'Force-field analysis' training session guide

Why are we doing this?

1. This is a classic technique that is of considerable value to change agents.

2. It is a versatile and can be adapted to different purposes. It can be used to help to figure out how to bring about change. It can also be used to help to make difficult decisions.

Materials required Handout.

Procedure

Distribute the handout and one of the facilitators models the process with some change they wish to bring about OR Write up a force field example on the flipchart

Plenary/debrief

Find a partner (who you have spoken least to) and compare notes on using that technique.

Quick plenary on reflections on using that technique.

Distribute the appendix to the handout showing how the technique can be used
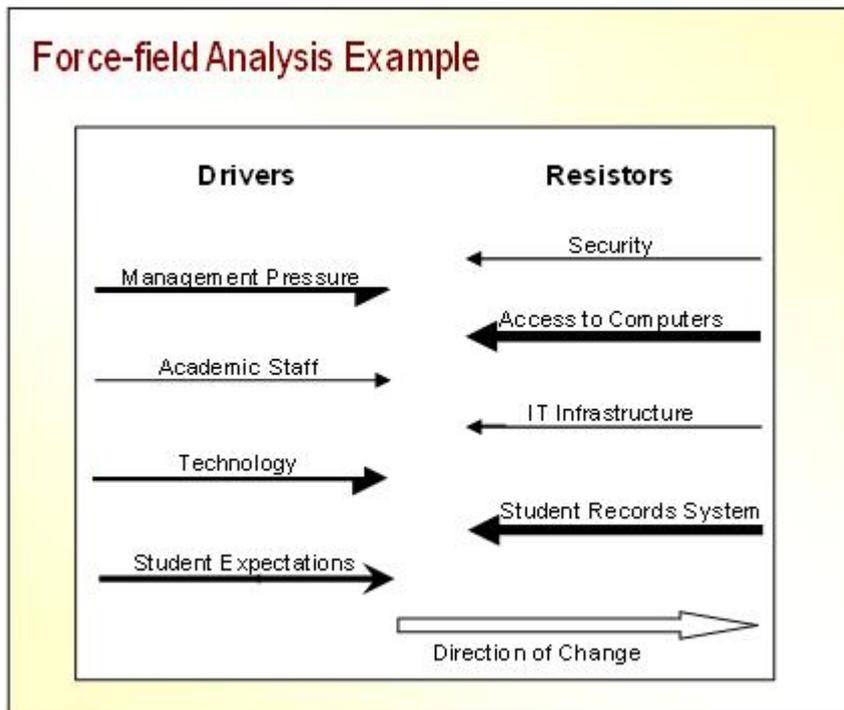
Handout for
FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS

Force-field analysis is a flexible tool often used by change agents. It can help you to work out how to bring about change.   To use it for this purpose follow the following process:

1.   Summarise the present situation. Try to do this in one all-encompassing sentence.

2.   State your desired situation.

3.   Map all the forces working in favour of your desired situation (the 'supporting forces')

4.   Map all the forces working against your desired situation (the 'restraining forces')

5.   Identify the 5 most powerful 'supporting forces'

6.   Identify the 5 most powerful 'restraining forces'

7.   Rate the significance of each of the supporting forces from 3 down to 1 as follows:

   3 = major significance

   2 = medium significance

   1 = minor significance

8.   Similarly, rate the significance of the restraining forces from 3 down to 1.

   (Compute a 'total score' for the 'supporting forces' and a total for the 'restraining forces').

9.   Identify possible actions you could take to increase each of the supporting forces and reduce each of the restraining forces.

10.   Find a partner and explore the feasibility of the actions you have come up with.

PS. You can use your action learning set as a forum to help you to identify the 'supporting forces' and the 'restraining forces'.

Here's a partially worked illustration from Web-images:

Force-field Analysis Example

Drivers | Resistors

Security

Management Pressure

Access to Computers

Academic Staff

IT Infrastructure

Technology

Student Records System

Student Expectations

Direction of Change

Another use for force-field analysis

Force-field analysis is a flexible tool with other uses that are relevant to action learning.

Most of the problems that people bring to an action learning set meeting fall into one of two types: (1) they are stuck and can't see any options, or (2) they have several options and they are not sure which to choose. The tools for creative thinking can help you identify options. Force-field can help in evaluating alternative options. It can be used to sort out the pros and cons of different options.

Here is how to use force-field analysis to help to evaluate options. For each option follow the following process:

1.   Map all the forces in favour of the option i.e. its advantages.

2.   Map all the forces against the option i.e. its disadvantages.

3.   Identify the 5 main advantages

4.   Identify the 5 main disadvantages

5.   Rate the significance of each of the advantages from 3 down to 1 as follows:

3 = major significance

2 = medium significance

1 = minor significance

6.   Similarly rate the disadvantages from 3 down to 1.

7.   Compute a 'score' for the 'advantages' as the sum of the advantages weighted by the significance rating (- the maximum score is 15, if all 5 advantages are of major significance). Do the same for the disadvantages and subtract from the advantages score. This will give you an overall score for the option; it may be positive or negative.

8.   Do the same for any other option.

The purpose of this exercise is to expose the elements that comprise an option and their relative strengths. Used in that way it can be very productive. Do not follow it mechanically and slavishly or it is likely to be counterproductive. One of the benefits of this form of analysis is that opening up the contents of an option often suggests ways in which you can improve on it by increasing the advantages score or reducing the disadvantages score.