Business Management Units 3 & 4

Chapter 11 — Force Field Analysis and forces for change

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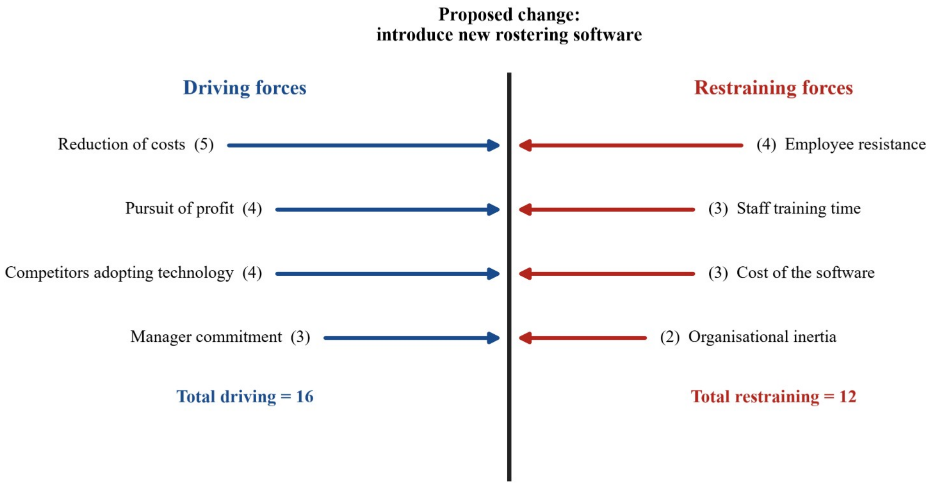
Theory

When a business considers a change, some pressures push **for** the change while others push **against** it. **Force Field Analysis (FFA)**, developed by **Kurt Lewin**, is a decision-making tool that identifies and weighs these opposing pressures so that a manager can judge whether a proposed change is likely to succeed and decide how to make it work. The two sets of pressures are:

- **Driving forces** — factors that **support, encourage or push for** the change (for example, the pursuit of profit, reduction of costs, or competitors adopting new technology).
- **Restraining forces** — factors that **resist, oppose or work against** the change (for example, employee resistance, the cost of the change, or organisational inertia).

Lewin argued that a situation sits in **equilibrium** while the driving and restraining forces are balanced. Change occurs only when the **driving forces outweigh the restraining forces**. Importantly, a manager can shift the balance either by **strengthening the driving forces** *or* by **reducing the restraining forces** — and Lewin held that **reducing the restraining forces is usually more effective**, because simply adding driving forces tends to increase tension and resistance.



Driving (16) > Restraining (12) → change is likely to succeed

The key principles — the four steps. The study design specifies that Force Field Analysis involves weighting, ranking, implementing a response and evaluating the response.

1. **Weighting.** Once the driving and restraining forces have been identified, each force is given a **numerical value (a weight)** that represents **how strong it is** — for example, on a scale of 1 (weak) to 5 (very strong). The total weight of the driving forces is then compared with the total weight of the restraining forces. If the driving total is greater, the change is more likely to succeed.
2. **Ranking.** The forces are then placed **in order of their weight** (from strongest to weakest), so the manager can see **which forces matter most**. Ranking directs attention to the **most significant** driving forces to build on and the **most significant** restraining forces to address, rather than wasting effort on minor forces.
3. **Implementing a response.** The manager **acts** on the analysis by developing strategies to **strengthen the key driving forces and/or reduce or remove the key restraining forces** — for example, communicating benefits to reduce employee resistance, or providing training to overcome a skills barrier. What is implemented here is the **response**, not the change: the change has not yet begun.
4. **Evaluating the response.** As the response takes effect, the manager **re-assesses the driving and restraining forces** to judge whether the response has actually **shifted the balance**. This is an **ongoing** check of whether the situation is **now conducive to the change beginning**: only once the driving forces are judged to **outweigh** the restraining forces does the change go ahead. If the restraining forces still dominate, the manager responds further and evaluates again.

All four steps therefore take place **before the change is commenced** — Force Field Analysis determines whether and when a change should begin, not whether a change that has already happened worked.

Keep straight.

- **Weighting ≠ ranking.** *Weighting* assigns each force a value for its **strength**; *ranking* then puts the forces **in order** of those values. Weighting comes first; ranking uses the weights.
- FFA is a **decision-making and planning tool**, not a change model in itself — it helps a manager *decide whether and how* to proceed with a proposed change.
- **Reducing a restraining force is generally better than adding a driving force**, because adding pressure can heighten resistance, whereas removing an obstacle lowers it.
- **"Implement" and "evaluate" both refer to the *response*, not to the change.** *Implementing a response* does not mean starting the change; it means acting to shift the balance of forces. *Evaluating the response* does not mean checking whether the change succeeded; it asks **have the driving forces now overtaken the restraining forces, so the change can begin?** Reviewing whether a change achieved its objective afterwards is done with **key performance indicators** — a separate idea that does not belong in an FFA answer.

Contemporary example — Origin Energy, May 2024

Origin Energy is an Australian electricity generator and energy retailer; in 2024 it operated the Eraring coal-fired power station in New South Wales.

On 23 May 2024 the NSW Government announced an agreement with Origin that deferred Eraring's scheduled closure from 19 August 2025 to 19 August 2027 — a two-year extension. The government cited analysis by the Australian Energy Market Operator finding that, without Eraring, the state faced electricity reliability risks from 2025. Under the agreement the state made no upfront payments; instead Origin could opt in each year — by 31 March in 2025 and in 2026 — and, if it did, claim up to 80 per cent of Eraring's operating losses from the government, capped at $225 million a year, while sharing up to $40 million a year of any profits.

Read through Lewin's framework, the reliability shortfall was a heavily weighted **driving force** for deferring the closure, while the financial risk of continuing to run an ageing plant that Origin had already scheduled to retire acted as a **restraining force**. The capped loss-sharing arrangement is a **response that reduces a restraining force** rather than one that adds a driving force — the approach Lewin regarded as more effective, because it removes an obstacle instead of applying pressure. The annual opt-in points then work like **evaluating the response**: the balance of forces is re-assessed before each further commitment is made. That re-assessment has kept moving the date — in January 2026 Origin notified the market operator that all four Eraring units would now run until 30 April 2029.

Source: NSW Government, NSW Government secures two-year extension to Eraring Power Station, 23 May 2024 — https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/nsw-government-secures-two-year-extension-to-eraring-power-station. Source: Power Technology, "Origin to extend operation of Eraring Power Station units until April 2029", 20 January 2026 — https://www.power-technology.com/news/origin-extend-operations-eraring-power-station/. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Rosterly Cafés, a chain of 20 cafés, is considering introducing new rostering software. Management identifies the driving forces as reduction of costs (weight 5), pursuit of profit (4), competitors adopting technology (4) and manager commitment (3); and the restraining forces as employee resistance (4), staff training time (3), the cost of the software (3) and organisational inertia (2). Use Force Field Analysis to advise whether the change should proceed.

Working	Comment
Total driving = 5 + 4 + 4 + 3 = **16**.	Add the weights of all driving forces.
Total restraining = 4 + 3 + 3 + 2 = **12**.	Add the weights of all restraining forces.
Driving (16) > restraining (12), so the change is **likely to succeed**.	Compare the totals — the higher total wins.

Working	Comment
The strongest restraining force is **employee resistance (4)**, so management should respond by reducing it (e.g. communicating the benefits and involving staff).	Rank the restraining forces; target the largest.
∴ the change should proceed, with action taken to reduce employee resistance.	State a clear, justified recommendation.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how a manager would carry out the four steps of Force Field Analysis when deciding whether to relocate a warehouse.

Working	Comment
Weighting — identify the driving forces (e.g. lower rent, closer to customers) and restraining forces (e.g. moving costs, staff travel), and give each a strength value.	Step 1: score each force.
Ranking — order the forces by weight to see which driving and restraining forces are most significant.	Step 2: put them in order.
Implementing a response — build on the strongest driving forces and reduce the strongest restraining forces (e.g. subsidise staff travel to cut the "staff travel" restraint).	Step 3: act on the analysis.
Evaluating the response — as the response takes effect, re-weigh the forces (has subsidising travel actually lowered the "staff travel" restraint?), and relocate only once the driving forces clearly outweigh the restraining forces.	Step 4: re-check the balance — the move begins only when it favours the change.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Distinguish between weighting and ranking in Force Field Analysis.

Weighting is the step in which each driving and restraining force is given a **numerical value that represents its strength** (for example, from 1 to 5), allowing the total strength of the driving forces to be compared with the total strength of the restraining forces. **Ranking** is the step in which the forces are then arranged **in order of those weights**, from strongest to weakest, so the manager can identify **which forces are most important** to act on. The key difference is that weighting *measures the strength* of each force, whereas ranking *orders the forces* by that strength; weighting is done first and ranking uses its results. ∴ weighting assigns strength, while ranking prioritises.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

A manager says, "Force Field Analysis just means adding more reasons to change until they outnumber the reasons against." Evaluate this statement.

The statement is **partly correct but incomplete**. It is true that a change is more likely to succeed when the driving forces **outweigh** the restraining forces, so building up driving forces is one valid response. **However**, the statement misrepresents Force Field Analysis in two ways. First, FFA is a **structured process** of identifying forces, **weighting** them by strength, **ranking** them, implementing a response and **evaluating** it — not simply "adding reasons". Second, Lewin argued that **reducing the restraining forces is usually more effective** than adding driving forces, because piling on pressure to change tends to **increase resistance**, whereas removing obstacles lowers it. ∴ while outweighing the restraining forces is the goal, the statement is an oversimplification that ignores both the method and the preference for reducing restraining forces.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define each of the following: (a) driving force; (b) restraining force.

Q2. Identify who developed the Force Field Analysis theory.

Q3. List the four key steps of Force Field Analysis, in order.

Q4. A business is deciding whether to introduce a new uniform. It identifies driving forces with a total weight of 14 and restraining forces with a total weight of 9. (a) State whether the change is likely to succeed. (b) Justify your answer.

Q5. Explain the difference between *weighting* and *ranking* the forces.

Q6. A manager wants to shift the balance towards a proposed change. (a) Identify the **two** ways the balance can be shifted. (b) State which Lewin regarded as more effective, and why.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Describe the purpose of Force Field Analysis. *(2 marks)*

Q8. Distinguish between a driving force and a restraining force. *(4 marks)*

Q9. Explain the step of *weighting* in Force Field Analysis. *(3 marks)*

Q10. Explain why ranking the forces is a useful step for a manager. *(3 marks)*

Q11. *Case study.* **GreenLeaf Grocers** is a supermarket chain planning to replace single-use plastic bags with reusable ones. Management identifies the driving forces as societal attitudes (weight 5), reduction of long-term costs (3) and manager commitment (3); and the restraining forces as customer inconvenience (4), the cost of the reusable bags (3) and employee retraining (2). (a) Calculate the total driving and total restraining force weights. *(2 marks)* (b) Using Force Field Analysis, analyse whether the change is likely to succeed. *(3 marks)* (c) Propose **one** response GreenLeaf Grocers could take to improve the likelihood of the change succeeding, and justify it. *(3 marks)*

Q12. Explain why Lewin argued that reducing restraining forces is usually more effective than increasing driving forces. *(3 marks)*

Q13. Explain how the final step of Force Field Analysis, *evaluating the response*, is carried out. *(3 marks)*

Q14. A manager weights the forces for a proposed change but never ranks them or implements a response. Explain **two** problems this creates. *(4 marks)*

Q15. Distinguish between *implementing a response* and *evaluating a response* in Force Field Analysis. *(4 marks)*

Q16. Analyse how the weighting and ranking steps together help a manager decide where to focus their efforts. *(4 marks)*

Q17. A business finds that its driving forces total 11 and its restraining forces total 15 for a proposed change. Analyse what this result tells the manager and what actions Force Field Analysis suggests they could take. *(4 marks)*

Q18. Evaluate the usefulness of Force Field Analysis as a tool for a manager planning a major change. *(6 marks)*

Q19. *Extended response.* **Brightspark Electrical**, a manufacturer of 300 staff, plans to automate part of its production line. The owner is aware of strong employee resistance and limited finance, but faces rising labour costs and aggressive competitors. Explain how the owner could apply the key principles of Force Field Analysis **before deciding** whether to proceed with automation, referring to all four steps of the theory. *(10 marks)*

Q20. *Contemporary example.* On 23 May 2024 the NSW Government announced an agreement with **Origin Energy** that deferred the closure of the Eraring power station from August 2025 to August 2027. Rather than paying Origin upfront, the government agreed to meet a capped share of any operating losses the plant made. Analyse this arrangement using Force Field Analysis. *(5 marks)*

Answers

Q1. (a) A factor that supports or pushes for a change. (b) A factor that resists or works against a change. **Q2.** Kurt Lewin. **Q3.** Weighting; ranking; implementing a response; evaluating the response. **Q4.** (a) Likely to succeed. (b) The driving forces (14) outweigh the restraining forces (9). **Q5.** Weighting gives each force a value for its strength; ranking then orders the forces by those values. **Q6.** (a) Strengthen the driving forces; reduce the restraining forces. (b) Reducing restraining forces, because adding driving forces can increase resistance/tension. **Q7.** Model response in solutions. **Q8.** A driving force supports/pushes for the change; a restraining force resists/works against it — they push in opposite directions on the same proposal. See solutions. **Q9.** Each force is given a numerical value for its strength; totals are compared. See solutions. **Q10.** It shows which forces matter most, so effort targets the significant ones. See solutions. **Q11.** (a) Driving = 11; restraining = 9. (b) Driving (11) > restraining (9) → likely to succeed. (c) e.g. reduce “customer inconvenience” by communicating/phasing in the change. See solutions. **Q12.** Adding driving forces raises tension/resistance; reducing restraining forces lowers obstacles. See solutions. **Q13.** Re-assess the driving and restraining forces after the response; the change begins only once driving outweighs restraining. See solutions. **Q14.** e.g. cannot prioritise the most important forces; the analysis never leads to action. See solutions. **Q15.** Implementing = acting to strengthen driving / reduce restraining forces; evaluating = re-checking whether that action has made driving outweigh restraining, so the change can begin. See solutions. **Q16.** Weighting measures strength and ranking orders it, so together they show where effort will have the greatest effect. See solutions. **Q17.** Restraining (15) > driving (11), so the change is likely to fail as planned; reduce restraining and/or strengthen driving forces. See solutions. **Q18.** Evaluation — strengths (structured, prioritises, visual) and weaknesses (weights subjective, static snapshot). See solutions. **Q19.** Model response in solutions. **Q20.** Driving force = the reliability shortfall; restraining force = Origin’s financial risk. The capped loss-sharing reduces a restraining force rather than adding a driving force — Lewin’s preferred approach. See solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. Force Field Analysis is a **decision-making tool** that helps a manager decide **whether and how to proceed with a change** by identifying the **driving forces** (pushing for the change) and **restraining forces** (resisting it), weighting and comparing them to judge whether the change is likely to succeed.

Q8. A **driving force** is a factor that **supports, encourages or pushes for** a proposed change — for example the reduction of costs, the pursuit of profit, or competitors adopting new technology — and it makes the change **more likely to go ahead**. A **restraining force** is a factor that **resists, opposes or works against** that same proposed change — for example employee resistance, the cost of the change, or organisational inertia — and it makes the change **less likely to go ahead**. The key difference is therefore the **direction in which each pushes**: driving forces move the business **towards** the change, whereas restraining forces hold it at the **status quo**. In Force Field Analysis the two are weighted and totalled against each other, and the change is judged likely to succeed only where the driving total **outweighs** the restraining total.

Q9. In the **weighting** step, each driving and restraining force that has been identified is given a **numerical value representing its strength** (for example, on a scale of 1 to 5). The weights of the driving forces are **totalled** and compared with the total of the restraining forces; if the driving total is greater, the change is more likely to succeed. Weighting therefore turns a list of forces into a comparison of their overall strength.

Q10. Ranking places the forces **in order of their weight**, from strongest to weakest. This is useful because it shows the manager **which forces are most significant**, so they can concentrate on **building on the strongest driving forces** and **addressing the strongest restraining forces** rather than spreading effort evenly across minor forces. It makes the manager’s response more efficient and targeted.

Q11. (a) Total driving = 5 + 3 + 3 = **11**; total restraining = 4 + 3 + 2 = **9**. (b) Because the driving forces (11) **outweigh** the restraining forces (9), Force Field Analysis suggests the change to reusable bags is **likely to succeed**. (c) GreenLeaf Grocers could **reduce the “customer inconvenience” restraining force (4)** — the largest restraint — by **communicating the environmental benefits and offering a cheap reusable bag or a small discount for bringing one**. This is justified because reducing the strongest restraining force lowers overall opposition and, per Lewin, is more effective than simply adding driving forces, further improving the likelihood of success.

Q12. Lewin argued that **increasing driving forces adds pressure** on employees to change, which tends to **provoke greater resistance and tension** as people push back against being forced. In contrast, **reducing a restraining force removes an obstacle** (for example, training staff removes a skills barrier), which **lowers opposition without raising tension**. Because it addresses the cause of resistance rather than overpowering it, reducing restraining forces is usually the **more effective and sustainable** way to shift the balance towards change.

Q13. Evaluating the response is carried out **as the response from step 3 takes effect, and before the change itself begins**. The manager **re-assesses the driving and restraining forces** to see whether the response has actually shifted the balance — for example, whether an information campaign has brought the weight of employee resistance down from a 4 to a 2. The evaluation is **ongoing**: the manager keeps monitoring the relative strength of the two sets of forces, and **only once the driving forces are judged to outweigh the restraining forces does the change go ahead**. If the restraining forces still dominate, the manager takes further action — reducing another restraint or strengthening a driver — and evaluates again.

Q14. First, without **ranking**, the manager cannot tell **which forces are most significant**, so they may waste effort on minor forces while neglecting the strongest restraining force that most threatens the change. Second, without **implementing a response**, the analysis **never leads to action** — the forces are measured but nothing is done to strengthen driving forces or reduce restraining ones, so the change is no more likely to succeed than before. The analysis therefore produces information but delivers no benefit.

Q15. Implementing a response is the step in which the manager **takes action** on the analysis — developing strategies to **strengthen the key driving forces and/or reduce the key restraining forces** (for example, running an information campaign to cut employee resistance). It is the **response** that is implemented, not the change. **Evaluating a response** is the **later** step in which the manager **re-assesses the two sets of forces** to judge whether that action has worked — that is, whether the driving forces **now outweigh** the restraining forces, so that the change can begin. The key difference is that implementing **acts to shift the balance** of forces, whereas evaluating **checks whether the balance has shifted far enough** to proceed; implementing comes first, and **both occur before the change itself is commenced**.

Q16. Weighting gives each force a value for its **strength**, and **ranking** orders the forces by those values, so **together** they reveal **where a manager's efforts will have the greatest effect**. By weighting, the manager can see the overall balance of forces; by ranking, they can see that, say, the strongest restraining force scores a 5 while others score only 1 or 2. This relationship means the manager can **direct scarce time and resources at the few forces that most determine the outcome** — reducing the highest-weighted restraining force and reinforcing the highest-weighted driving force — rather than treating all forces as equally important, which makes the change effort far more effective.

Q17. A result where **restraining forces (15) outweigh driving forces (11)** tells the manager that, as things stand, the **change is likely to fail** because opposition to it is stronger than support for it. Force Field Analysis suggests two courses of action to reverse this: **reduce the restraining forces** — ideally the highest-weighted ones — for example by addressing employee concerns or removing a cost barrier; and/or **strengthen the driving forces**, for example by emphasising the competitive or financial benefits. Because reducing restraining forces avoids increasing tension, the manager should prioritise lowering the strongest restraints until the driving total exceeds the restraining total, then proceed.

Q18. Force Field Analysis has clear **strengths** as a planning tool. It provides a **structured, visual way** to identify the pressures for and against a change, and by weighting and ranking the forces it helps a manager **prioritise** the issues that most affect success and decide **where to act**. It also encourages the manager to consider **reducing resistance**, not just applying pressure, which supports smoother change. **However**, it has **weaknesses**: the weights are **subjective estimates**, so different managers may score the same forces differently and reach different conclusions; it captures only a **snapshot** and may not reflect forces that change over time; and it can **oversimplify** a complex situation into a single comparison of totals. **On balance**, Force Field Analysis is a **useful** tool for structuring a change decision and directing effort, provided the manager treats the weightings as a guide rather than a precise measure and updates the analysis as the situation changes. *(Full marks require: at least two developed strengths and two weaknesses, and a justified overall judgement.)*

Q19. *Model response (10 marks).* The owner of **Brightspark Electrical** can use Force Field Analysis to decide **whether to proceed** with automating the production line by working through its four steps, all of which are completed **before** any automation begins. **First, weighting.** The owner identifies the **driving forces** — rising labour costs, aggressive competitors, and the pursuit of lower long-term costs — and the **restraining forces** — strong employee resistance and limited finance — and gives each a strength value, for example on a scale of 1 to 5. The owner then totals the two sets of weights and compares them; if, say, the driving forces total more than the restraining forces, automation is likely to succeed, but if the strong employee resistance and finance constraints outweigh the drivers, the change is at risk as planned. **Second, ranking.** The owner orders the forces by weight to see which matter most — here, **employee resistance** and **limited finance** are likely the highest-weighted restraining forces, and **rising labour costs** a leading driver. Ranking tells the owner exactly where to concentrate effort. **Third, implementing a response.** Guided by the ranking, the owner acts to **reduce the strongest restraining forces** — for example, communicating the reasons for automation and offering retraining or redeployment to reduce employee resistance, and staging the investment or seeking finance to ease the funding constraint — and to **build on the strongest driving forces**, such as highlighting the cost and competitive benefits. Consistent with Lewin, the owner focuses first on **reducing resistance** rather than merely adding pressure, because forcing the change would likely deepen employee opposition. **Fourth, evaluating the response.** As those responses take effect — and **before any machinery is switched on** — the owner **re-weighs the driving and restraining forces** to judge whether the response has worked: have retraining and redeployment brought employee resistance down from, say, a 5 to a 2, and has staged investment eased the finance restraint? This monitoring is **ongoing**, and **only once the owner judges that the driving forces outweigh the restraining forces should automation commence**; if resistance still dominates, the owner responds further and evaluates again. By moving through weighting, ranking, implementing a response and evaluating that response, the owner turns a difficult, contested decision into a planned process that establishes **whether the conditions for automation are favourable before the change is begun**. *(Full marks require: all four steps correctly named and explained in order; recognition that all four occur before the change is commenced; sustained application to Brightspark's specific driving and restraining forces; and a justified account of how FFA determines whether the conditions for the change are favourable.)*

Q20. The proposed change being weighed was **deferring Eraring's closure** beyond the retirement date already scheduled for 2025. The principal **driving force** was the **electricity reliability risk** to New South Wales identified by the Australian Energy Market Operator — a **heavily weighted** force, because a supply shortfall would affect the entire state. The principal **restraining force** was the **financial risk to Origin** of continuing to operate an ageing plant it had planned to retire, since any operating losses would fall on the business. Force Field Analysis indicates that the balance could be shifted either by **strengthening the driving forces** — for example, by emphasising the public interest in reliable supply — or by **reducing the restraining forces**. The capped loss-sharing arrangement does the latter: by meeting a limited share of Eraring's operating losses, it **lowers the weight of the financial restraining force** without adding pressure on the business. This is consistent with Lewin's view that **reducing a restraining force is usually more effective than adding a driving force**, because removing an obstacle lowers opposition, whereas applying pressure tends to increase it. The annual decision points built into the agreement also resemble **evaluating the response**, since the balance of forces is re-assessed before each further commitment. ∴ the arrangement is best analysed as an **implemented response targeting the strongest restraining force**, shifting the balance so that the deferral could proceed. *(Full marks require: identification of at least one driving and one restraining force in the Eraring context; recognition that the capped loss-sharing reduces a restraining force rather than adding a driving force; and a link to Lewin's preference for reducing restraining forces.)*

Chapter 11 Force Field Analysis and forces for change — 11B Driving forces for change

Theory

A **driving force** is any factor that **supports, encourages or pushes a business towards a proposed change**. It works in favour of the change and, if strong enough, moves the business away from its current position towards a new one. Driving forces are the pressures a manager identifies on the "for change" side of a situation — they sit **opposite** the restraining forces, which push against the change. Where the combined driving forces are strong enough to overcome the forces resisting change, the business is likely to change.

Driving forces arise both from **inside** the business (internal drivers, over which the business has more control) and from **outside** it (external drivers, over which it has little control). The study design prescribes **eleven** driving forces. Each is explained below as a pressure that pushes a business to change.

- **Owners.** Owners (sole traders, partners or shareholders) provide the business's capital and expect a return on it, so they push for change to **protect or grow their investment** — for example demanding higher profits, expansion or a new strategic direction. When a business is sold, **new owners** frequently drive change by imposing their own objectives and expectations.
- **Managers.** Managers are responsible for the performance of the business, so they act as a driving force when they **initiate change to achieve business objectives** — for instance restructuring operations, adopting new strategies, or responding to disappointing key performance indicators. A manager's vision, ambition and drive to improve performance can be a powerful internal push for change.
- **Employees.** Employees can drive change by **pushing for improvements** to their pay, conditions or the way work is organised — often through their representatives or unions — and by **contributing ideas** from their frontline experience that lead to better products and processes. Pressure from staff for a safer, fairer or more flexible workplace can force management to change.
- **Competitors.** The actions of rival businesses are a major external driver. When competitors **release new products, cut prices, adopt new technology or improve their service**, a business must change to remain competitive and avoid losing sales, customers and market share. Competitive pressure pushes a business to match or better what its rivals are doing.
- **Legislation.** New or amended laws and regulations (for example workplace safety, employment, consumer, environmental or tax law) **compel a business to change** its practices in order to comply. Because non-compliance can bring fines or legal action, a change in legislation is a driving force the business cannot ignore.
- **Pursuit of profit.** The desire to **increase profit** drives change, because profit rises when revenue grows or expenses fall. A business chasing higher profit may change by expanding into new markets, launching new products or reorganising to lift sales. The pursuit of profit is one of the most common reasons a business seeks change.
- **Reduction of costs.** The drive to **lower operating costs** pushes a business to change the way it operates — for example by automating tasks, restructuring the workforce, relocating, or sourcing cheaper inputs. Lower costs improve competitiveness and widen profit margins, so cost pressure is a strong force for change.
- **Globalisation.** Globalisation — the growing **integration of national economies and markets** — drives change by opening the business to overseas customers, exposing it to overseas competitors, and giving it access to cheaper inputs and labour abroad. To take advantage of, or defend itself against, an increasingly global marketplace, a business is pushed to change how and where it operates.
- **Technology.** The development of new technologies (such as automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and e-commerce) drives change by offering **faster, cheaper or better ways of operating**. To capture these efficiency and quality gains — and to keep pace with rivals who adopt them — a business is pushed to update its equipment, systems and processes.

- **Innovation.** Innovation — the **creation of new or improved products, services and processes** — drives change both when a business pursues its own new ideas and when it must respond to the innovations of others. Bringing an innovative product or method to market requires the business to change, and being out-innovated by a competitor forces it to change to keep up.
- **Societal attitudes.** Shifts in the **values, beliefs and expectations of the community** — such as greater concern for the environment, ethical sourcing, health or social justice — push a business to change so that it continues to meet customer and community expectations. A business that ignores changing societal attitudes risks losing customers and damaging its reputation.

Keep straight.

- A **driving force pushes *for* a change; a restraining force pushes *against* it.** The two act in opposite directions on the same proposed change. Calling a factor "driving" only makes sense in relation to a *particular* change — the same pressure might support one change and resist another.
- **Some parties can be *either* a driving or a restraining force. Managers, employees and legislation** appear on *both* lists. Managers may champion a change (driving) or resist losing authority (restraining); employees may push for change (driving) or resist it out of fear of the unknown (restraining); and legislation may *require* a change (driving) or *prevent* one (restraining). Which role a factor plays depends on the specific change and how the party is affected.
- **Do not default to "pursuit of profit".** When a scenario names a *specific* driver — a retiring owner, an aggressive competitor, a new law — identify *that* force rather than reaching for "pursuit of profit". The pursuit of profit is a genuine driving force, but it is not the answer to every change.
- **Internal versus external — classify by *origin*.** Owners, managers, employees, the pursuit of profit and the reduction of costs originate *inside* the business; competitors, legislation, globalisation and societal attitudes originate *outside* it. **Technology** and **innovation** can sit on either side: they are *external* when a new technology or a rival's new idea appears in the market and forces the business to keep pace, and *internal* when the business itself decides to invest in new equipment or develops its own new product or process. Classify a force by **where the pressure originates**, not by its label. A business generally has more control over its internal drivers than its external ones.

Contemporary example — Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, July 2025

Australian Red Cross Lifeblood is a not-for-profit blood service that collects blood and plasma donations across Australia. On 18 June 2025 it announced that, from **14 July 2025**, most sexual activity wait times for **plasma** donation would be removed, so that most people — including gay and bisexual men, and people taking PrEP — could donate plasma without a wait period, provided they met the other eligibility criteria. Lifeblood estimated at the time that more than 600,000 people had been covered by the previous wait times, and projected around 24,000 additional donors and 95,000 additional plasma donations each year. It stated that extensive research and modelling showed the change would not affect the safety of the plasma supply. In the same announcement, Lifeblood said the Therapeutic Goods Administration had approved a separate submission to replace the gender-based rules for blood and platelet donation with questions put to all donors.

Two of the prescribed **driving forces** are visible here. **Societal attitudes** — a shift in the community's values and expectations about who should be able to donate — is an **external** driver that pushed for the existing rule to be reconsidered. **Innovation** supplied the means: Lifeblood's own research produced an **improved screening process** that assessed each donor's activity rather than their gender, and because the organisation generated it itself, that pressure originated **internally**. Acting together, the two forces were strong enough to change the rule from a set date.

Source: Australian Red Cross Lifeblood, Lifeblood announces changes to sexual activity rules for blood and plasma donation, 18 June 2025 — https://www.lifeblood.com.au/news-and-stories/media-centre/media-releases/lifeblood-announces-changes-sexual-activity-rules-blood-and-plasma. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Trailblaze Outdoors, a chain of camping-equipment stores, has seen two new online retailers undercut its prices and win over its younger customers. Explain how competitors act as a driving force for change at Trailblaze Outdoors.

Working	Comment
A driving force is a factor that pushes a business towards change; competitors are an **external** driving force.	Start by naming the type of force.
The two online rivals are **undercutting prices and taking younger customers**, so Trailblaze is losing sales and market share.	Identify the specific competitor pressure in the scenario.
To stay competitive and win those customers back, Trailblaze is pushed to change — for example by launching its own online store or matching the lower prices.	Link the pressure to the push for change (the causal step).
∴ competitor activity drives Trailblaze to change, because failing to respond would mean a continued loss of sales and market share.	State the conclusion, applied to the business.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Explain how the **pursuit of profit** and the **reduction of costs** can each drive a business to change.

Working	Comment
Both are **internal** driving forces linked to a business's financial performance.	Classify the two forces.
Pursuit of profit — wanting higher profit pushes the business to change in ways that lift revenue, such as entering new markets or launching new products.	Explain the first force as a push for change.
Reduction of costs — wanting lower expenses pushes the business to change how it operates, such as automating tasks or sourcing cheaper inputs, which widens the profit margin.	Explain the second force as a push for change.
Both improve the bottom line, but one works by **raising revenue** and the other by **lowering costs**.	Note how the two differ while both drive change.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Distinguish between **legislation** and **societal attitudes** as driving forces for change.

Legislation is an external driving force in which a new or amended **law or regulation compels a business to change** its practices in order to comply — for example, a stricter workplace-safety law that forces the business to change its procedures. Compliance is **compulsory**, and failing to change risks fines or legal action. **Societal attitudes** are an external driving force in which a **shift in the community's values, beliefs and expectations** — such as growing environmental concern — pushes a business to change **voluntarily** so that it keeps meeting customer and community expectations; here the pressure is commercial and reputational rather than legal. The key difference is that legislation **requires** change through the force of law, whereas societal attitudes **encourage** change through the risk of lost customers and a damaged reputation. ∴ legislation is a compulsory driver, while societal attitudes are a persuasive one.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

"Because employees are listed as a driving force for change, they will always support a business's proposed changes." Discuss.

The statement is **only partly correct**. Employees genuinely can be a **driving force**: they may push for change by demanding better pay or conditions, by campaigning through their union, or by contributing ideas from their frontline experience that lead the business to improve its products or processes — so in these cases staff do *support* change. **However**, the claim that they will *always* support change is wrong, because **employees also appear as a restraining force**. Faced with a change that threatens their job security, requires retraining, or disrupts familiar routines, employees frequently **resist** — through low morale, opposition or industrial action. Whether employees drive or restrain a change therefore depends on **how the specific change affects them**: a change that benefits staff will be supported, while one that threatens them will be resisted. ∴ employees are not an automatic source of support; they can be either a driving or a restraining force depending on the change.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define the term *driving force* for change.

Q2. The study design lists eleven driving forces for change. (a) List **any five** of them. (b) Classify each of your five as either an **internal** or an **external** driving force.

Q3. For each of the following, name the driving force being described: (a) a rival business launches a cheaper product, forcing the business to respond; (b) a new environmental law requires the business to change its packaging; (c) shareholders demand a higher return on their investment.

Q4. Three of the prescribed driving forces can also act as restraining forces. (a) Identify the **three** parties or factors that can be either. (b) For **one** of them, briefly explain how it could act as a driving force in one situation and a restraining force in another.

Q5. A frozen-yoghurt franchise decides to switch to compostable cups after customers repeatedly complain about its plastic waste. (a) Identify the driving force at work. (b) Explain how this force is pushing the business to change.

Q6. Explain the difference between the **pursuit of profit** and the **reduction of costs** as driving forces for change.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Describe how **technology** can act as a driving force for change. *(2 marks)*

Q8. Distinguish between an **internal** and an **external** driving force for change, using an example of each. *(4 marks)*

Q9. Explain how **globalisation** can drive a business to change. *(3 marks)*

Q10. Explain how **owners** can act as a driving force for change. *(3 marks)*

Q11. Explain how **managers** can be *both* a driving force and a restraining force for change. *(4 marks)*

Q12. *Case study.* **Kettle & Crumb** is a family-owned chain of 14 bakery cafés. Its long-serving founder has just retired and sold the business to an investment group that expects a 20 per cent lift in profit within two years. The new owners note that two rival chains have introduced app-based ordering, that younger customers increasingly want plant-based options, and that a new state law will require kilojoule labelling on all menus. (a) Identify **three** different driving forces for change acting on Kettle & Crumb. *(3 marks)* (b) Explain how **one** of these forces is pushing the business to change. *(3 marks)* (c) The new owners assume that “the pursuit of profit is the only real reason we need to change”. Analyse why this view is mistaken, with reference to the case study. *(4 marks)*

Q13. Explain how **competitors** can act as a driving force for change, using an example. *(3 marks)*

Q14. Compare **legislation** and **competitors** as driving forces for change. *(4 marks)*

Q15. A café owner claims, “The only driving force for change that matters is the pursuit of profit.” Discuss this claim. *(6 marks)*

Q16. Analyse how **societal attitudes** and **innovation** can together drive a business to change its products. *(4 marks)*

Q17. *Case study.* **BrightWeave Textiles** manufactures uniforms in a single Australian factory. Rising local wages have pushed up its costs, a competitor has begun importing cheaper garments from overseas, and improvements in logistics technology now make international shipping fast and reliable. Analyse how the driving forces acting on BrightWeave could push it to move some of its manufacturing offshore. *(6 marks)*

Q18. Explain why identifying the **specific** driving force behind a change — rather than simply naming "pursuit of profit" — is important for a manager. *(4 marks)*

Q19. *Extended response.* **Verdant Grocers** is a supermarket chain facing several pressures at once: customers increasingly demand ethically sourced, low-waste products; a well-funded competitor has just launched a slick home-delivery app; new packaging-waste regulations take effect next year; and the board of directors wants stronger profit growth. Analyse how these driving forces are pushing Verdant Grocers to change, and evaluate which is likely to be the most significant driver of change for the business. *(10 marks)*

Q20. *Contemporary example.* From 14 July 2025, **Australian Red Cross Lifeblood** removed most sexual activity wait times for plasma donation. Analyse the driving forces that pushed Lifeblood to make this change. *(5 marks)*

Answers

Q1. A factor that supports, encourages or pushes a business towards a proposed change. **Q2.** (a) Any five of: owners, managers, employees, competitors, legislation, pursuit of profit, reduction of costs, globalisation, technology, innovation, societal attitudes. (b) Internal: owners, managers, employees, pursuit of profit, reduction of costs. External: competitors, legislation, globalisation, societal attitudes. **Technology** and **innovation** may be placed on either side, so accept whichever classification the student justifies by the **origin** of the pressure — external when the market or a rival moves, internal when the business itself invests or generates the new idea. **Q3.** (a) competitors; (b) legislation; (c) owners. **Q4.** (a) Managers, employees, legislation. (b) e.g. legislation — a new law that requires a change is a driving force, whereas a law that blocks or limits a proposed change is a restraining force. **Q5.** (a) Societal attitudes. (b) Changing community and customer expectations about plastic waste push the franchise to switch to compostable cups so that it keeps meeting those expectations. **Q6.** Pursuit of profit drives change that **raises revenue**; reduction of costs drives change that **lowers expenses**. Both improve profit, but by different routes. **Q7.** Technology offers faster, cheaper or better ways of operating; adopting it (and keeping pace with rivals) pushes the business to change. See solutions. **Q8.** Internal = originates inside the business, more control (e.g. pursuit of profit); external = originates outside, little control (e.g. competitors). See solutions. **Q9.** Globalisation opens overseas markets, exposes the business to global competitors and offers cheaper inputs/labour, pushing it to change how and where it operates. See solutions. **Q10.** Owners supply capital and expect a return, so they push for change (higher profits, expansion, new direction); new owners often impose new objectives. See solutions. **Q11.** Driving: managers initiate change to achieve objectives. Restraining: managers resist change that threatens their authority/workload. Depends on the change. See solutions. **Q12.** (a) Any three of: owners (new investment-group owners), competitors (rival app ordering), societal attitudes (plant-based demand), legislation (kilojoule-labelling law), pursuit of profit (20 per cent target). (b) e.g. legislation — the new state law compels menu/kilojoule changes to avoid penalties. (c) Several distinct forces (a compulsory law, competitor pressure, changing customer attitudes) would push change even if profit were healthy. See solutions. **Q13.** Rivals cutting prices, launching products or adopting technology threaten sales/market share, pushing the business to change to stay competitive. See solutions. **Q14.** Both external, uncontrollable and harmful if ignored; legislation **compels** change by law, competitors **encourage** it through market pressure. See solutions. **Q15.** Partly true (profit is a common, powerful driver) but overstated (legislation, competitors, technology, globalisation and societal attitudes each drive change independently). See solutions. **Q16.** Societal attitudes change what customers value, creating demand; innovation provides the new product to meet it — the two reinforce each other to drive product change. See solutions. **Q17.** Rising local costs (reduction of costs) + a low-cost importing competitor + enabling logistics technology (with globalisation) combine to push BrightWeave to manufacture offshore. See solutions. **Q18.** The specific force reveals the real cause and the right response; labelling everything "profit" risks missing a legal duty or competitive threat. See solutions. **Q19.** Model response in solutions. **Q20.** Societal attitudes (a shift in community expectations about who should be able to donate) created the pressure to revisit the rule; innovation (Lifeblood's own improved, activity-based screening process) provided the means. The two combined to produce the change. See solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. Technology acts as a driving force because the development of new technologies — such as automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and e-commerce — offers **faster, cheaper or better ways of operating**. To capture these efficiency and quality gains, and to keep pace with rivals who adopt them, a business is **pushed to update its equipment, systems and processes**, which is a change.

Q8. An **internal** driving force originates **inside** the business and is largely within its control — for example, the **pursuit of profit**, where the owners' and managers' desire for higher profit pushes the business to change so as to lift revenue or cut costs. An **external** driving force originates **outside** the business, in its operating or macro environment, and is largely **beyond its control** — for example, **competitors**, whose new products or lower prices push the business to change in order to stay competitive. The two therefore differ in their **source** (inside versus outside the business) and in **how much control** the business has over them.

Q9. Globalisation — the growing integration of national economies and markets — drives change by **opening the business to overseas customers and markets**, **exposing it to overseas competitors**, and **giving it access to cheaper inputs and labour abroad**. To exploit these opportunities, or to defend itself against cheaper global rivals, the business is pushed to change **how and where it operates** — for example by selling online to international customers or moving production offshore. Because these pressures come from outside, the business has little choice but to respond.

Q10. Owners provide the business's capital and expect a **return on their investment**, so they push for change to **protect or grow that investment** — for example demanding higher profits, expansion into new markets, or a change in strategic direction. **New owners** (for instance after a business is sold) are an especially strong driver, because they often impose their **own objectives and expectations** on the business. As the ultimate authority over the business, owners' expectations are a powerful internal push for change.

Q11. As a **driving force**, managers **initiate change to achieve business objectives** — for example restructuring operations, adopting a new strategy, or responding to poor key performance indicators — so their vision and ambition push the business forward. As a **restraining force**, managers may **resist a change** that threatens their authority, increases their workload or exposes their weaknesses, and so block or slow it down. Which role a manager plays depends on **how the change affects them**: the same manager can drive one change and resist another, which is why managers appear on both the driving and restraining lists.

Q12. (a) Any **three** of: **owners** (the new investment-group owners); **competitors** (the two rival chains with app-based ordering); **societal attitudes** (younger customers wanting plant-based options); **legislation** (the new state kilojoule-labelling law); **pursuit of profit** (the 20 per cent profit target). (b) *For example — legislation:* the new state law will **require kilojoule labelling on all menus**, so Kettle & Crumb must **change its menus and point-of-sale systems** to display kilojoule information. Because this is a legal requirement, the business has no choice: failing to comply would risk fines, which is what pushes the change. (c) The view is mistaken because **several distinct forces**, not just profit, are pushing Kettle & Crumb to change, and they operate through **different causal channels**. The **kilojoule-labelling law compels** a menu change regardless of whether it improves profit; the **competitors' app ordering** threatens to draw customers away, forcing a competitive response to protect market share; and **changing societal attitudes** toward plant-based food will cost the business customers if it does not adapt its range. Each of these would push change **even if profit were already healthy**, so treating profit as the *only* reason to change would cause the owners to **overlook a legal obligation and real competitive and customer pressures**. The pursuit of profit is one driver among several interacting forces, not the sole cause.

Q13. Competitors are an external driving force. When rival businesses **cut prices, launch new products, adopt new technology or improve their service**, a business risks **losing sales, customers and market share**, and this threat pushes it to change in order to stay competitive. *For example*, if a rival gym introduces 24-hour access, a competing gym is pushed to **extend its own opening hours or add new services** to stop its members switching. The competitor's action is the cause of the change.

Q14. Both legislation and competitors are **external** driving forces that are largely **beyond the business's control**, and **ignoring either can seriously harm the business**. They differ, however, in **nature and compulsion**. A **difference** is that **legislation is a law that *compels* change** — compliance is mandatory and non-compliance brings **legal penalties** — whereas **competitors exert *commercial* pressure that *encourages* change**, with the "penalty" for inaction being **lost sales and market share** rather than legal action. A further difference is that legislation forces change **directly** through the law, while competitors force it **indirectly** through the market. (A full answer to *compare* must state both a similarity and a difference.)

Q15. The claim that the pursuit of profit is the only driving force that matters has **some merit but is overstated**. *In support:* the pursuit of profit is a **powerful and very common driver** — most changes ultimately aim to raise revenue or cut costs, and as the core financial objective of most businesses it underlies decisions to expand, launch products or reduce expenses, so it is often present. *Against the claim:* **many changes are driven by other forces acting independently of profit**. **Legislation** compels change whether or not it is profitable; **competitors, technology and globalisation** each push a business to change to keep up; and **societal attitudes** can force change to protect reputation and retain customers. Moreover, these forces usually **act together**, and a manager who treats profit as the only driver risks **overlooking a legal duty or a competitive threat** until it is too late. (For *discuss*, both sides are presented; a final judgement is not required, and no single point should be used as both a strength and a weakness.)

Q16. Societal attitudes and **innovation** drive product change through a **reinforcing causal relationship**. A shift in societal attitudes — for example growing demand for sustainable or plant-based products — **changes what customers value**, which creates market demand and pressure that push the business to change its products. **Innovation** then provides the **means to respond**: by developing a **new or improved product** (such as a plant-based line or recyclable packaging), the business can satisfy the new attitudes. The relationship runs in both directions and compounds: **changing attitudes create the demand, innovation creates the product to meet it**, and if a competitor innovates in that space first, the pressure to change intensifies. Acting together, the two forces drive product change more strongly than either would alone.

Q17. Several driving forces are **combining** to push **BrightWeave Textiles** toward offshore manufacture, and analysing their relationships shows why the pressure is strong. **Reduction of costs:** rising local wages have **raised BrightWeave's production costs**, so shifting manufacturing to a lower-wage country would **cut those costs** — a direct financial push. **Competitors:** a rival has already begun **importing cheaper garments**, undercutting BrightWeave's prices and **threatening its market share**, which pressures BrightWeave to match the rival's cost base by producing offshore itself. **Technology (and globalisation):** improvements in **logistics technology** now make international shipping **fast and reliable**, which **removes a former barrier** to offshoring and makes overseas manufacture practical. These forces **interact**: the high local costs and the cost-cutting rival create the *pressure* to move, while the logistics technology *enables* the response — so together they push BrightWeave much harder toward offshore manufacture than any one force would on its own. (An *analyse* answer shows how the forces cause and reinforce the move, rather than listing the pros and cons of offshoring.)

Q18. Identifying the **specific** driving force matters because it determines the **correct response**. If a manager labels every change "the pursuit of profit", they **obscure the real cause** — a new law, a competitor's move, or a shift in societal attitudes — and may then respond **incorrectly or too slowly**. Naming the actual force (for example new legislation) tells the manager **what must change and why**, allows the force's **strength to be weighed accurately** against the forces resisting change, and — in a case study or exam — **matches the evidence provided in the scenario**, which is where marks are earned. The pursuit of profit is often present in the background, but it is rarely the whole story, so defaulting to it can lead to a poorly targeted change.

Q19. *Model response (10 marks).* **Verdant Grocers** faces several driving forces at once, and analysing how each operates shows why change is likely, while evaluation identifies the most significant.

First, **societal attitudes**: customers increasingly demand **ethically sourced, low-waste products**. This shift in community values changes what shoppers buy, so if Verdant does not change its range and packaging it will **lose customers to more ethical rivals** — the changing attitudes causally push it to reformulate products and cut packaging. Second, **competitors**: a well-funded rival has launched a **home-delivery app**, which directly **threatens Verdant's market share** because customers can switch to the more convenient service; to avoid losing them, Verdant is pushed to **develop its own delivery capability**. Third, **legislation**: **new packaging-waste regulations** take effect next year, which **compels** Verdant to change its packaging regardless of its own preferences, because non-compliance would bring penalties. Fourth, the **pursuit of profit**, expressed through the board's demand for **stronger profit growth**, pushes management to change in ways that **lift revenue or cut costs**, reinforcing the other changes (for example, a delivery service to grow sales). These forces **interact**: the ethical-products change serves both societal attitudes and the profit objective, and the delivery app responds to competitors while also supporting profit growth.

Evaluation. In terms of **urgency and unavoidability**, the **legislation** is arguably the most significant driver, because it is the only force that makes change **compulsory** — Verdant must comply by the deadline or face penalties, so this change will happen regardless of the others. **However**, in terms of the business's **competitiveness and long-term profitability**, the **competitor's delivery app** is at least as significant, because failing to respond could cause a **lasting loss of market share**, whereas the packaging change merely maintains compliance. On balance, the **legislation is the most urgent and unavoidable** driver, but the **competitor pressure is the most strategically significant** for Verdant's future performance, so a strong response must address **both**: complying with the new rules while quickly matching the rival's delivery service. *(Full marks require: several driving forces accurately identified; causal analysis of how each pushes change rather than a list; a sustained evaluation reaching a justified judgement about the most significant driver; and application to Verdant Grocers throughout.)*

Q20. Two driving forces **combined** to push **Australian Red Cross Lifeblood** to remove most sexual activity wait times for plasma donation from **14 July 2025**. **Societal attitudes** are an **external** driving force: the community's values and expectations about who should be able to donate had shifted, so the existing wait times were increasingly out of step with those expectations and Lifeblood was pushed to reconsider them. **Innovation** supplied the **means to respond**: the organisation's own research and modelling produced an **improved screening process** that assessed each donor's activity rather than their gender, and indicated the change would not affect the safety of the plasma supply. Because that new process was generated **inside** the organisation, this pressure originated **internally**, while the shift in attitudes came from **outside** — a reminder that a force is classified by **where the pressure originates**. The two **interact**: the changed attitudes created the *reason* to act, while the innovation removed the safety concern that would otherwise have restrained the change, so together they were strong enough to overcome the forces resisting it and the rule changed on a set date. ∴ neither force alone would have produced the change — the external pressure supplied the reason and the internal innovation supplied the means. (An *analyse* answer must show how the forces caused and reinforced the change, not merely name them.)

Chapter 11 Force Field Analysis and forces for change — 11C Restraining forces for change

Theory

When a business proposes a change, the pressures acting on it fall into two opposing sets. **Driving forces** push *for* the change, while **restraining forces** push *against* it. A **restraining force** is a factor that **resists, opposes or works against** a proposed change — it holds the business back, and if the restraining forces are strong enough they can slow a change, weaken it, or stop it altogether. The study design prescribes **six** restraining forces in businesses: **managers, employees, time, organisational inertia, legislation and financial considerations.**

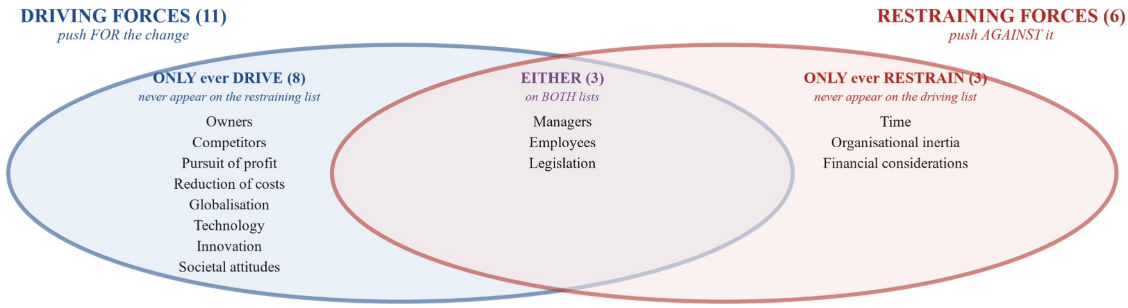
- **Managers.** Managers can resist a change when they **prefer the status quo**, **fear losing authority, status or their role**, **lack the skills or confidence** to lead the change, **disagree with its direction**, or worry it will expose weaknesses in the way they currently run things. A manager who drags their feet, withholds support, or quietly blocks a proposal can slow or halt the change, because managers control the resources and decisions the change depends on.
- **Employees.** Employees commonly resist change out of **fear of job loss or redundancy**, **fear of the unknown**, **disruption to established routines and workplace relationships**, the **effort of learning new skills**, or a belief that the change is **unnecessary or unfair**. This resistance can show up as low morale, falling productivity, grievances, higher absenteeism, or simply a refusal to adopt new methods — all of which make the change harder to implement.
- **Time.** Genuine change takes **considerable time** to plan, communicate, trial, train for and embed, yet the pressure of day-to-day operations leaves managers with little spare time. A **lack of adequate time** restrains change in two ways: managers may **postpone** a change they cannot find the time to do properly, and change that is **rushed** is poorly planned and far more likely to fail. The longer a change takes, the more opportunity there is for opposition to build.
- **Organisational inertia.** Organisational inertia is the **tendency of a business to keep operating in its established way** and to resist moving away from existing structures, systems, routines and culture — the "we have always done it this way" mindset. Entrenched procedures, bureaucracy, long-standing habits and a comfortable culture create a **built-in momentum** that opposes any new direction. Inertia is generally **stronger the larger and more established** the business, because its ways of working are more deeply embedded.
- **Legislation.** Existing **laws and regulations** can restrain change by **limiting what a business is permitted to do**, or by imposing **costly and time-consuming compliance requirements**. For example, employment and industrial-relations law may require a business to consult employees and pay redundancy entitlements before restructuring; planning, environmental or licensing regulations may restrict a proposed change. Meeting these legal obligations can slow, complicate or entirely block a change the business would otherwise make.
- **Financial considerations.** Change almost always **costs money** — new equipment or technology, redundancy payouts, retraining, consultants, and lost production during the transition. If a business **lacks the funds**, cannot borrow enough, or judges the **cost too high** relative to the expected benefit, limited finance restrains the change: the business may be **unable to afford it** or **unwilling to risk the outlay**, so the change is scaled back or shelved.

Some forces can push either way. Three of the restraining forces — **managers, employees and legislation** — also appear among the **driving** forces for change, because whether a force *drives* or *restrains* depends on the **context**. The same group can support one change and oppose another:

- **Managers** may **champion** a change they believe in (driving) but **resist** one that threatens their position or comfort (restraining).
- **Employees** may **push for** a change that improves their pay, conditions or job security (driving) but **resist** one that threatens their jobs or routines (restraining).
- **Legislation** may **force** a business to change — for example, a new law requiring it to act (driving) — or **prevent or complicate** a change the business wants to make (restraining).

The other three restraining forces — **time, organisational inertia and financial considerations** — act **only as restraints**; they do not appear among the driving forces.

Driving and restraining forces overlap — 3 factors can do either, depending on the change



The 3 that can do either — the SAME group, a different change

Managers	**DRIVING when they**	champion a change they believe in	**RESTRAINING when they**	resist one that threatens their position, status or comfort
Employees	**DRIVING when they**	push for better pay, conditions or security	**RESTRAINING when they**	resist one that threatens their jobs or routines
Legislation	**DRIVING when they**	a new law REQUIRES the business to act	**RESTRAINING when they**	an existing law PREVENTS or complicates what it wants to do

Calling a factor "driving" only makes sense in relation to a PARTICULAR change. Organisational inertia is a property of the business itself — the built-in momentum of established structures, systems and routines — not of any one person, which is why it can never appear on the driving side.

Keep straight.

- A **restraining force works *against*** the change; a **driving force works *for*** it. The two act in **opposite directions** on the same proposed change.
- **Organisational inertia is a property of the business itself**, not of one person — it is the built-in momentum of established structures, systems, routines and culture. **Managers** and **employees**, by contrast, are specific **groups of people** who resist.
- **Managers, employees and legislation can be driving OR restraining** depending on the change and the context; **time, organisational inertia and financial considerations are only ever restraining**.
- A force that restrains does **not automatically stop** a change — it must be **weighed against the driving forces**, and change proceeds only when the driving forces outweigh the restraining ones.

Contemporary example — Snowy Hydro, August 2023

Snowy Hydro is an Australian electricity generator and retailer; in 2023 the Commonwealth-owned business was building Snowy 2.0, a large pumped-hydro storage project in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales.

On 31 August 2023 Snowy Hydro announced a reset of the project. It put the revised total cost to complete at $12 billion, reported expenditure to the end of June 2023 of $4.3 billion, and set its schedule back to first power in the second half of 2027 with a target of December 2028 for commercial operation of all units. The business also announced it was amending the existing engineering, procurement and construction contract with its principal contractor, moving from a fixed-price arrangement to an incentivised target-cost model and settling outstanding claims. The Australian National Audit Office later examined the project's delivery in Auditor-General Report No. 39 of 2025–26, *Delivery of Snowy 2.0*.

What makes the announcement useful here is that the business quantified its own restraining forces. **Financial considerations** restrained the change: the cost of completing it was revised to $12 billion, so the funds needed to finish rose well beyond what had first been committed. **Time** restrained it as well, with completion pushed years past the original schedule. Both are forces the study design treats as **only ever restraining** — neither can be reframed as a driving force — and here they acted together, because the additional years of construction were themselves part of what made the project cost more.

Source: Snowy Hydro, "Securing the future of critical energy transformation projects", 31 August 2023 — https://www.snowyhydro.com.au/news/securing-the-future-of-critical-energy-transformation-resets/. Source: Australian National Audit Office, Auditor-General Report No. 39 of 2025–26, "Delivery of Snowy 2.0" — https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/delivery-of-snowy-two-point-zero. Accurate as at July 2026.

Worked examples

Example 1 — scaffolded

Lumina Candles, a small candle manufacturer, wants to replace its hand-pouring process with an automated pouring machine. The owner has found that the machine would cost $180 000 — more than the business can currently borrow — and the four long-serving production staff have said they "don't see why we need to change how we've always made them". Explain **two** restraining forces acting against this change.

Working	Comment
Financial considerations — the machine costs $180 000, which is more than Lumina can borrow.	Name the first force and quote the evidence for it.
Because the business cannot fund the machine, it **cannot afford to proceed** with the change as planned, so finance is holding it back.	Explain *how* the force resists the change, not just that it exists.
Organisational inertia (reinforced by employee attitudes) — the staff "don't see why we need to change how we've always made them", showing an attachment to established methods.	Name the second force and link it to the evidence.
This entrenched "we've always done it this way" attitude creates resistance that would **slow adoption** of the new process even if the machine were bought.	Explain the mechanism by which it restrains the change.

Example 2 — scaffolded

Harborline Ferries wants to restructure its rosters and make several positions redundant to cut costs. Explain how **time** and **legislation** could act as restraining forces on this change.

Working	Comment
Time — restructuring requires time to redesign rosters, consult staff and manage the transition, but the ferries run every day, leaving managers little spare time.	Identify the force and connect it to the business's situation.
With so little time available, the change may be **delayed** or **rushed**, and a rushed restructure is more likely to be poorly planned and to fail.	Explain how limited time restrains the change.
Legislation — employment and industrial-relations law requires Harborline to **consult employees and pay redundancy entitlements** before cutting positions.	Identify the second force and the specific legal obligation.
These legal requirements **add cost and delay** and limit how quickly and easily the business can restructure, restraining the change.	Explain the restraining mechanism.

Example 3 — unscaffolded

Explain how **legislation** can act as **both** a driving force and a restraining force for change.

Legislation is a **driving** force when a **new or changed law compels a business to change** what it does: for example, a new regulation requiring reduced emissions or safer equipment forces the business to alter its operations in order to comply, pushing change forward. Legislation is a **restraining** force when **existing laws limit or complicate a change the business wants to make**: for example, employment law that requires consultation and redundancy entitlements before restructuring adds cost and delay, and planning or licensing rules may prohibit a proposed change altogether. The direction of the force therefore depends on **whether the law is pushing the business towards a change or standing in the way of one**. ∴ the same factor — legislation — drives change in one context and restrains it in another, which is why it appears on both sides of a force field.

Example 4 — unscaffolded

Evaluate the view that employees are always the greatest restraining force a business faces when it attempts to change.

Employees are often a **powerful** restraining force: because they carry out the day-to-day work, their **fear of job loss, disruption to routines and reluctance to learn new skills** can translate directly into low morale, falling productivity and refusal to adopt new methods, which can stall a change. **However**, the claim that they are *always* the greatest restraint is **too absolute**. In some situations other forces dominate — a **severe shortage of finance** can make a change impossible regardless of how willing staff are; **legislation** can legally prohibit a change; and **organisational inertia** embedded in structures and culture can obstruct change even when individual employees are supportive. Moreover, employees are **not always restraining at all**: where a change improves their pay, conditions or security, they may actively **drive** it. ∴ while employee resistance is frequently a significant restraining force, whether it is the *greatest* depends on the specific change and context, so the view should be **rejected as a general rule** and assessed case by case.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

Q1. Define the term *restraining force*.

Q2. List the **six** restraining forces in businesses prescribed in the study design.

Q3. For each of the following, name the restraining force being described: (a) staff worry the change will make their jobs redundant and refuse to cooperate; (b) the business lacks the funds to pay for the new equipment the change requires; (c) entrenched routines, structures and “the way things have always been done” slow the change.

Q4. Identify the **three** restraining forces that can also act as **driving** forces depending on the context.

Q5. A manufacturing business wants to introduce automated machinery, but the project would cost more than it can currently afford. (a) Identify the restraining force at work. (b) Explain how it is restraining the change.

Q6. Explain the difference between **organisational inertia** and **time** as restraining forces.

Unscaffolded

Q7. Describe how **employees** can act as a restraining force for change. *(2 marks)*

Q8. Explain how **time** can act as a restraining force for change. *(3 marks)*

Q9. Explain how **organisational inertia** can restrain change in a business. *(3 marks)*

Q10. Explain how **managers** can act as a restraining force for change. *(3 marks)*

Q11. Distinguish between **financial considerations** and **legislation** as restraining forces for change. *(4 marks)*

Q12. Explain how **legislation** can act as **both** a driving force and a restraining force for change. *(4 marks)*

Q13. Compare **organisational inertia** and **financial considerations** as restraining forces. *(4 marks)*

Q14. *Case study.* **Terra Textiles** is a family-owned clothing manufacturer that has operated the same way for 35 years. Its managing director, Costa, wants to move production offshore to cut costs, but the factory’s 60 machinists — many with more than 20 years’ service — are strongly opposed. The business would also need to pay significant redundancy entitlements it can barely afford, and Costa’s operations manager, who designed the current factory system, has argued repeatedly against the plan. (a) Identify **two** restraining forces evident in the case study. *(2 marks)* (b) Explain how **financial considerations** are acting as a restraining force at Terra Textiles. *(3 marks)* (c) Explain how **managers** could be acting as a restraining force at Terra Textiles. *(4 marks)*

Q15. Cirro Cloud Systems, a software firm, plans to roll out a new project-management platform across all of its teams. Analyse how **organisational inertia** and **employees** could combine to restrain this change. *(6 marks)*

Q16. Evaluate the view that **organisational inertia** is the most difficult restraining force for a large, long-established business to overcome. *(6 marks)*

Q17. Analyse the relationship between the **time** available to plan and implement a change and the likelihood that the change succeeds. *(4 marks)*

Q18. Discuss the role of **managers** during a period of business change. *(6 marks)*

Q19. *Extended response.* **Northwind Manufacturing** produces steel components and employs 400 staff. Its board wants to introduce robotic welding across the plant to lift productivity and reduce costs. The plant has run the same manual welding process for 25 years; the robotic system would require a major capital investment the business would need to borrow for; the welders' union has raised concerns about job losses; and the plant manager, who is close to retirement, is reluctant to disrupt operations. Analyse how restraining forces could threaten the proposed change at Northwind Manufacturing, referring to at least **three** of the six restraining forces. *(10 marks)*

Q20. *Contemporary example.* On 31 August 2023 **Snowy Hydro** announced a reset of its Snowy 2.0 pumped-hydro project, revising the total cost to complete to $12 billion and setting a December 2028 target for commercial operation of all units. Analyse how **financial considerations** and **time** acted as restraining forces on this project. *(6 marks)*

Answers

Q1. A factor that resists, opposes or works against a proposed change (and can slow, weaken or stop it). **Q2.** Managers; employees; time; organisational inertia; legislation; financial considerations. **Q3.** (a) employees; (b) financial considerations; (c) organisational inertia. **Q4.** Managers; employees; legislation. **Q5.** (a) Financial considerations. (b) The business cannot afford the cost, so it cannot proceed with the change as planned. **Q6.** Organisational inertia = the business's entrenched routines, structures and culture resisting a new direction — the business is *unwilling* to move; time = the shortage of time available to plan and implement the change, so it is postponed or rushed and more likely to fail. **Q7.** Fear of job loss, disruption and retraining lead employees to resist. See solutions. **Q8.** Change needs time to plan/train/embed; too little time delays or rushes it. See solutions. **Q9.** Established structures, routines and "the way we've always done it" oppose new directions. See solutions. **Q10.** Managers resist to protect status/authority, from lack of skill/confidence, or disagreement. See solutions. **Q11.** Financial considerations = cost/affordability restrains change; legislation = laws limit or complicate change. See solutions. **Q12.** Driving when a new law forces change; restraining when existing law blocks/complicates a change. See solutions. **Q13.** Both are restraining forces that only ever oppose change; they differ in that inertia is cultural/behavioural momentum while financial considerations are about money/cost. See solutions. **Q14.** (a) e.g. employees, financial considerations, organisational inertia, managers (any two). (b) Redundancy entitlements it "can barely afford" make the change unaffordable. (c) The operations manager arguing against the plan withholds support/blocks it. See solutions. **Q15.** Inertia (long-standing routines) plus employee resistance reinforce each other to stall adoption. See solutions. **Q16.** Evaluation — inertia is pervasive/embedded/self-reinforcing, but "most difficult" depends on context (finance, legislation, employee resistance can be greater). See solutions. **Q17.** Too little time raises the risk of a rushed, poorly planned change; adequate time improves the chance of success. See solutions. **Q18.** Managers can both drive change (champion/lead it) and restrain it (resist to protect status/comfort). See solutions. **Q19.** Model response in solutions. **Q20.** Financial considerations — the cost to complete was revised to $12 billion, raising the funds needed to finish; time — completion was pushed out to a December 2028 target. Both forces only ever restrain, and each worsens the other. See solutions.

Fully-worked solutions

Q7. Employees act as a restraining force because they may **resist a change** they see as threatening — for example through **fear of losing their jobs**, disruption to their routines, or the effort of learning new skills. This resistance can appear as **low morale, reduced productivity or refusal to adopt new methods**, all of which make the change harder to implement.

Q8. Time acts as a restraining force because genuine change needs **considerable time to plan, communicate, trial, train for and embed**, yet day-to-day operations leave managers with little spare time. When there is **too little time**, managers may **postpone** the change, or push it through in a **rushed** way that is poorly planned; either outcome makes the change **less likely to succeed**. In this way a shortage of time works against the change.

Q9. Organisational inertia is the **tendency of a business to keep operating in its established way** and to resist departing from existing structures, systems, routines and culture. It restrains change because **entrenched procedures, long-standing habits and a comfortable "we've always done it this way" culture** create momentum that opposes any new direction, so proposals are met with foot-dragging and resistance rather than adoption. This inertia is typically **strongest in large, long-established businesses**, where ways of working are most deeply embedded.

Q10. Managers act as a restraining force when they **oppose or fail to support** a change. This can happen because a manager **prefers the status quo**, **fears losing authority, status or their role**, **lacks the skills or confidence** to lead the change, or **disagrees with its direction**. Because managers control the resources and decisions a change depends on, a manager who **withholds support or quietly blocks** the change can slow it or stop it altogether.

Q11. Financial considerations restrain change through **cost and affordability**: a change such as new equipment, redundancy payouts or retraining costs money, and if the business **lacks the funds or judges the cost too high**, the change is scaled back or shelved. **Legislation** restrains change through **laws and regulations**: existing law may **limit what the business is permitted to do** or impose **compliance requirements** (such as consulting staff and paying entitlements before restructuring) that add cost and delay. The two therefore differ in nature — one is about **whether**

the business can afford the change, the other about **whether the law permits or complicates it —** even though both can hold the same change back.

Q12. Legislation is a **driving** force when a **new or changed law compels a business to change**: for instance, a regulation requiring lower emissions or safer equipment forces the business to alter its operations to comply, pushing the change forward. It is a **restraining** force when **existing laws limit or complicate a change the business wants to make**: for instance, employment law requiring consultation and redundancy entitlements before restructuring adds cost and delay, and planning or licensing rules may prohibit a proposed change. Which role legislation plays depends on **whether the law is pushing the business towards a change or standing in its way** — which is why it appears among both the driving and the restraining forces.

Q13. Organisational inertia and **financial considerations** are **similar** in that both are **restraining forces** that **only ever work against change** (neither appears among the driving forces), and both can **slow or prevent** a change from going ahead. They **differ** in their nature: organisational inertia is a **cultural and behavioural momentum** — the business's entrenched routines, structures and "we've always done it this way" habits resisting a new direction — whereas financial considerations are about **money**, namely the **cost of the change and the funds available** to pay for it. In short, inertia is about the business's **unwillingness** to move, while financial considerations are about its **inability to afford** to.

Q14. (a) Any **two** of: **employees** (the 60 machinists strongly opposed); **financial considerations** (redundancy entitlements it "can barely afford"); **organisational inertia** (operated the same way for 35 years); **managers** (the operations manager arguing against the plan). (b) **Financial considerations** are restraining the change because moving production offshore would require Terra Textiles to **pay significant redundancy entitlements that it "can barely afford"**. Because the business lacks the funds to cover this cost comfortably, the **expense of the change itself holds it back** — the money needed to make the change is a barrier to going ahead, so finance is working against the proposal. (c) **Managers** are acting as a restraining force through Costa's **operations manager, who designed the current factory system and has argued repeatedly against the plan**. As the person who built the existing system, the operations manager may **prefer the status quo, feel the change devalues their work, or genuinely disagree** with moving offshore. Because managers control resources and influence decisions, an operations manager who **withholds support and openly opposes** the change can slow it, create internal conflict, and make it far harder for Costa to implement — demonstrating that managers, not just employees, can restrain change.

Q15. At **Cirro Cloud Systems**, **organisational inertia** and **employees** could **reinforce one another** to restrain the rollout of the new platform. Organisational inertia means the teams are **accustomed to their existing tools and routines**, so there is a built-in momentum to keep working the old way. This inertia **feeds employee resistance**: because staff are comfortable and confident with the current system, they may **fear the disruption and the effort of learning** the new platform, and so resist adopting it. Their resistance, in turn, **strengthens the inertia** — as individuals continue using the old tools, the established routine becomes even harder to break. The **causal relationship** is therefore **self-reinforcing**: entrenched routines make employees reluctant, and reluctant employees keep the entrenched routines in place. Together the two forces could stall adoption well beyond what either would cause alone, leaving teams half-using the new platform and undermining the change.

Q16. Organisational inertia has strong claims to being the **most difficult** restraining force for a large, long-established business to overcome. Unlike a single manager or a funding gap, inertia is **embedded throughout the business** — in its structures, systems, routines and culture — so there is **no single source to address**; it is **diffuse and self-reinforcing**, and it tends to **grow with the size and age** of the business, exactly the conditions described. **However**, the claim that it is *the* most difficult is not clear-cut. Other forces can be **as hard or harder** in particular situations: **deep employee resistance** driven by fear of redundancy can be intense and immediate; a **severe shortage of finance** can make a change simply **impossible** regardless of willingness; and **legislation** can **legally prohibit** a change outright, which no amount of cultural effort can overcome. **On balance**, organisational inertia is often the most **pervasive and persistent** restraint because it quietly underlies the others and resists sustained effort to change culture; but whether it is genuinely the *most difficult* **depends on the specific change and circumstances**, so the view is best accepted only as a general tendency rather than an absolute rule. *(Full marks require: a developed case for the view, at least one well-argued counter-point, and a justified evaluative judgement.)*

Q17. There is a strong **relationship** between the **time available** and the **likelihood a change succeeds**. Change requires time to **plan, communicate, consult, train and embed**; when **adequate time** is available, a manager can work through these steps thoroughly, build support and iron out problems, which **raises the chance of success**. When

time is short, the change is either **delayed** — so the opportunity may be lost — or **rushed**, meaning it is poorly planned, staff are under-prepared, and resistance is not addressed, all of which **lower the likelihood of success**. The causal link runs in one direction: **less time increases the risk of a hurried, poorly executed change**, while **more time allows the careful preparation that makes a change more likely to work** (though time must still be used well). Time is therefore a restraining force precisely because a **shortage of it** directly undermines the quality of the change effort.

Q18. Managers can play **two opposing roles** during a period of business change, which is why they appear among **both** the driving and the restraining forces. As a **positive (driving) role**, managers can **initiate and champion** change — identifying the need for it, communicating a vision, committing resources and leading employees through the transition — so effective managers are often the **engine** of successful change. As a **negative (restraining) role**, managers can **resist** change that threatens them: a manager may **prefer the status quo, fear losing authority or status, lack the skills or confidence** to lead the change, or **disagree** with its direction, and by withholding support or blocking decisions they can slow or stop it. The role a manager actually plays **depends on the context** — whether the change aligns with or threatens their interests and capability. Because managers control the resources and decisions change depends on, their stance is often **decisive** either way: the same manager who could drive a change successfully could also become its greatest obstacle.

Q19. *Model response (10 marks).* Several restraining forces could combine to threaten **Northwind Manufacturing's** plan to introduce robotic welding, and analysing how they interact shows why the change is at risk. **First, organisational inertia.** The plant has run the **same manual welding process for 25 years**, so its structures, routines and culture are deeply embedded; this built-in momentum means the change faces resistance simply because it departs from "the way things have always been done", and inertia of this depth is characteristic of a large, long-established operation. **Second, financial considerations.** The robotic system requires a **major capital investment the business would need to borrow for**; the high cost, the debt and the risk of the outlay may make the board hesitate or scale the project back, because the change is expensive relative to the funds available. **Third, employees.** The **welders' union has raised concerns about job losses**, so the workforce is a significant restraining force: fear of redundancy can produce low morale, disputes and refusal to cooperate, which would make implementation difficult and slow. **Fourth, managers.** The **plant manager, close to retirement, is reluctant to disrupt operations**; as the person running the plant they control resources and decisions, so their reluctance can withhold the support the change needs.

These forces do not act in isolation — they **reinforce one another**. The plant manager's reluctance strengthens the existing inertia; employee fears about job losses deepen resistance to breaking the 25-year routine; and the union's concerns may trigger **legislative** obligations to consult and pay redundancy entitlements, adding further **cost** and **time** to an already expensive change. Analysed together, the restraining forces at Northwind are **mutually reinforcing**: financial constraints, entrenched routines, a resistant workforce and a reluctant manager each make the others harder to overcome, so unless the board reduces these restraints the change is likely to stall or fail. *(Full marks require: at least three restraining forces correctly identified and applied to Northwind's specific situation; analysis of how the forces relate to and reinforce one another — not a simple list; and sustained reference to the case throughout.)*

Q20. The reset **Snowy Hydro** announced on 31 August 2023 shows **financial considerations** and **time** acting together as restraining forces on Snowy 2.0. **Financial considerations** restrain a change because change costs money, and where the cost is high relative to the funds available a business may be **unable to afford it or unwilling to risk the outlay**. Here the **total cost to complete was revised to $12 billion**, so the amount that had to be funded to finish the project rose substantially; the larger the required outlay, the harder the project is to justify and the greater the pressure to scale it back. **Time** restrains a change because change needs time to plan, deliver and embed, and a **shortage of time** means it is either postponed or rushed. At Snowy 2.0 the schedule moved out to first power in the second half of 2027 and a **December 2028 target for commercial operation of all units**, so the benefits of the change were **delayed** and the period over which opposition could build was extended. The two forces also **reinforce one another**: each additional year of construction adds cost, and rising cost prompts further re-planning that consumes still more time. ∴ both worked against the project, and both belong to the group of forces that are **only ever restraining** — unlike managers, employees and legislation, neither could be reframed here as a driving force. *(Full marks require: both forces correctly identified and applied to Snowy 2.0's specific circumstances; explanation of the mechanism by which each restrains the project, not a definition alone; and analysis of how the two forces relate to one another.)*