

It's About the Leadership

T. Douglas Lawson

President

Baylor Regional Medical Center at Grapevine



Over the course of a relatively short career, I have had the unique opportunity to work for several outstanding organizations, some of which have received national recognition for excellence and one that received the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. My experience with these organizations has led to a newfound respect for using a Baldrige-based approach in our search for organizational excellence and the related competitive process of completing applications for State and National quality awards.

In my personal journey, what has resonated with me as a common denominator in these high performing organizations is the increased emphasis within human resources on recruitment, retention, and organizational development. Critical to our success is the ability to identify and recruit staff who share the common values of the organization as well as those who possess the technical skills unique to the job in question. Equally important, and I would argue more important, is our ability to grow and develop effective managers who can lead staff in very stressful and demanding environments. These leaders represent a key success factor for the organization and ultimately a strategic advantage in a very competitive healthcare market.

I truly believe that without fully engaging our front-line managers, the best staff in the world working with some of the world's most sophisticated technology will fail to maximize the potential of their organization. Our managers' understanding, acceptance, and enthusiasm for the vision, mission, values, and ultimately the organization's strategic plan is one of the keys to transforming the hospital from "Good to Great" as described by the book of the same title by Jim Collins.

The healthcare industry has worked hard to provide outstanding care and, over the last several years, the positive pressure to perform at even higher levels has resulted in our searching for new ways to raise the bar. Collins, in his book, "Good to Great" established a conceptual model for delivering "excellent" care. Collin's model begins with effective leadership and progresses through the organization's hiring practices, ensuring mutual accountability, dealing honestly and openly with competition and fostering an environment where good is simply not good enough.

As a hospital administrator, I am not at the bedside during the critical conversations that, for our patients and their families, are often some of the most important conversations of their lives. Nor do I administer medical treatment to assist patients in their road to recovery. However, I am in the unique position of leading the organization in how it selects staff, develops its leaders, builds and executes an effective rewards and recognition programs, and ensuring accountability to the highest standard of conduct and performance on a daily basis.

Getting the right staff to join you on the organizational journey seems straightforward, but as all of us know, it is one of the most challenging issues that any business deals with each day.

This challenge, combined with the unique opportunity in healthcare to serve the community is what keeps many of us coming back each day. The methods and signals sent by an effective and engaged leadership team warrants all within the organization to remain committed and focused to the task at hand. In our case, that task is being recognized as the best place to give and receive safe, quality, and compassionate health care.

What Is Force Field Analysis?

To better facilitate change and improvement, it helps to recognize the driving forces that will move change forward and the restraining forces that block progress. If the restraining forces are stronger than the driving forces, change will not happen. How can you know if that's the case? The tool used to understand and manage conflicting forces encountered during organization change is called Force Field Analysis.

Force Field Analysis begins by making a two-column list of restraining and driving forces.

For example, if we developed a project plan to improve a call center that had low customer satisfaction, we might have to confront issues of staffing, process changes that impact different shifts and sites, management concerns about increased costs, and so on (Step 1).

We must find ways to weaken the restraining forces and strengthen the driving forces (Step 2).

Naturally, many different issues and concerns would have to be analyzed. The point is to understand what's working against us and how we can lessen its impact. Also, what is working in our favor and how we can use it to succeed.

Step 1	
Restraining Forces	Driving Forces
Initial increase in cost of handling incoming calls - mgt concerns	Reduces training cost
Potential lack of backup cross site	Customer gets to an expert more quickly
Administrative overhead is greater	Maximizes resources
24x7 coverage concerns - third shift coverage	Facilitates learning & shared knowledge
May require more staff	Faster ramp-up of new people

Step 2			
Weakening Actions	Restraining Forces	Driving Forces	Strengthening Actions
Schedule reserve personnel as required. Cost will reduce with economies of scale.	Initial increase in cost of handling incoming calls – mgt concerns	Reduces training cost	Specialty training required only for support personnel who need it
Management to develop guidelines for specialties which will provide additional backup at all sites	Potential lack of backup cross-site	Customer gets to an expert more quickly	Measure and monitor service levels to allow more dynamic phone coverage
Spread admin jobs across the organization at all hours	Administrative overhead is greater	Maximizes resources among all technical specialties	Use internship program to make sure each team member is knowledgeable
Improve cross site team skills (technical training) to ensure good coverage at night	24x7 coverage concerns – third shift coverage	Facilitates learning & shared knowledge	Train personnel cross-site to share issues and customers.
Adjust cross-site scheduling by blocks of time	May require more staff	Faster ramp-up of new people. Lower cost in the long run.	Improve cross-site team skills, issue sharing.

Where is it used?

Anytime efforts are made to improve business processes it requires organizational change. The necessary change may prompt a struggle between forces that are seeking to upset the status quo and those that want to maintain it.

Therefore, before a plan is implemented, Force Field Analysis can be used to understand what the barriers to success are and how to overcome them. It’s applicable to any type of project work or general improvement effort.

What are the limitations?

Force Field Analysis requires time and effort to understand all the repercussions of a planned change. Everyone impacted and their concerns must be considered, analyzed, and planned for.

What you need to know

Force Field Analysis helps facilitate change and makes it less painful because:

- It forces people to think together about all the facets of a desired change.
- It encourages creative thinking.
- It facilitates agreement about the relative priority of factors on each side of the force field.
- It provides a starting point for action.