SYSTEMS CHANGERS

The Force Field Analysis - what is it?

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The Force Field Analysis was designed in the early 1950's by Kurt Lewin who became a social psychologist following a career as a physicist. Whilst not widely known about, Lewin's theory of change underpins almost all contemporary change theory.

Lewin noted that despite the often positive reasons for change it is usually resisted. There are many reasons for resisting change and ways in which individuals, teams and organisations express their resistance. If the resisting forces can match the driving forces, no change will occur. A system is unconsciously designed to reinforce itself, and will put in an effort to maintain the status quo. Just like our own human system strives to keep us at the same temperature, a system will have drivers and resistors which will keep the system in a ' quasi-state of equilibrium'

To make a change happen you have to first understand what forces are at play in your system in relation to the change you want to make. You can identify if the change is still the right one to pursue and then think about how you influence those forces so that the drivers are more powerful than the resisters and the change will occur.

1. How to undertake a Force Field Analysis

a. Use a blank sheet of paper, whiteboard, or the Systems Changers Force Field Analysis template.
b. In a box in the middle of the paper describe your plan or proposal for change.
c. Draw a number of arrows in a column on the left hand side pointing into the side of the box.
d. Beside each arrow down the left hand side list the drivers of the change you want to make. The positive forces for change.

Think about this on different levels - the practical drivers - the need to save money, improve performance etc. Then start to think about the emotional drivers for you or those involved in the change you want to make for example, we will feel more connected with others.

Be thorough and clear.

When you think you have got a full list then ask yourself - **What else? What else? What else?**

Now draw a set of arrows in a column pointing into the right hand side of the box. Beside each arrow list the forces against change.

What makes the change difficult to get agreed or if it is agreed what makes it difficult to implement? List these down the right hand side arrows.

Think about which individuals or teams, departments, stakeholders might not want to make the change? Why not? What will it mean for them?

As with the drivers, think about the practical and emotional reasons in the system that will resist the change. And of course ask yourself or your team again - What else?

2. Analysing your Force Field

a. Once you have listed the driving and restraining forces you can step back and evaluate them. What insights emerge? Note: you can weigh up the drivers and resistors by giving each a score between 1-10 with ten being the most powerful and one being least powerful. It is usually enough to step back and see what is clearer.
b. Are the restraining forces greater than the drivers? Were you aware of all those restraining forces? Have you attended to them already or do you need to have some further conversations with relevant stakeholders? Can you now understand why there has been resistance to the change you want to make - in you, or in other parts of the system? Are some resisters more powerful or complex to tackle than others?
c. What about the drivers? Are these positive forces for change shared across the system? Have you been fully communicating them effectively? What might you need to hear from others before they would be open to hearing about these drivers?

Tip: **Remember the emotional responses to change are far more powerful than any practical reasons for it.**

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Driving forces (Positive forces for change)	Present state (or desired change)	Restraining forces (Obstacles to change)