

Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis: Decision Making Made Easy

By Lyndsay Swinton

Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis is a simple yet effective decision making model to add to your management tool-kit. Here's the low down on how to use force field analysis to make better decisions, quickly, for yourself or with others.

Who's Kurt Lewin anyway?

Kurt Lewin was a German social psychologist born in 1890, best known for "Force Field Analysis" using force field diagrams, and for introducing scientific experimentation to test hypotheses. Lewin worked mostly in the USA, and his teachings shape our understanding today of group dynamics.

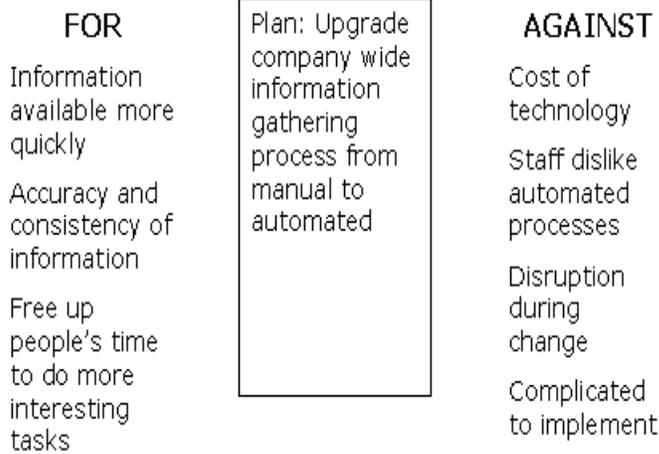
Force Field Analysis – the 35,000 foot view

There are always pros and cons to a decision – nothing is ever that simple! The secret of good decision-making is figuring out whether the pros outweigh the cons BEFORE you take action. With force field analysis, you list and score the factors for and against a decision, total the scores and see which comes up best.

If it's a close call and the decision for or against is not clear, you can add an extra step. Review the factors affecting the decision and create an action plan to increase the "fors" and decrease the "againsts". Simply repeat the force field analysis with the new conditions and your decision will be clear.

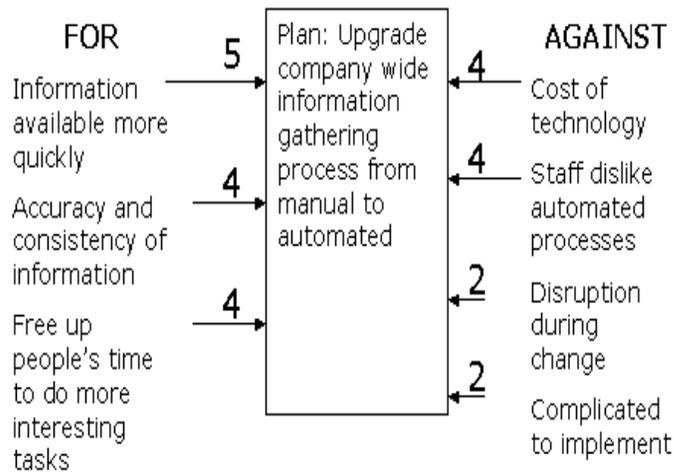
Force Field Analysis – Step 1

On a sheet of paper or spreadsheet, list all the factors **for**(pros) and factors **against** (cons) a decision. Include intangible or emotional factors as ignoring these can undermine your decision.



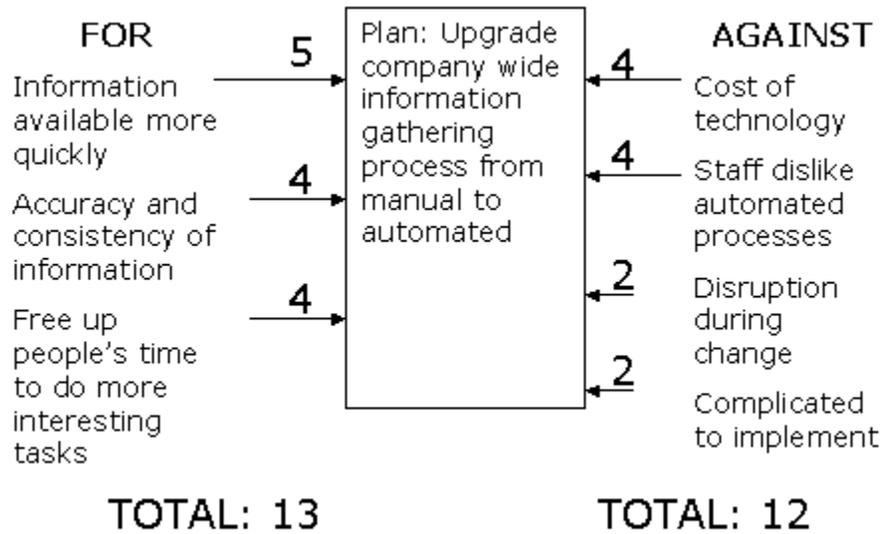
Force Field Analysis -Step 2

Give each factor a score of between 1 and 5, where 1 is low or weak and 5 is high or strong. Draw opposing arrows for each factor, where the size represents the score.



Force Field Analysis - Step 3

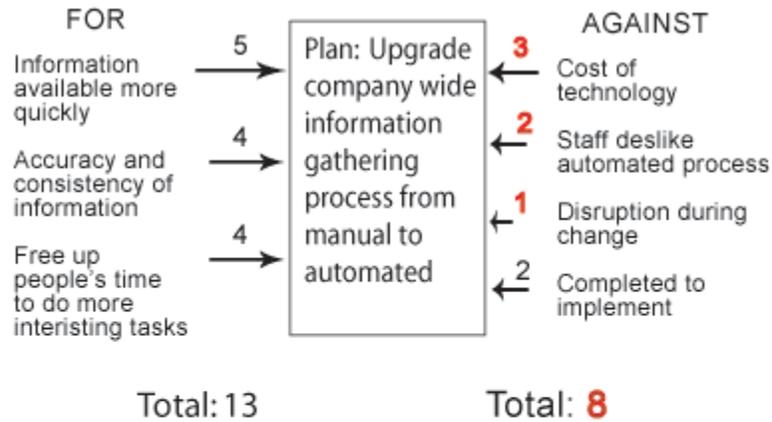
Total the For and Against scores. Is the result as expected? Do your heart and head agree? If not, review briefly the factors you listed. Are there any missing? Are less important factors overshadowing the more important factors? Are the scores realistic, and spread across the full range? Resist the temptation to fabricate the results, consider changing the factors and scores and see what happens.



Force Field Analysis - Step 4 (Additional)

It may be possible to increase the For score and decrease the Against score by taking appropriate action. Could a communication plan address concerns about resistance to change? Could additional training or additional resources increase the likelihood of a successful change? Review the factors and decide what actions could be taken to address or enhance any challenges.

Assuming these actions take place, what would the new scores be? Go through each factor, assuming the action has been successful, and write down the new score (as step 2). Total the new For and Against scores (as step 3). Again, is the result as expected?



Action plan

For: no action required

Against:

Involve key staff in designing new process

Review new process with experts to ensure "Best Practice"

Key staff to coach other during change

Crystal Clear Decisions

By now your decision is clear. Although you might not like the outcome, you can be confident that your decision is sound, transparent and explainable.

Instead of using "gut feel" or other haphazard means, try a more scientific decision making method. *Kurt Lewin Force Field Analysis* is simple yet effective method to improve your decision making ability today

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