Force field analysis is a useful tool for analysing change situations and assessing the prospects for change. It’s a way of examining all the forces for and against a decision. You are effectively weighing up the pros and cons. It was developed by Kurt Lewin. He suggested that at any given time we can look at any organisation being held in balance between driving forces that are seeking to change and restraining forces that are preventing movement and change.

If the situation is not changing, it is because the forces inhibiting change and development - represented by the arrows on the right-hand side are together, equal to the forces which are driving the change – the arrows on the left-hand side.

- The thickness of the arrow can be used to show the strength of the force
- The length of an arrow can be used to show how difficult it would be to modify the force
- Cluster them under different headings

Once you have obtained a clear view of the forces in play it will help you decided the feasibility of the changes you are proposing.
A force-field diagram can also be used to identify ways of promoting change – ways in which you can shift the balance of forces in favour of change. Reducing restraining forces is often more effective than increasing the driving forces. By carrying out the analysis you can plan to strengthen the forces supporting a decision and reduce the impact of the opposition to it.

**Task – Force Field Analysis**

Draw a force-field diagram of the situation in your own organisation/department for a change programme you are considering or are tasked with implementing.

**Disadvantages of force field analysis**

Whilst one of the strengths of the force-field analysis is its simplicity, this can also be misleading as different parts of the organisation are likely to change at different rates. Nevertheless, it is a useful tool for considering pressures in favour or against taking certain courses, as long as you take into account the situation is unlikely to be constant but continually shifting.
Be careful if you are going to use force-field analysis with other people. You need to be clear what you mean when you identify someone or something as a ‘force’ and be sensitive to the dangers of thinking in terms of opposing sides.

Introducing force-field analysis into a situation that is already tense could polarise things further and create confrontations and fixed positions that you are trying to avoid. Be careful not to let force field analysis draw you or other people into thinking in ‘win-lose’ terms. Likewise beware of associating restraining forces with negativity.

**How objectively can you assess your idea?**

A force field analysis is only as good as the forces you put into it. There are a number of personal pressures that you may feel. These include:

- The need to satisfy key stakeholders
- Corporate pressures to pursue a strategic direction
- Organisational cultural pressures
- Balancing personal objectives with the interests of internal and external groups
- A concern to maintain a personal image/status within the organisation

All these pressures need to be factored into your assessment of the viability.