

Force Field Analysis

From Objectives to activities

Tree diagramming and options analysis are techniques that may help you determine what the focal areas or themes for your project should be the purpose, objectives and expected results. Once these have been determined, it will be important to consider the context in which your project will try to have influence in order to find out what activities you should undertake to achieve your objectives. What is working with you and what against you? *Force field Analysis* is a technique for analysing the forces that may help or obstruct you in the achievement of your objectives. It can be a useful technique for exploring further how feasible an option is as well as supportive when drawing up an implementation plan. The following instructions explain how to use the technique. The main requirements are:

- 1) To identify the forces which support the achievement of your objective (driving forces) and those which act against the objective (restraining forces).
- 2) To identify ways in which driving forces can be promoted, strengthened or maximised.
- 3) To identify ways of reducing, weakening or minimising the restraining forces.

In greater detail

- 1) Elaborate on the theme/issue identified in the tree diagramming process by reformulating your intentions in objectives terms – rewrite your theme as an objective. You should state what you want to achieve and when, very specifically, using the words “To.....by.....” *NB Make sure you have stated only one objective – deal with additional ones on a separate sheet/as a separate exercise.*
- 2) List all of the forces that go in the same direction as your objectives – the driving forces – you can think of on the left :
 - ✓ Be very specific (i.e. what, who, where, when, how much, how many, etc.)
 - ✓ Forces can be inside your organisation or community as well as outside
 - ✓ Indicate how the force will contribute to meeting the objective
- 3) List the forces that go against your objectives - the restraining forces - on the right
 - ✓ Again, be specific
 - ✓ List all the factors, both inside and outside which will work against you
 - ✓ Indicate what effect each force is likely to have on your achieving your objective
- 4) Analyse the forces
 - ✓ Identify which forces are most important (make sure they are real, not assumed). These are the ones that will have a significant effect on whether or not you can achieve your objective. Circle all the important forces on your list
 - ✓ Obtain any additional information you may feel is lacking about any important force
- 5) Find out activities that could strengthen the driving forces, or weaken the restraining forces (reducing a restraining force is generally more effective than increasing a driving force).
 - ✓ Work on each important force in turn
 - ✓ Identify ways in which you can increase, strengthen, or maximise each driving force
 - ✓ Identify ways in which you can reduce, minimise or eliminate each force working against you
 - ✓ If you really cannot find a way of reducing a restraining force, write “no action possible” against it
 - ✓ It is often useful to get others’ ideas and suggestions to help here

- ✓The secret of the technique is to address the forces most likely to tip the balance
- 6) Realistic assessment of feasibility
 - ✓Do the driving forces now clearly outweigh the restraining forces?
 - ✓If yes, check "Do I really want to achieve this". If the answer is another yes, then adopt your objective/option and begin work on the forces
 - ✓If the answer is no to either question, you can come up with further ideas. If you can't, you may have to revise your objective i.e. choose another option.

In summary, force field analysis can be used to determine the viability of an option but can also help devise ways of improving the implementation plans associated with an option. The exercise below helps you explore this latter possibility more fully.

