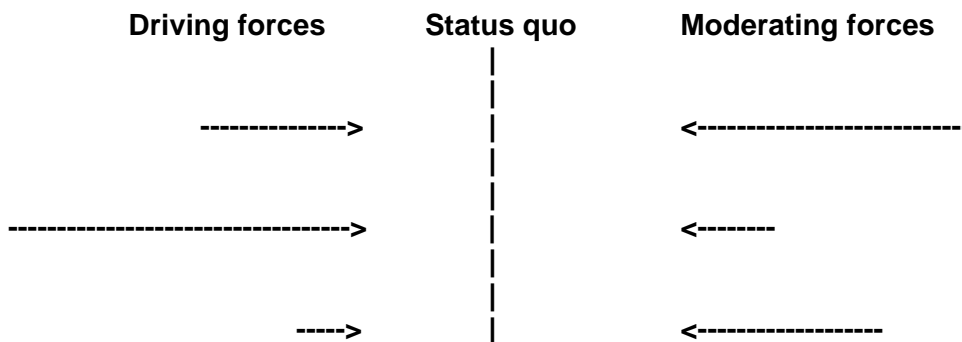# synergia

## human resource consultants

**Enhancing team performance through the
Force Field Analysis**

The Force Field Analysis, developed by organisational psychologist Kurt Lewin, is an excellent planning tool.

Draw a diagram on a page (or whiteboard or OHT) that looks something like this.

```
        Driving forces        Status quo        Moderating forces
                                  |
                                  |
        --------------->          |          <----------------------------
                                  |
                                  |
        --------------------------------->    |    <---------
                                  |
                                  |
              ----->              |          <-------------------
```

The **driving** forces are the strengths, aspects of your team culture, team members' abilities & giftings, and the policies & practices of the system within which the team operates that all have a positive effect on where the team is now.

The **moderating** forces are those restraining influences that are holding the team back from where it could be, or should be.

The varying length of each arrow indicates the degree of effect that force is exerting on the status quo.

The **status quo** is the result of these two interacting forces. It is where you are at right at this point.

In using this process, it is important to clearly identify exactly what you want to work on. The status quo can relate broadly to your team - e.g., how well you work together as a team - or it can be a specific part of your team life, - e.g., the effectiveness of communication within the team.

1. Identify the **driving forces** operating within your team's context which have brought you to this point - to where the status quo is now. E.g., what makes your team (or your team communication) as good as it is, or why is it so effective in this particular area, or what is

about the team that makes it gel so well? You should try and identify (in small groups) at least six key factors that have been directly impacting positively on the particular aspect of team life that is being examined. Each group should present their list, explaining the rationale for their choices. At this point you should try and combine duplications on a single composite diagram.

2. Again in small groups, identify the **factors that are inhibiting progress**. Why isn't the status quo further to the right? Why aren't you better than you are now? What has held you back? Once again, each group should present its responses, offer a rationale for their choice, and then a composite list of moderating forces should be drawn up.

3. Allocate the identified driving and moderating forces to each group (e.g., if you have six of each force, and three groups, allocate two of each to each group). Each group then **prepares an action plan** for each of the forces allocated to that group. The action plan should identify ways of strengthening each driving force, and reducing the impact of, or negating, each moderating force. It needs to be very specific – who will do what, by when, with whom, with what resources, how the plan will be re-visited or reviewed, etc. The more specific the plan is the more likely it is that the plan will become action. Vague proposals that don't have deadlines attached and do not have to be revisited at some specific time in the future are rarely acted upon.

This is an excellent tool for evaluating and enhancing the effectiveness of, or aspects of, team life:
- It is an empowering process, as it involves each team member in genuine decision-making and implementation.
- It secures ownership of the action plan, as the plan emerges from the bottom-up as a result of an authentic team engagement with the real issues in a process which ought to have been characterised by significant integrity[1].
- It is specific in that it identifies the real issues – positive and negative – that team members see as being at the core of whatever it is you are looking at.
- It builds unity, as it necessitates team members talking and working together in a potentially vulnerable context.
- Finally, it is positive. It calls the team to build on what it is already going well, and to work together on what it could be doing better.

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[1] Assuming that (a) participants have been honest in their responses and have identified the <u>real</u> issues, and (b) that holders of (overt or covert) power in the team have been prevented from influencing and/or contaminating the process.