

## CASE 9—Guide to Analysis

### Is It “Take Us to Our Leader” or “We Can Do It Ourselves”?

**Key Concept:** Teacher Autonomy vs. Team Coherence and Alignment of Curriculum

This case addresses the thorny issue of leadership within a team of autonomous teachers. The case takes place during the second year of the principal’s putting the teachers in teams. During the first year there was an assigned teacher leader; in the second year the teachers have had to run the team without a formal leader, depending instead on a rotating leadership arrangement.

#### Your Facilitator

**Wait!** It would be very, very difficult to gain any appreciable benefit from your expenditure of time and energy by attempting to conduct this analysis and its series of exercises without a facilitator. You *need* to appoint someone (it can be a team member) as a designated facilitator. This is not necessarily your team leader. This person will not be your “boss.” But this person *will* be responsible for:

- Copying and distributing to all participants copies of the Case and Case Analysis and all handouts
- Organizing role-plays (appointing time keepers and observers, where indicated)
- Moving the process along and staying on track

**Psst! Facilitators:** Read all the activity directions as if they applied to you.

**Psst! Team members:** You, too.

#### Materials Needed

Enough printed copies of the following to distribute to all team members:

- The Case and Guide to Analysis
- Handout—Directions for Force Field Analysis
- Worksheet—Force Field Analysis
- Handout—Mock Force Field Analysis
- Worksheet—Action Planning and Goal Setting
- Chart paper and markers

## A. Analyzing the Case

### Step 1: Read the Case (15–20 minutes)

Distribute the teaching case, and have all team members read it through, underlining or highlighting pieces of information that they think are significant to understanding the case.

### Step 2: Establish the Facts of the Case (10 minutes)

As a whole group, make a list on chart paper of the significant *facts* of the teaching case. Include what you know about each team member (and make sure to include the teacher leader from the first year, Maria Catone). Try to withhold judgment, inferences, or evaluation, and come to agreement about what happened.

**Very Important:** When we say *facts* we mean just that—you must stick to the facts ONLY. There is a huge temptation, when analyzing other teachers' interactions, for teachers to voice *opinions* such as "She talks too much during the meeting" or "She's not a very good teacher." These are not *facts*, and negative comments such as these are counterproductive. The group should consciously steer away from such comments and instead either ask questions such as "Does she allow other voices to be heard?" or offer statements based on *evidence* such as "She says \_\_\_\_\_, but then she does \_\_\_\_\_."

If teachers feel they will be attacked for opening up their practice for other teachers to view, they simply will not do it. Making practice public is a risky proposition, and part of your challenge as a case analyst is to pretend that the teachers you are talking about are right there in the room with you.

### Step 3: Case Analysis (15 Minutes)

Discuss the following questions. For each question, identify the evidence that leads to your response.

- At the beginning of the year, how did the teachers address the issue of team leadership?
- What were the potential benefits and challenges of the decision to have rotating leadership?
- Where were there opportunities for individual teachers to have exerted leadership? What were they?

- Which teachers could have assumed leadership and moved the team from autonomy to collaboration? How might they have done it?
- What could the teachers have done to prevent this untenable situation and the team's impasse?

## B. Reflect and Connect (30 minutes)

This case raises two challenges that confront teams:

- Teacher autonomy
- Team coherence

Historically, teacher autonomy brought with it a culture of isolation and a set of behaviors on the part of teachers, such as self-sufficiency ("I can do this a lot better when I'm left alone"), that led to resistance to collaboration. Today, teachers are more likely to work in teams, and many value what they see as the benefits of teamwork and collaboration. However, they are rarely taught the skills needed, and old behaviors die hard. Teachers may still guard their autonomy and are frequently reluctant to accept leadership from one of their peers. This case addresses such a situation, with the added twist that the team had a team leader who encouraged and facilitated collaboration the year before. That team leader is now gone, and the team must function on its own. What are the results?

### Group Activity—Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis, an activity developed by a social psychologist,<sup>1</sup> enables a group of colleagues to examine a problematic situation using a protocol to identify strengths, pinpoint weaknesses, and develop a plan of action that addresses the problems and moves the group closer to achieving its goals. The assumption behind Force Field Analysis is that any situation involving human interactions—such as in organizations, institutions, and teams—is complex and changeable. These interactions involve patterns of behavior that are in dynamic equilibrium between opposing forces. *Facilitating forces* push the group's situation toward an ideal state, while *restraining forces* push the situation away from an ideal state and toward a worse state. This dynamic is the Force Field.

Force Field Analysis can be an enormously helpful tool for *any* team (try it out with any of the other cases in this book as well), but you will use it here with the case you have just read, demonstrating

how this team could move to a more productive team stance. You can then apply it to your own team to better understand how your team can achieve its own ideal state.

### **Step 1: Distribute and Review Materials (5 minutes)**

Distribute and briefly review the materials provided: Handout—Directions for Force Field Analysis (Figure C9.1), the Worksheet—Force Field Analysis (Figure C9.2), Handout—Mock Force Field Analysis (Figure C9.3), and Worksheet—Action Planning and Goal Setting (Figure C9.4).

### **Step 2: Study Directions and Blank Form (10 minutes)**

Introducing and understanding the Force Field Analysis concept takes a certain amount of study. Looking at these handouts and thinking about how the Force Field Analysis is applied helps to get team members accustomed to the notion of how this works.

### **Step 3: Study and Discuss Mock Force Field Analysis (15 minutes)**

The Mock Force Field Analysis demonstrates how this tool can be used to deepen an understanding of a team's inner life—to uncover what is working well, what is not working, and how problems may be resolved. Looking at the directions again, discuss how well this Mock Force Field Analysis does its job. Note that we do *not* call this a “model” analysis; it isn't designed to be perfect, just to suggest how one team *might* go about analyzing itself.

As a team consider the following:

- Is there anything missing? If so, what would you add?
- What would you have expressed differently?
- Are the new ideas doable?

## **C. What Do We Do Now?**

### **Step 1: Apply Force Field Analysis to Your Team (40 minutes)**

Now take what you've learned and apply it to your team. Again, look at the Directions for Force Field Analysis and the Worksheet—Force Field Analysis.

1. Collaboratively, give your team's Force Field Analysis a title (this is not terribly important). Identify the team's major goal (or goals—choose only one or two, perhaps three; picking too many will get you bogged down by trying to accomplish too much). Make your choice of a goal as clear and reasonable as possible. You should not attempt to work on a goal that is beyond the team's immediate reach.
2. Individually, and then sharing your answers among team members, complete Steps 3 and 4 of the directions.
3. Collaboratively, complete Steps 5, 6, and 7. Read Step 8.
4. Using Step 9, collaboratively brainstorm and fill in Column 3 of the Force Field Analysis: New Ideas.
5. Do not forget Step 10. One month later, evaluate your New Ideas. The biggest pitfall that defeats attempts at meaningful change is that we don't evaluate our onward progress—or lack of it.

## Step 2: Create an Action Plan

When you have completed the entire activity, make a list of action steps and a timeline for completing the steps (see **Figure C9.4**).

Finally, designate one team member as the “watchdog” who will hold team members accountable for fulfilling their commitments to the goal and the team.

In upcoming team meetings, make plans to revisit your Force Field Analysis when things don't seem to be working as well as the team has planned.

## Reference

1. Lewin, K. (1943). Defining the “Field at a Given Time.” *Psychological Review*, 50, 292–310. Republished in *Resolving Social Conflicts and Field Theory in Social Science*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997.