



FORCE FIELD: DEALING WITH TENSIONS

DIAGNOSTIC METHOD

Tensions can be seen as a piece of emergent information at a given time. A group project will go through situations with tension as part of a changing, growing, and learning process. This method allows collecting information by observing the group scenario as a force field, where different vectors tend to push in opposite directions. This facilitates the next step: to define which proposals can be developed in order to improve the group field and process.



Aims and Objectives

The purpose is to assist the group to have a more clear picture of which vectors are involved in a situation that can be experienced as a tension, a problem or blockage, and which vectors could be supporting a positive development.

It can also be used simply as a process of inquiry around what is alive in a group in any present moment.



Time

From 1 to 2 hours depending on the amount of participants. It will depend also on what topics the group wants to explore.



Materials Preparation

Papers and markers.



Target audience

Groups and trainers.



Number of Participants

Minimum 6 – maximum 20.
It can be more if more time is available.
Alternatively, a large group can be divided in smaller groups and work separately.



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**CLIPS
METHODS**



Duration	Activity
5'	INTRODUCTION
35-60'	MAPPING THE SITUATION
20-30'	ENGINES & BRAKES
30-35'	WORKING OUT THE TENSIONS
15'	DEBRIEFING IN PLENARY

INTRODUCTION

FRAMING (5 MINUTES)

This method is developed in several stages, alternating plenary work with smaller working groups. With above 12 people, the group will be divided into small groups of 3 or 4 members each.

The process follows these steps:

- map the tensions,
- identify engines and brakes,
- select the most relevant ones by the group
- elaborate specific, relevant, and feasible proposals that rebalance the field of forces in the group.

Note, that this work might not be complete today, but will probably form a good start. The process can be done over several days if the situation seems to be complex to detect and define. A "diagnostic" session can be done in the first session, defining brakes and engines; and, in the second session, the selection and elaboration of proposals can happen.

FORCE FIELD 1 - MAPPING THE SITUATION

INSTRUCTION 1 DESCRIBING THE CURRENT SITUATION (10~25 MINUTES)

The group focuses on analyzing and describing the "present situation" in the group, referring to any question or issue which concerns them. It is important that they are as concrete as possible.

It can be accompanied by drawings with colors so that more subtle information is reflected as well.

INSTRUCTION 2 DESCRIBING THE DESIRED CURRENT SITUATION (15 ~ 25 MINUTES)

Magic wand in mind!

This is about describing the "desired present situation", referring to the same question as to the previous stage.

It is important to speak about this desired situation in the PRESENT, it is not a matter of going into the future, but rather to describe the situation that is "wanted", or "believed", as if it would be real.

If there is a lot of diversity in the group, all the options are collected, but the part that gathers a bigger consensus is drawn and defined.

INSTRUCTION 3 PUTTING EVERYTHING IN COMMON (5~10 MINUTES)

All the information is put in common for clarification, observarion of what has been reflected, expressed, etc. in plenary.



FORCE FIELD 2 - ENGINES & BRAKES

INSTRUCTION 1 INQUIRE THE TENSIONS (10~20 MINUTES)

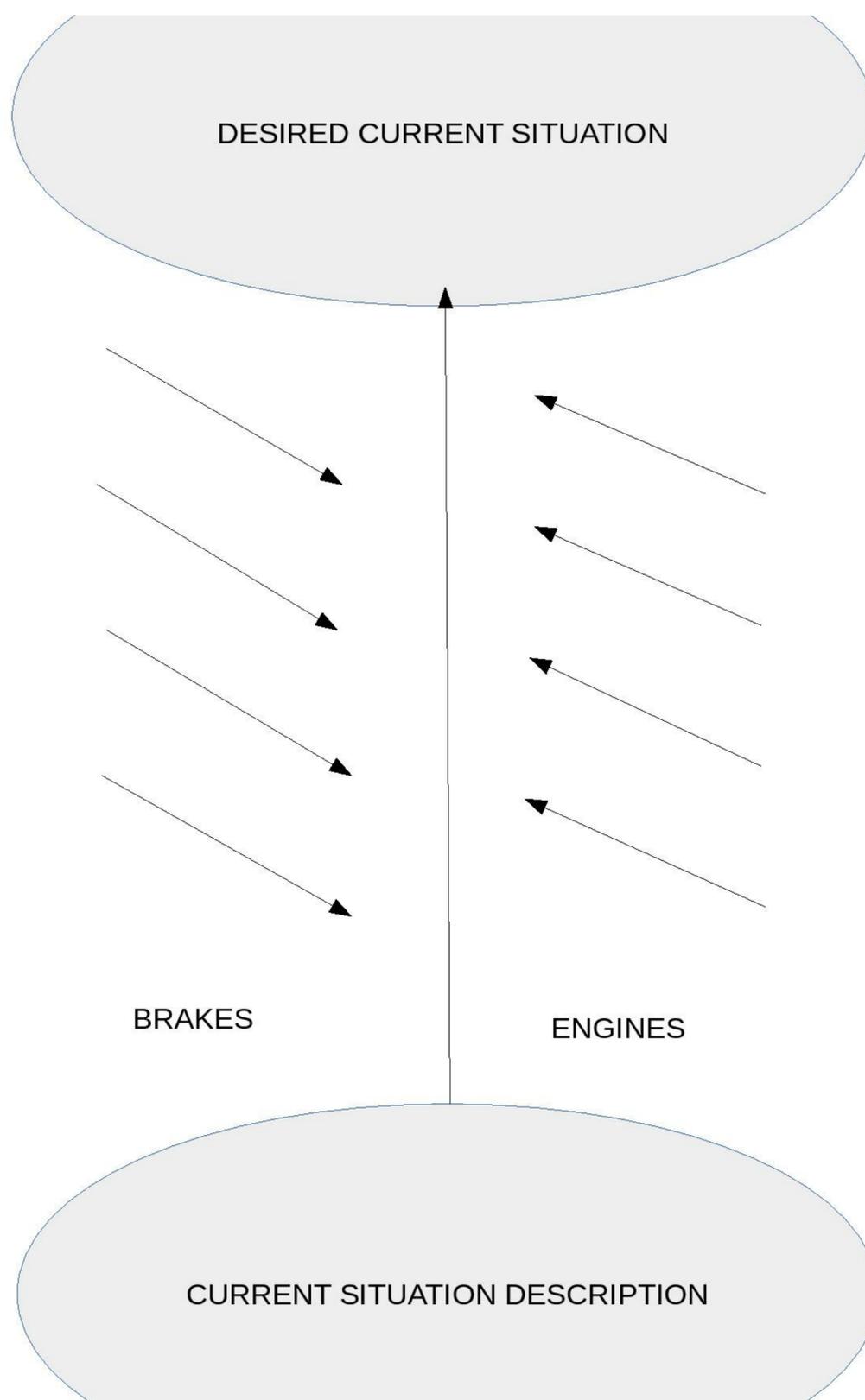
The picture (see illustration below) shows the tension between what is actually alive and what you want, or think, should be alive. This tension can be a source of discomfort in a group. The exercise uses this tension as a source of information and a motor for group improvement.

At this stage, the group investigates which are the engines that can move it to the "desired present situation", and what brakes may be acting as barriers to that movement (not more than 4 in each space). It is always important to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible.

INSTRUCTION 2 PRIORITIZE THE TENSIONS - (10 MINUTES)

The group prioritizes in plenary what they consider to be the most useful engines in the present moment and the most intense brakes (not more than 2 in each space). After a brief pooling, the facilitator can assist to propose a way to prioritize them.

Diagram showing the tensions as brakes and engines



FORCE FIELD 3 - WORKING OUT THE TENSIONS

INSTRUCTION 1 WORKING OUT THE TENSIONS (15 MINUTES)

In small groups, each group work on one of the themes:
If they are engines, what proposals can feed that specific engine?
In the case of brakes, which proposals can lighten the brake pressure?

Encourage the groups to be concrete and focus on what is really achievable.
Remind them to design an action plan for implementation in the proposal.

INSTRUCTION 2 SHARING THE PROPOSALS (5 MINUTES)

Share the proposals.
Clarify doubts about the presented proposals.

OBJECTIVES OR PROPOSALS SHOULD BE 'SMART' + C

Specific. How much (e.g., 10%) of what is to be achieved (e.g., what behavior of whom or what outcome) by when?

Measurable. Information concerning the objective can be collected, detected, or obtained.

Achievable. It is feasible to pull them off.

Relevant to the mission. A clear understanding of how these objectives fit the overall vision and mission of the group.

Timed. A timeline (a portion of which is made clear in the objectives) by which they will be achieved.

Challenging. They stretch the group a bit to set its aims on significant improvements that are important to the members.

INSTRUCTION 3 - COLLECTIVE DECISION - 10~15 MINUTES

The group comes designs a collective decision. The decision covers what proposals are chosen to be implemented, when, how and who takes care of each process. The decision is taken by "consent" (see the method "consent").

FORCE FIELD DEBRIEFING

DEBRIEFING (15 MINUTES)

Debriefing in the plenary: How was it for you? And for the group?

Celebration.

THE ORIGIN OF "FORCE FIELDS"

The "Force fields" diagnostic method was initially developed by Kurt Lewin, within the business management field. But later on, it has been adapted to the work of group facilitation.

