

**PMEducation**

FORCE FIELD

**WHAT IT IS**

This is a decision making tool. It can be used whenever we need to decide whether to take a particular action, or to retain the status quo. Force Field analysis can be applied in the management of Quality, or Risk, or really anywhere a decision is to be made whether to take action or not. To do, or not to do, that is the question.

Making a decision can be difficult when there are various factors to consider, each with their own importance. Drawing a line down the middle of a page and listing reasons, Pros and Cons, is a common approach to making these decisions, but does not allow for the relative importance of each.

A Force Field Diagram improves on a Pros and Cons list by adding a weight to each. The diagram can be made alone or in a group of people. As a group activity it encourages creative thinking and brings a consensus about the Pros and Cons.

Force Field Analysis was developed by Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) who expressed that “driving forces” (Pros) move a situation toward change while “restraining forces” (Cons) block that movement. If the sum of the driving forces is greater than the sum of the restraining forces, the change will happen. In decision making we can say the change **should** happen. Alternately if the sums of the forces are equal, or if the sum of the restraining forces is greater than the sum of the driving forces, no change should occur (status quo).

**HOW IT WORKS**

1. Begin with the decision being considered. One decision could be to implement a new HR System. Place this in the middle of the page with a brief explanation.
2. Then brainstorm all possible reasons in favour of the decision (Pros) and list them. In our example, these are all the reasons for implementing a new HR system. These are shown in green colour.
3. Next brainstorm all the possible reasons for not selecting the decision, and retaining the status quo. These are shown in red.
4. Apply a score to each Pro and to each Con. The Nominal Group Technique can be used to establish weights.
5. Add the sum of the Pros and the sum of the Cons.
6. Take an overview look at the diagram to see if any changes or additions are needed.
7. Finally, if the sum of the Pros (driving forces) is greater than the sum of the Cons (restraining forces), proceed with the change being decided. Otherwise retain status quo.

**KEY ELEMENTS**

For this method to be effective, the following key elements must be used:

* Understanding of the reasons for (Pros) and the reasons against (Cons) the decision being considered.
* Use as few words as possible to keep the diagram legible

ADVANTAGES and DISADVANTAGES

Of FORCE FIELD

 ADVANTAGES

* Highly visual. Easy to see and to explain to others.
* Easy to create. Can be made quite quickly.
* Identifies weight of each Pro and each Con.
* Generates discussion amongst participants
* Allows creative thinking
* Brings consensus to a decision

 DISADVANTAGES

* Usually only applied to one decision (to proceed or not)
* Does not give comparison of various alternate decisions
* Scores applied to Pros and Cons are only subjective

FINAL NOTES: This tool is useful for deciding whether or not to take a particular action. It can also be used to force a change to happen by increasing the Pros and decreasing the Cons.

Below you will find the Force Field Analysis Diagram for “Implementing a HR System”. This is not an advertisement, just a good illustration. The arrows are all the same length but to make the diagram more illustrative, you could have each arrow length related to the weight of its Pro or Con.

