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., Vol. II, pp. 151 - 192). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

⁵Earley, P. C., & Kanfer, R. (1985). The influence of component participation and role models on goal acceptance, goal satisfaction and performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 36, 378-390.

for analyzing obstacles and resources).

Effective problem-solving involving a change in the status quo usually requires consensual public commitment to a goal by members of the group.

People will work to achieve difficult goals if they accept and are committed to those goals and believe that goal attainment is possible.⁶ Furthermore, public commitment to a goal or set of new activities is more effective in producing desired new behavior than is private commitment.⁷ Fortunately, there is generally great pressure towards uniformity in groups,⁸ so that consensus in public commitment is often achievable.⁹

Commitment to a goal is unlikely unless a feasible path to its achievement is perceived by all members of the group. Perceptions are not always objectively correct, but they nevertheless constrain action just as do any other elements of the force field.

An aim of force-field analysis is to learn about the perceptions of members of the group who will maintain the status quo or make change possible. As noted earlier, it is the force field as perceived by these decision makers that maintains the quasi-stationary equilibrium. Analysis of the force field must attend not only to the hindrances and facilitating factors that *are* perceived, but also to factors which are *not* perceived. Often, mobilization towards change is stifled by perceptions or beliefs that are held in common and go unquestioned by all members of an organization, but that can yield to alternative perceptions or interpretations if approached creatively.

Figure 4 illustrates a situation in which a person perceives no way to get to goal 2, and so can not choose to pursue that goal. Figure 5 illustrates how the person can be free to pursue goal 2 once certain unperceived elements of a path to that goal

⁶Erez, M., & Zidon, I. (1984). Effect of goal acceptance on the relationship of goal difficulty to performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69, 69-78.

⁷(1) Lewin, K. (1947). Group decision and social change. In T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (Eds.), *Readings in social psychology*. NY: Holt. (2) Hollenbeck, J. R., Williams, C. R., & Klein, H. J. (1989). An empirical examination of the antecedents of commitment to difficult goals. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74, 18-23.

⁸Cartwright, D., & Zander, A. (1968). Pressures to uniformity in groups: Introduction. In D. Cartwright & A. Zander (Eds.), *Group dynamics: Research and theory* (3rd ed., pp. 139-151). NY: Harper & Row.

⁹An explanation of the central role of goals in directing human performance is contained in Locke & Latham's goal theory: Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

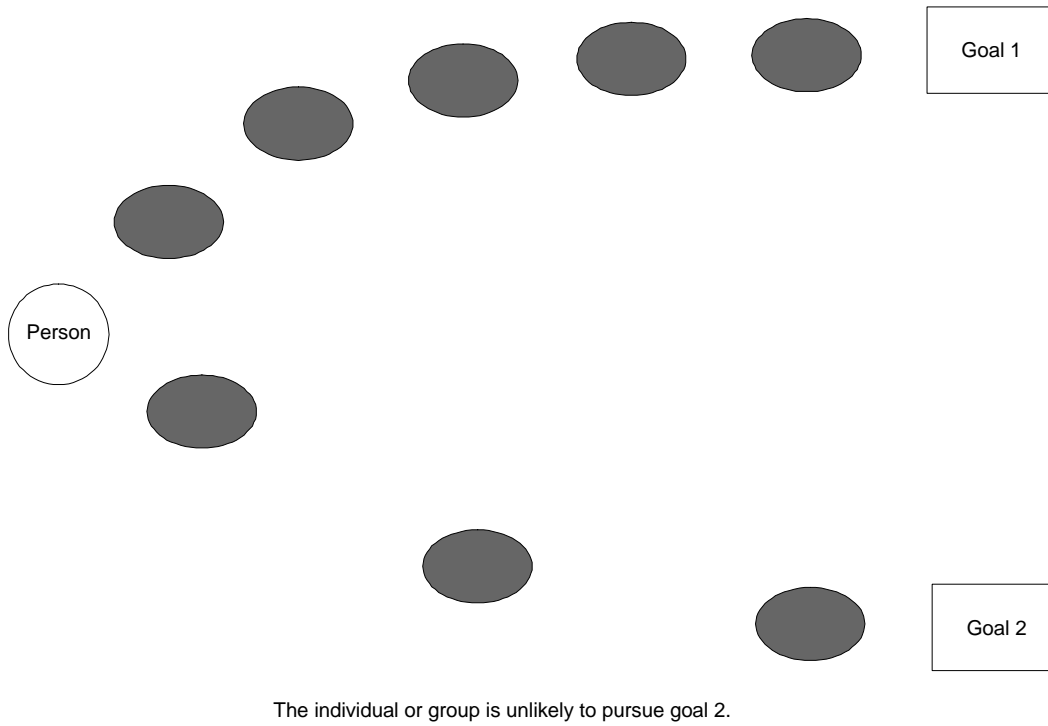


Figure 4. A Person or Group Is Likely to Pursue a Goal Only If a Path to It Is Perceived

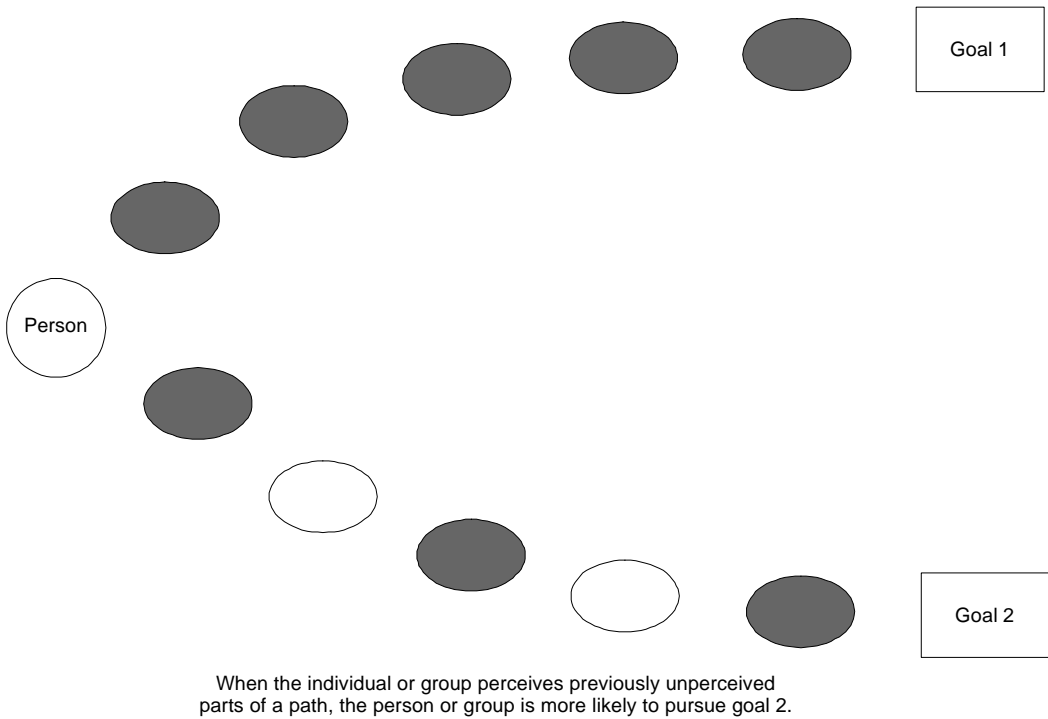


Figure 5. When Previously Unperceived Parts of a Path are Revealed, A Person or Group Is More Likely to Pursue Goal 2

are revealed.¹⁰ Revealing such possibilities is one of the purposes of force-field analysis in planning and problem solving. An example of how these additional steps towards goal 2 emerge from an analysis is provided by the Figure 3 diagram of the altered force field for the ‘no pass–no play’ problem. The steps to obtain agreements from board members to re-construe the situation are the previously unperceived steps that are available once the analysis has been performed.

The psychology of the group is different once a new path towards a goal has been perceived; changes in mood or attitude, and in the level of enthusiasm about change can be quite evident.

Revealing the nature of the force-field, possible errors in its perception, and the availability of a path previously unperceived are tools for “unfreezing” group custom or breaking a social habit. Plans made on the basis of the new perceptions can then be implemented to “refreeze” a new status quo by altering the force field permanently.

Standards for performance, feedback, and the expectation of follow-up enhance action directed towards the goal.

People responsible for social management are frequently deprived of their legitimate desire for reconnaissance on a realistic basis. Under these circumstances, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with achievement becomes mainly a question of temperament. In a field that lacks objective standards of achievement, no learning can take place. If we cannot judge whether an action has led forward or backward, if we have no criteria for evaluating the relation between effort and achievement, there is nothing to prevent us from coming to the wrong conclusions and encouraging the wrong work habits.¹¹

Planning should include the specification of concrete, observable standards for performance, benchmarks of progress, and measurable objectives and goals. This enables feedback on performance to be assessed in comparison with these standards, benchmarks, objectives, and goals. Goal setting without feedback, and feedback without goal setting are both unlikely to produce the same degree of effort towards change as the combination of goals and provision for feedback. As an important review of the research on motivation put it, “Goal setting without feedback appears to have little long-term effect on performance.... [And] without a goal or standard, people do not appraise feedback as significant and thus do not

¹⁰Theoretically, such an act of insight involves a person’s cognitive reorganization of the field. Lewin, K. (1935). *A dynamic theory of personality*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

¹¹Lewin, K. (1947, op. cit., p. 334).

take action in response to it.¹²

There is much evidence that goals or incentives in combination with feedback on performance lead to improvements in performance over time, provided that improvement is possible.¹³

A Structure for Conducting a Force-Field Analysis¹⁴

Steps for Force-Field Analysis

Here are the steps for conducting a force-field analysis. Each step is explained following the list. Before taking these steps, your group should have a clear idea of the change you wish to bring about.

1. Identify obstacles—the restraining forces.
2. Determine which obstacles are most important. List obstacles in order of priority.
3. Identify resources—the enabling forces.
4. Develop a general strategy—a plan to overcome resistance to change. Get consensual public commitment to the strategy,
5. Specify critical benchmarks—observable signals of changes in the force field.

The following paragraphs explain how to carry out each step. It is important that the person leading the group in a force-field analysis execute these steps *in this order*, or have a very good reason for deviating.

¹²Lock, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990, op. cit.). For a briefer account see also Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). Work motivation and satisfaction: Light at the end of the tunnel. *Psychological Science*, 1, 240-246.

¹³Gottfredson, G. D. (1996). The Hawthorne Misunderstanding (And How to Get the Hawthorne Effect in Action Research). *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 33, 28-48.

¹⁴Alternative structures or advice for conducting a force-field analysis have been provided elsewhere. Readers may also find those accounts useful or preferable to the present account. (1) Blanton, J., & Alley, S. (1976). Program development: A manual for organizational self-study. *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 6, 26. (Ms. No. 1216). (2) Schmuck, R. A., & Runkel, P. J. (1985). *Handbook of organization development in schools* (3rd ed., Chap. 5). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield. (3) Speir, M. S. (1973). Kurt Lewin's "force field analysis." *Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*, pp. 111-113. (4) Morris, W. C., & Saskin, M. (1976). *Organization behavior in action: Skill building experiences*, pp. 138-140. St Paul, MN: West.

Step 1: Obstacles

First, working with the entire team, use a large pad of newsprint paper¹⁵ to make a *comprehensive* list of obstacles to moving in the desired direction. *Do not attempt to resolve these obstacles at this time.* Set aside all discussion of ways to circumvent obstacles until later. (It may be useful to note ideas about resources on a sheet of paper that is covered by the obstacle sheet.) When a group member begins to discuss a resource, say “That is a resource. We are working on obstacles now.” The task at this stage is to produce a complete list of *every* important obstacle. (You can add others to the list later, but try to be as complete as possible at this point.)

There is an important reason for beginning with obstacles and deferring the discussion of resources until later. In many (if not most) groups, at least one nattering nabob of negativism (NNN) makes problem solving difficult. Each time an idea about problem resolution arises, the NNN can generate one to several reasons why the idea will not work. This “yeah but” phenomenon leads to switching from topic to topic without resolving any obstacles. By insisting on a complete listing of all obstacles at the outset, it will be possible later to structure the discussion of each *important* obstacle in turn. When an obstacle is mentioned repeatedly, say “Isn’t that pretty much the same as obstacle number X?”

Use verbal rewards for on-task behavior. Each time a group member offers an obstacle say, “Thanks” or “Good, that’s another one.” Write each obstacle on the newsprint legibly, incorporating your own or any other group member’s clarifying language. Writing on the chart concretely reinforces on-task behavior, and it keeps the contribution public so that it can be observed and recalled by all members of the group.

Encourage honesty. One important obstacle that groups often fail to discuss is their own attitudes about the project to be undertaken. If one or more group members have reservations about the desirability of moving forward, include that in the list of obstacles. Try to determine the nature of the reservation.

Propose some common categories of obstacles if they are not being identified by the group. Ask the following questions to generate information if information is not offered:

¹⁵You can develop the list on a blackboard or plain paper, but the giant newsprint pads make it easier for everyone to participate and see the ideas in written form. Unlike lists made on a chalk board, notes on newsprint can easily be taken away so that edited and printed versions can be prepared with a word processor. If a laptop computer and video projector are available, you may use a word processing or presentation program to record ideas and project them on the wall. This often has the advantage of greater legibility than when newsprint is used. A disadvantage of computerized projection is that multiple pages cannot be viewed at the same time by the group—as they can if newsprint is posted around the walls of a room.

- “Is there enough money to do this?”
- “Does anyone not want us to do this?”
- “Would any individuals or groups oppose us if it appeared that we would move ahead with this?”
- “Is everyone here convinced that it is a good idea to move ahead with this?”
- “Are there any rules, regulations, policies, or laws that would make this difficult?”
- “Are there any other forces from within our organization that will restrain us from doing this?”
- “Are there any other forces from outside our agency (sources of money, sponsors, clients, constituencies, regulators) that will restrain us from doing this?”
- “Why hasn’t this change occurred already?”

Attempt to be exhaustive. If enumeration of obstacles is terminated too early, important obstacles which group members may feel uncomfortable about openly discussing may be omitted. It is time to quit eliciting obstacles only when the group can generate no more, or the obstacles listed are so trivial that it is obvious they can be overcome easily, or they generate laughter.

Step 2: Identify the Most Important Obstacles

Second, decide through group discussion which of the obstacles is most important, next most important, and so forth. Number the elements of your list accordingly.¹⁶ In most instances, a satisfactory plan for change can be devised and most group members will become committed to the plan if the one to three most important obstacles can be coped with. It is rarely necessary to discuss all the obstacles identified, but it is important that they be on the list because (a) they can then be explicitly and publicly examined for their importance and (b) they provide a vehicle for and help to control the NNN phenomenon.

Step 3: Identify Resources

Now the team should shift from obstacle-finding mode to problem-solving mode. Lead the group in this shift by explaining that whereas in the previous steps the group was concerned with listing obstacles and that identifying forces working against the desired change was competent role behavior, competent role behavior now consists of finding ways to overcome these obstacles.

¹⁶Some guidelines for FFA advise estimating the strength of each restraining influence, and diagramming the forces using arrows of different lengths. Although doing this helps to produce a graphical representation of a situation and facilitates communication about it, this force estimation and diagramming is time consuming and cumbersome. It can usually be dispensed with if obstacles can simply be ordered in importance.

Explain that it is generally better to find a way to render an obstacle irrelevant, to diminish its force, or to change its direction than to attempt to overcome an obstacle by applying counter force. Explain why (see page 4).

Start with the most important obstacle and a fresh sheet of newsprint paper. Encourage group production of ideas about ways to get around this first obstacle. What resources (money, interpersonal influence, prestige, authority, personnel) can you apply to overcome this obstacle?

Orally reinforce contributions. Write each idea about a new resource that can be applied on the flip chart as a means of rewarding on-task behavior, to ensure that all contributions are public, and so that no idea is lost.

Suggest potential resources that group members may not themselves suggest (because they are captives of “pluralistic ignorance” or “social habit”). For example, ask, “Is there really a written state regulation making this impossible?” “Will the person(s) with decision-making authority make funds for this available?” Remember that many of the restraints that an organization’s members have long assumed are due to rules, regulations, policies, or laws may not in fact be such. Similarly, ask “Who made that policy? Could that individual change the policy? What would it take to get so-and-so to change the policy?”

Never argue about a matter of fact. Get the correct information whenever uncertainty or disagreement exists. In most cases, a phone call to a person with the relevant factual information should be made immediately during the meeting. Send an individual from the room to make a phone call or to get a pertinent document sent by telefax, or use an assistant to do so. Pursue another idea while waiting for the factual information.

For each important obstacle, one at a time, ask what could change the direction of this element of the force field. Can, by adopting a more fundamental perspective or by appealing to an overarching commonality of goals, this force be made to work for change in the desired direction rather than against it?

When one or several seemingly good ideas for coping with the first obstacle have been generated, move on to another obstacle.

Usually, it is not necessary to be exhaustive in discovering resources. It is often useful to determine the general nature of the range of impelling forces, however, because this information can be useful in reversing the direction of restraining forces by reference to common aims of the planned change and the individuals or groups who currently resist change.

Step 4: Develop a Strategy

At some point, a *strategy* for applying resources to overcoming the most important obstacles should emerge. Psychologically, the members of the groups will perceive steps to attain the goal that had not previously been perceived (remember Figures 4 and 5). At this point try to formulate a general strategy or plan in words through group discussion. Usually, a few sentences can capture the essence of a strategy. In the “no pass–no play” example used earlier, the general strategy was: “Convince board members that we are increasing the frequency of consequences for a failure of effort and that by using daily withdrawal of privileges we may be promoting even stronger academic standards. Persuade the previously resistant board members to allow us to try this idea as an experiment. If our arrangements do not prove to be more effective, we will agree not to press for a permanent change in the policy.”

Record the strategy on the newsprint.

Seek consensus and public commitment from all group members. If the FFA exercise has been successful, the mood and attitude of the group will often be quite different than that prevailing when the exercise was begun—sometimes elation prevails. Test for success by asking each person, “Do you think this strategy will work?” Everyone should reply with a “yes” or “it has a good chance of working.”

Important: If there is not general agreement that the strategy is feasible and desirable at this point, the group should either (a) continue with the consideration of resources until an attractive plan emerges or (b) reconsider the change it intends to introduce to select an alternative that is more feasible given available resources.

Step 5: Specify Critical Benchmarks

A critical benchmark¹⁷ is an *observable* decision, arrangement, agreement, or change in resources that alters the balance of forces in the force field.

In the “no pass–no play” example, critical benchmarks might include the following: (a) board member Johnson agrees that anything that might increase adult influence over student effort might be a step in the right direction, (b) the board chair agrees to schedule a discussion of the merits of alternative ways of tying athletic participation to academic performance for a board meeting, (c) the board approves of a trial of the new idea as an experiment.

List the critical benchmarks—the key decisions, arrangements, agreements, or personnel changes that are required to move forward with the strategy—on a large piece of paper for everyone to see.

¹⁷A critical benchmark is akin to what Lewin (1947) referred to as a “gate.”

For each critical benchmark indicate *what* observable change occurs, *who* the primary person for ensuring the achievement of this benchmark shall be, and *when* the benchmark must be observed to signal satisfactory progress with the plan.

The list of critical benchmarks for implementing the strategy serve to (a) indicate in an objective manner what is expected to be accomplished by specific individuals, (b) provide feedback signaling progress in implementing the strategy when benchmarks are attained, (c) provide warning signals that the strategy is not working (if benchmarks are not being met), and (d) provide for the anticipation of follow-up on implementation of the plan (a motivational tool).

The plan incorporating a summary statement describing the strategy and a complete list of critical benchmarks, complete with observable benchmark statements, specification of a person responsible for achieving each, and a date for completion should be reproduced and made available to all members of the group. Monitoring and follow-up on this plan is essential.

Important: When monitoring of progress indicates that critical benchmarks are not being met, the group should reconsider its force-field analysis and devise an alternative strategy.

Appendix A: Self-Test

Test your understanding of the principles underlying the use of force-field analysis by answering the following questions. If you are not sure of an answer, re-read the pertinent section of this document.

1. How does force-field analysis explain how current conditions tend to persist over time?
2. How can “pluralistic ignorance” maintain the status quo?
3. Describe a technique for coping with the “yeah but” phenomenon in planning for change.
4. Describe three ways of overcoming resistance to change, and explain why one method is likely to be ineffective and explain why an alternative is more often useful in creating lasting change.
5. What obstacles to change might an organizational outsider be of more help in understanding than an organizational insider?
6. Is an attempt at persuasion in an individual face-to-face discussion likely to be more effective or less effective than a group discussion in facilitating change in behavior in an organization? Why?
7. How can one tell that a group has developed a strategy it is likely to pursue? Unlikely to pursue?
8. What is a critical benchmark? Why is the specification of CBs important?

