



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1 - January 2013

EPICENTRAL

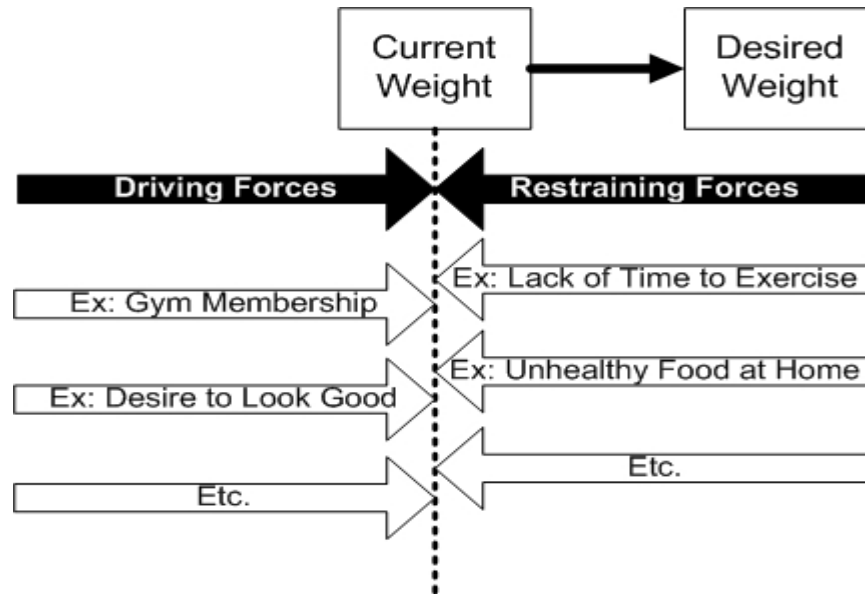
A Newsletter from Epicenter Development Group highlighting ideas that improve organizations

Welcome to Epicenter Development Group's newsletter, EPICentral. The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight fundamental ideas that have helped organizations develop and maintain great manufacturing and service operations. We hope that you find our EPICentral newsletter helpful, and we would welcome your comments on its content.

Force-Field Analysis: A Deceptively Simple Yet Powerful Tool for Improving Your Processes

A few years ago, I conducted some research to identify the "best" tools available for helping organizations make significant and sustainable improvements. Surprisingly, one of the tools that came into focus through this research was a simple technique that was invented in 1947 by a noted practitioner named Kurt Lewin. Mr. Lewin took the engineering tool called "vector analysis" and started to apply it within the fields of social problems and social change. Since then the tool, now called "Force-Field Analysis," has become a highly used technique for helping individuals and teams create change within their organizations.

A Metaphor: Let me offer a personal metaphor to help you understand the Force-Field concept. Imagine that you are interested in losing weight. How easy would this be for you to accomplish? For most people, this is a difficult task because your current weight is in balance with how you live your life. On the one side, there are **driving forces** that keep you from gaining more weight like a membership at the local gym or aspiring to look good. On the other side, there are **restraining forces** that keep you from losing weight. These can include lack of time to exercise, a house full of unhealthy food or a stressful job. The Force-Field Analysis concept would suggest that in order to lose weight, you need to identify and address those factors that both drive (help) and restrain (hinder) your efforts. By removing some restraining forces or developing new driving forces, you can, not only have your weight loss, but keep your weight at a better, sustainable level.



What this Means to Your Company: The force-field concept of driving and restraining forces is currently at work at all levels of your organization. In a way, therefore, your company's performance is exactly where it should be based upon the forces at work. In order to make significant changes to your organization, you need to both recognize these forces and either add new driving forces or remove existing restraining forces. Once you begin to do this, significant shifts in results can and will occur.

The Seven-Step Process:

1. **Identify the current situation that you would like to change and describe it in as much detail as possible.** Examples could include performance measures such as "85% on-time delivery" or "60% first-pass quality."
2. **Describe the desired condition or goal.** Examples could include a goal of "a 97% on-time delivery" or "95% first-pass quality."
3. **Brainstorm and list all of the driving and restraining forces operating in the current force field.** Driving forces could include: for example, "an effective scheduling process" or "good quality procedures." Restraining forces could include "poor supplier response time" or "inconsistent machine capabilities."
4. **Examine the forces.** Which forces are strong or weak? Which can be controlled? Which can be influenced? An understanding of the forces helps you to understand where you should focus your attention and effort. It would not make sense, for example, to focus on a weak restraining force that is not under your control.
5. **Create action plans to either add more driving forces, remove restraining forces or do both.** The goal is to shift the equilibrium of forces to drive your organization toward the desired goal. Resist the temptation of just adding more driving forces. This tends to increase resistance and tension (restraining forces).
6. **Implement the action plans developed.** During this process, begin to track movement toward the goal and make adjustments as necessary. Don't give up until you reach your goal.
7. **Stabilize the new equilibrium.** Once you have reached your goal, you need to establish systems in order to sustain your new level of performance. This could include new policies or procedures or a regular plan to audit the process to ensure that it is being strictly followed.

Final Thoughts: The Force-Field Analysis technique seems almost too simple to be effective. In my experience, however, it provides a very effective framework for solving difficult problems and designing new systems. In addition, it raises the awareness of the project team around the organizational systems that help or hinder performance and creates a method for prioritizing improvement efforts to pursue.

Next Steps

If you would like more information on this topic or other similar types of tools, please contact Bill Proctor with your request at wproctor@epicentergroup.com or 216-702-0952. You can also find previous issues of EPICentral at [Newsletters](#).

Mr. Proctor also speaks on a variety of problem-solving and system design topics that can help companies significantly increase the success and profitability of their businesses. If you are interested in having Bill speak at one of your upcoming meetings/events or would like more information on any of the speaking topics, please visit [Speaker Services](#) or you can email sales@epicentergroup.com.

Epicenter Development Group is a unique consulting firm that seamlessly integrates the disciplines of Systems Engineering and Organizational Analysis & Development to create practical design solutions to your toughest challenges. It is on the cutting edge of problem-solving solutions and the creator of a unique process called GreenRoom Engineering. This process adds greater value and cost savings for clients as compared to traditional engineering methods.

William Proctor, Epicenter's founder and president, has provided services around the country to more than 100 companies consisting of a variety of organizations; and Epicenter continues to grow as a resource for firms of all sizes.

To learn more about Epicenter Development Group, visit our website:

www.epicentergroup.com

Epicenter News

Are you ready for the 2014 economy?

Please contact us about how we might help you streamline your operations in 2013 in preparation.



Quick Links

[Comments/Suggestions](#)

[Archive](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

STAY CONNECTED

