

Illustration of Lewin's Theory & IT Implementation

Lewin's Change Theory

When planning changes in how documentation is done, if they are to be successful, this planning must also take into account preparing users for this **change**. Lewin's **change theory** models the processes that occur in a planned **change**. He divides these changes into three stages: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Ways of moving a group from the first to the last stage need to be part of a plan for implementation of a system.

Unfreezing. This stage is based on the idea that human behavior is supported by a balance of driving and restraining forces that create an equilibrium. When a driving force toward **change** occurs, a countering restraining force often develops to allow the maintenance of equilibrium. Thus, to unfreeze, it is necessary to reduce the restraining forces and allow the driving forces to become dominant. Restraining forces are often personal psychological defenses or group norms, whereas driving forces can be involvement in the process, having one's opinion respected, and continuous communication during the process.

Moving. In this stage, the planned **change** is implemented. This is not a comfortable period. Anxieties are high and if they are not successfully dealt with, the **change** may be unsuccessful. Additionally, it is important to recognize that in this stage movement may occur in the wrong direction. This is especially likely to happen if the new system has many problems or is not supported by administration. Thus, it is important to gain the support of administration in the planning process, involve users so that the system serves them instead of creating more work, test the system thoroughly before implementation, provide adequate training, and deal with any implementation problems immediately.

Refreezing. In this stage, the planned **change** becomes the norm, but it is surrounded by the usual driving and restraining forces. For this state to occur the people involved need to feel confident with the **change** and feel in control of the procedures involved in the new methods. A well-designed help system that can provide answers to frequent procedures as well as those that a user may only use occasionally will assist in this process as will recognition by the organization of new skills. If too strongly reinforced, this stage can become a problem to the next **change**.