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## Empirical paper

# Leveraging intellectual capital through Lewin's force field analysis (the case of software development companies)

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### ABSTRACT

This article outlines an original conceptual framework for the strategic management of intellectual capital assets in software development companies, interconnected with force field analysis approach. The framework allows assessing the opinions of the managers from software companies about the impact of both driving and restraining forces on the pillars of intellectual capital.

Considering the capacity to adapt to change as one of the most relevant for the companies from knowledge intensive industries, this research uses a sample of 74 software development companies located in Romania to offer valuable insights on foresight capabilities to enable change benefits by managing the driving forces, respectively the restraining forces, at the level of IC pillars (human, structural and relational).

The findings, represented by the average scores per each item embedded in the conceptual framework, show that the driving forces' effects, quantified by means of PathMaker software's Force Field Tool, are more significant than the restraining forces to change, in the case of each IC pillar.

This paper's original contribution consists of the explanatory power of the proposed framework to managers' needs to find answers in the scientific research community to their challenging responsibility to drive change in their organizations through effective IC management. Furthermore, the article describes how the validation of the results encourages the implementation of change that aim to create value for the software development companies.

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## Probar los efectos reveladores del Capital Intelectual a través el análisis de campos de fuerzas de Lewin (el caso de las empresas del sector informático)

### R E S U M E N

#### Palabras clave:

Capital intelectual  
Kurt Lewin  
Análisis de campos de fuerzas  
Cambio organizacional  
Inteligencia estratégica  
Industria del software  
Análisis multidimensional  
escalar

El trabajo de investigación propone un esquema conceptual para el management estratégico de los activos de Capital Intelectual en el ámbito de las empresas del sector software, interrelacionado con el planteamiento analítico del modelo force field. El marco avanzado proporciona la evaluación de las opiniones de la dirección de las empresas del sector software sobre el impacto percibido por los mismos, de las ambas fuerzas impulsores e impedidoras repartidas entre los pilares del capital intelectual.

Considerando que la capacidad de adaptarse al cambio es el desafío más pertinente para las empresas de las industrias intensivas en conocimiento, este trabajo de investigación está empleando una población de 74 empresas del sector informático localizadas en Rumania, para proporcionar valiosas revelaciones sobre las capacidades anticipativas, activando los beneficios del cambio, a través de manejar las fuerzas impulsores e impedidoras a los niveles humano, estructural y relacional del Capital Intelectual. La análisis de los datos, a través del puntaje promedio por cada dimensión estructural del esquema conceptual, nos está revelando que el efecto de las fuerzas impulsores, cuantificado por PathMaker Force Field Tool, es más significativo que el de las fuerzas impedidoras por cada nivel de los pilares del capital intelectual. La contribución original de este trabajo de investigación consiste en revelar el poder explicativo del marco conceptual propuesto, como respuesta a la demanda de los directivos de empresas, a la búsqueda de soluciones de manejar el cambio frente a los desafíos organizacionales, a través del management eficaz del Capital Intelectual. Además, el trabajo de investigación está describiendo cómo la validación de los resultados está animando la implementación del cambio, con el propósito de la creación de valor en las empresas del sector informático.

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## Introduction

The idea of writing this paper came from the relevance for the present business landscape of a statement made by Kurt Lewin long time ago (1943), according to which an organization is held in balance by the interaction of two opposing sets of forces – those seeking to promote change (driving forces) and those attempting to maintain the status quo (restraining forces). The need for change, due to high pressures of both external and internal environment, assumes the consideration on how to reduce resisting forces, while driving forces are stronger.

The intellectual capital (IC) was proved to be useful for promoting organizational change processes (Lönnqvist, Kianto, & Sillanpää, 2009), being recognized as a highly important resource that organizations need to develop to gain sustainable competitive advantages (Kong & Thomson, 2009).

Based on the experiences gained in previous researches focused on IC management and Strategic Intelligence within the particular context of software industry, the challenging opportunity to emphasize the role of Lewin's force field analysis in the process of IC strategic management arises. After a careful analysis of the body of knowledge related to IC management, this is the first research paper that addresses IC specific strategic issues through Lewin's force field analysis,

in the attempt to calibrate the capability of change in the case of software development companies.

Sustainable advantage life cycle of each organization is relying upon managerial capacity to set up the change priorities based on intangibles assets – as future competence to train – in the attempt to develop its absorptive capacity. We advance that our conceptual construct is relevant both to reveal new knowledge by means of developing IC potential and to provide an adjusted methodology to employ as well, as response to strategic decision making need for external expertise.

The paper is structured as follows: in the first section, dedicated to literature review, the issues referring to the interconnections between IC, change management and force field analysis were highlighted; the second section describes the research methodology and tools; in the third section, we presented the main findings of the study, using Force Field Tool embedded into Path Maker software; in the last section, we presented the conclusions, the limitations of our study, its practical implications and the guidelines for the future research agenda.

## Theoretical background

Most part of managers are not fully aware of the value of their own intellectual capital and they do not know if they have

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