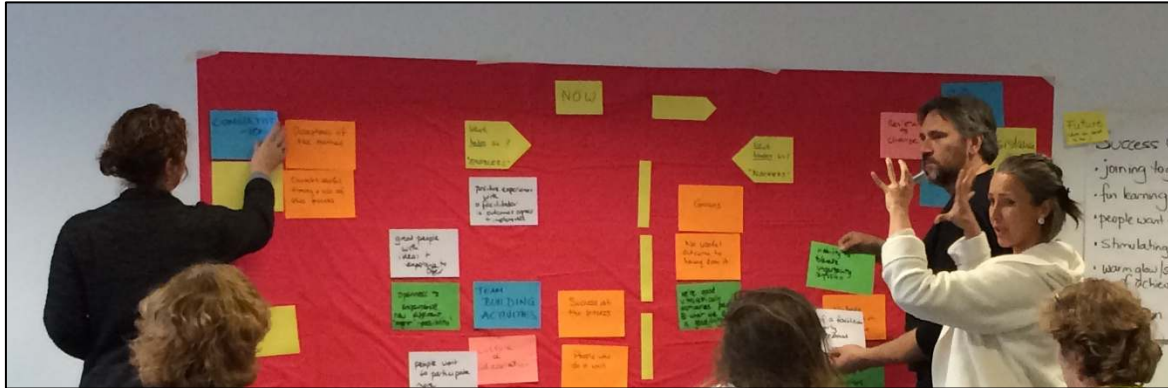




GETTING MOVEMENT INTO YOUR FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

By Rhonda Sparks-Tranks

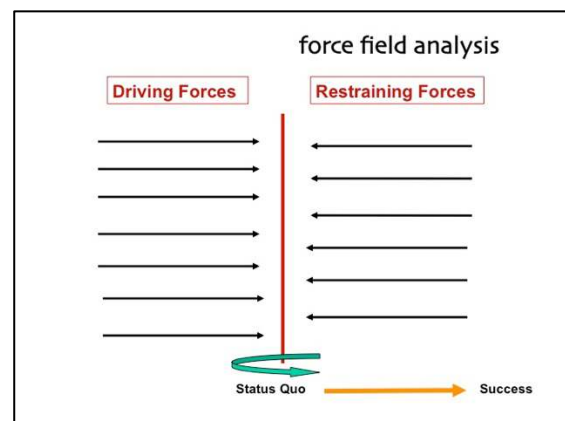
First published 2015



You've probably experienced a Force Field Analysis activity in a meeting. Someone draws a line down the whiteboard or flipchart and scribes as the group thinks through the issue. People sit and call out ideas while the scribe frantically tries to capture everything. After a little while the whiteboard looks like a dog's breakfast – there's no room for any more information, there are lines all over the place and people can't make sense of it. As the diagram becomes messier participants start to disengage and before long even the scribe loses the plot ... I'm actually describing an earlier version of myself here 😊

Force field analysis is a key process tool for many disciplines including project management, organisational development and change consulting. For years I struggled with a way to facilitate a group through the process so that it was engaging and people could visualise and understand the changing dynamic as we worked through the framework.

Over the years I've developed my own way of working with this essential tool for change. I often start with a physical demonstration of how a Force Field Analysis is essentially about movement. Group members become the driving and restraining forces trying to budge the person representing the current state. This can be a bit of fun before we get down to the real work.



Firstly we define the present /status quo (represented by the centre line), then define the desired state or success – what we want in the future. The next step is to identify restraining forces and driving forces and sometimes I include a ranking activity. Then we develop actions to remove or reduce the restraining forces, increase the driving forces or convert a restrainer into a driver (thus getting maximum acceleration for minimum effort).

But it was still me doing the scribing – and I found it difficult to maintain an overall sense when working up close and personal with the whiteboard or flipchart. As the facilitator I needed to be able to maintain the bigger picture.

One day I started to use a sticky wall that allowed the group members themselves to create, move, rank, delete etc. I use sticky walls of all sorts of other methods but had not used it for FFA. They became much more engaged, the Force Field Analysis process became much more dynamic and I could stand back and better facilitate the process rather than being locked into scribe role. I started to notice how much more creative and engaged people were. One day in one of my facilitator training workshops a participant decided to make different sized arrows to represent different “strengths” of a force. The colour of the paper took on a new meaning.



Scheduled action plan started to be built on an adjacent sticky wall. The act of removing a restraining force (written on A5 paper) was not just visual but physical and in some way this was more symbolic and satisfying.

Here is a group’s work during a strategy development event I facilitated January 2015 (part way through the process).

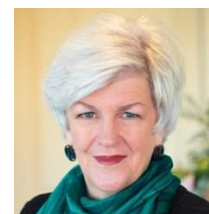
I’ve found this a much more effective way of doing a Force Field Analysis as it captures the spirit of change and forward movement. It can be a bit messy, but isn’t that what happens with change?

Note: Kurt Lewin developed the principle of Force Field Analysis in the early half of the 20th Century. There’s a wealth of information on the net including scholarly articles on Lewin’s work and a myriad of images for different ways people use the model. Be selective regarding what you read as some of the stuff on the internet totally misses the rationale and magic of Force Field Analysis. As much as possible go “back to source” for your facilitation tools. Learn the theories and basics before you start to improvise.

Rhonda Sparks-Tranks,

B.A. Certified Professional Facilitator, Master

Rhonda has decades of experience as a trainer, coach and facilitator working with major corporations and organisations around the world. Her facilitation focus is usually: navigating organisational change after restructures, strategic direction setting and planning, and team development - particularly when work relationships have become dysfunctional.



RHONDA SPARKS
facilitator | coach | celebrant

illuminating pathways for change

e rhonda@illumiconsulting.com.au t +61 (0) 410 510 720 w www.illumiconsulting.com.au