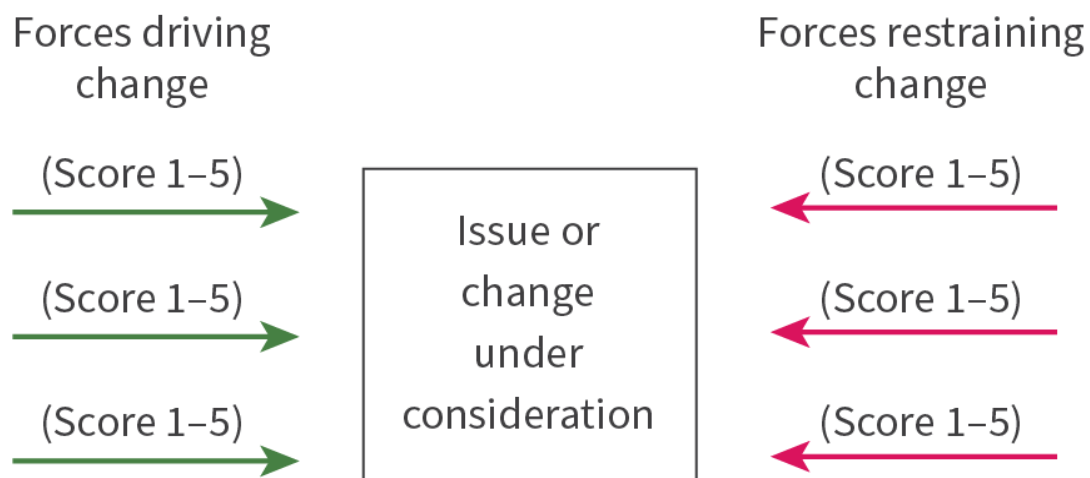


# Tool: Force field analysis (HL)

Kurt Lewin was a German academic who migrated to the United States in 1933. Much of Lewin's work focused on the dynamics of change.

In [Section 1.1.6 \(/study/app/y12-business-management-a-hl-may-2024/sid-351-cid-174702/book/tool-swotsteple-analysis-id-36504\)](#) you learned about how organisations must change in order to adapt to shifts in the external environment. But change can be difficult for individuals and entire organisations, generating fear and resistance, especially if communication is poor.

The force field diagram that Lewin developed can be used to study the factors that support or promote change (driving forces), and those that oppose or resist change (restraining forces). Each force is assigned a number, which is meant to indicate whether the force is relatively powerful (5) or weak (1). The framework for this is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

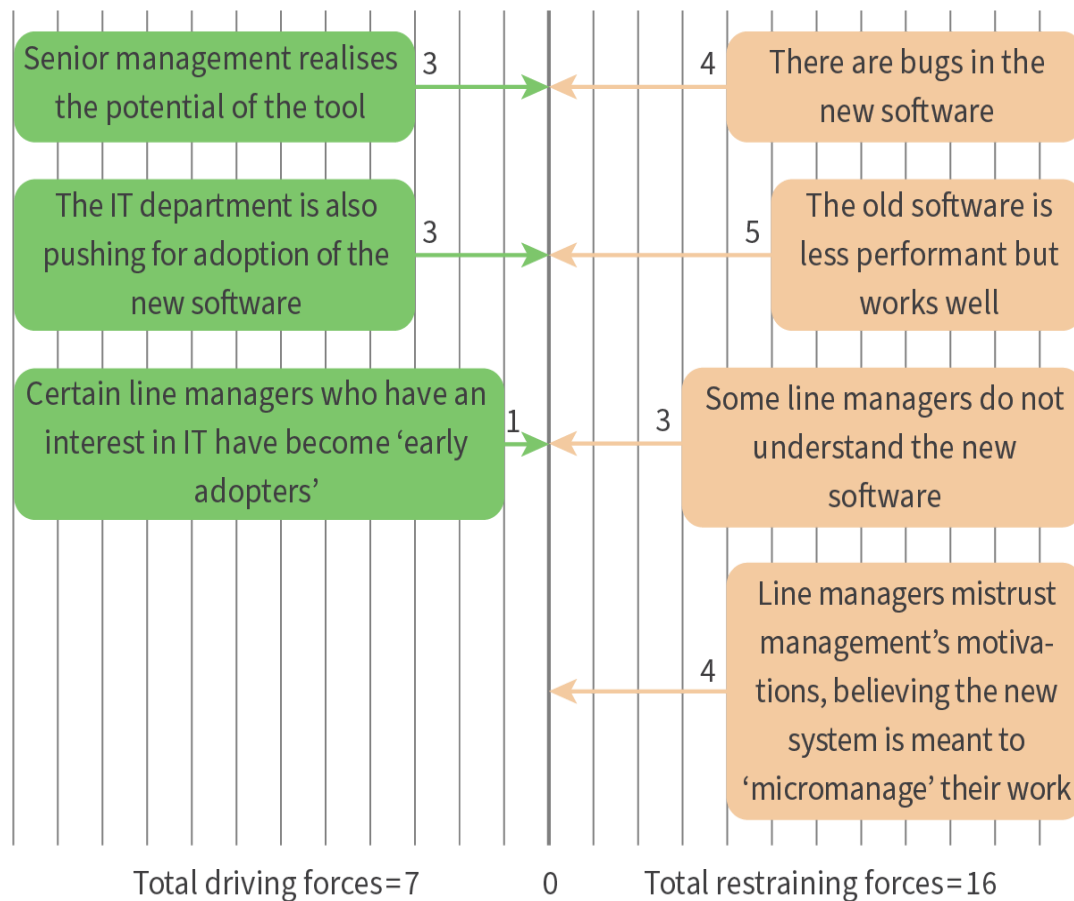


**Figure 1.** Force field analysis.

Once the diagram is complete, it is possible to identify which elements need to be modified in order to create change. Driving forces can be reinforced and restraining forces can be weakened. This will make it more likely that the desired change will occur.

For example, take a company that has invested in sophisticated new IT technology. Some employees may resist using the new equipment and insist that the old system works better. How can managers encourage employees to adopt the new technology?

**Figure 2** shows how a force field analysis could be applied to this problem.



**Figure 2.** Application of force field analysis: driving and restraining factors for the introduction of new management software.

According to the weights given in the diagram, driving forces are 7 while the restraining forces are 16. After carrying out the analysis, managers can consider how to amplify the driving forces and lessen the weight of the restraining forces.

### Activity

Your school is planning to expand by opening a new branch in another city. Use the force field analysis to evaluate the driving and restraining forces for this change. Identify some evidence that could be used to determine the weightings of the forces.

### Exam tip

Every time you are applying a force field analysis, remember:

- to put weightings on the factors
- that the weightings should be justified

- that the driving and restraining factors are not a list of advantages and disadvantages, although there may be some overlap
- that the driving factors are conditions that help change and restraining factors are blocking or hindering change

# Evaluation of the force field analysis

Some of the uses and limitations for the force field analysis are represented in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1.** Uses and limitations of the force field analysis tool.

Uses	Limitations
Graphic representation of complex information; easy to understand	Requires weights for qualitative factors; weights may be unscientific/biased, they need evidence to be valid
Helps develop better understanding of stakeholders and other factors that may prevent positive change; management can plan how to reduce or eliminate restraining forces or amplify driving forces	Depicting stakeholders as restraining forces may cause conflict