



EVALUATION OF ORGANISATIONAL RESTRUCTURING WITHIN THE HOT ROLLED PRODUCTS DEPARTMENT AT TATA STEEL UK.

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Executive Summary

This report evaluates organisational restructuring within the Hot Rolled Products (HRP) department at Tata Steel UK during a period of reduced production demand and financial pressure. The restructuring involved workforce reductions, boundary realignment between operational sections, and redistribution of managerial responsibilities.

The findings indicate that the change was operationally justified, with improved alignment between shift responsibilities and asset ownership. Permit-to-work processes became more streamlined, improving procedural efficiency and reducing duplication of authority. However, several workforce-related challenges were identified. Increased geographical responsibility and expanded reporting structures introduced higher workload demands for Section Leaders. Limited training provision and restricted transition time reduced workforce confidence and contributed to increased stress during implementation.

Evaluation using Lewin's Force Field Analysis identified strong operational driving forces, but significant restraining forces linked to workforce uncertainty and reduced morale. Application of Lewin's Three-Step Model indicates that the unfreeze and refreeze stages were less effectively supported, particularly in relation to employee preparation and reinforcement of new working practices. Assessment against Kotter's Eight-Step Model further highlighted weaknesses in workforce engagement, communication clarity, and reinforcement mechanisms.

Overall, the restructuring achieved its operational objectives but was less effective in supporting workforce transition. Future organisational changes should prioritise structured training, early workforce engagement, and ongoing reinforcement activities to improve long-term effectiveness.

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Introduction

TATA Steel UK, a division of a global steel conglomerate, operates a major manufacturing facility at Port Talbot producing Hot Rolled Steel Coils (HRC) for global markets. The organisation has undergone significant transformation in recent years, including restructuring of production methods. This transformation involves transitioning from traditional blast furnace ironmaking to Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) steel production using domestically sourced scrap, supporting industry efforts to reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability (TATA Steel UK, Ltd., 2024). As a result, several major processing facilities have been decommissioned (TATA Steel UK, Ltd., 2026).

These large-scale changes resulted in workforce reductions of approximately 2,500 roles across the site. The organisation is currently operating within a transitional phase expected to last approximately five years, during which imported steel slabs are processed to maintain production while new EAF facilities are constructed. During this transition, further unplanned restructuring occurred within the Hot Rolled Products (HRP) department, including the reduction of fifteen operator and management roles.

Effective management of organisational change is critical to maintaining operational stability and workforce engagement (Kotter, 1996). Changes to operational processes are often required to improve efficiency, respond to shifting demand, or reallocate resources to strategic priorities. A structured change management process ensures that proposed changes are necessary, effectively implemented, and capable of delivering expected organisational value (Hayes, 2022).

In this case, restructuring was driven by declining production volumes and the inability to meet forecast output targets. The following evaluation compares implementation of this change against established frameworks, including Lewin's Force Field Analysis (Lewin, 1951), Lewin's Three-Step Model (Hussain et al., 2018), and Kotter's Eight-Step Model (Kotter, 1996).

Main Findings

Existing Organisational Structure (Prior to Change)

Hot Rolled Products (HRP) processes imported steel slab substrate into Hot Rolled Coil (HRC) for global distribution. The department operates multiple interconnected sections that coordinate to achieve production and quality targets. Two organisational structures exist within HRP, as outlined in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1 -Day and Shift Organisational Structure

The organisational change being evaluated specifically relates to the reduction of management and operator roles along with the redistribution of responsibilities within the shift structure only.

Each operational section is led by a Section Leader responsible for safety, operational performance, personnel management, and efficiency within defined geographical and process boundaries. Additional operational areas, including the Slab Yard, Quench, and Roll Shop, are geographically separated but managed within the HRP organisational structure.

These areas are illustrated in **Figure 2**, which highlights the geographical scope of responsibility associated with each section.



Figure 2 – Further HRP Demarcation Including Slab Yard, and Quench.

Prior to restructuring, responsibilities were distributed across five Section Leaders per shift, covering both operational units and personnel management responsibilities.

Intended Organisational Change

The organisational change focused on reducing Section Leader and operator roles by redefining section boundaries across seven operational areas:

- Slab Yard (SY)
- Reheat Furnaces (RHF)
- Reversing Roughing Mill (RR)
- Finishing Mill (FM)
- Hot Coil Finishing (HCF)
- Light Roll Shop (LRS)
- Quench (Qch)

Operator reductions occurred within the HCF and LRS areas, with one operator removed per shift in each location, resulting in ten redundancies. In addition to operator reductions, section boundaries were revised to redistribute responsibilities across remaining personnel.

A key element of the restructuring involved transferring responsibility for the Quench unit to the Cold Rolled Products department, removing responsibility from the Finishing Mill Section Leader. Further redistribution included:

- Moving Reheat Furnaces into the Slab Yard section
- Moving the Reversing Roughing Mill into the Finishing Mill section
- Removing one Section Leader position per shift

These changes reduced the number of Section Leaders from five to four per shift. Although the structural alignment improved operational logic, redistribution of responsibilities increased workload demands for several Section Leaders.

Drivers for Change

In this case, the change was driven by declining production volumes and the inability to meet forecast output targets. Forecast production was expected to reduce from approximately 2.1 to 1.3 million tonnes per year, while fixed operating costs associated with labour, services, and operational support remained largely unchanged. This created financial pressure to reduce labour expenditure and improve operational efficiency. In addition to cost reduction, the restructuring aimed to improve alignment between day-based asset ownership and shift-based operational responsibility, where previous boundary arrangements had created operational inefficiencies.

Resistance

Resistance to change was influenced by workforce conditions following earlier large-scale restructuring across the site. For many employees, further restructuring during an already uncertain transitional period reinforced concerns regarding job security and reduced confidence in long-term role stability. A younger workforce demographic also limited voluntary redundancy uptake and increased concern regarding compulsory redundancies.

Concerns regarding increased workload despite reduced staffing levels further contributed to resistance. Remaining personnel felt that operational expectations would remain largely unchanged despite reduced staffing levels, reinforcing feelings of stress and reduced organisational support (Rafferty and Griffin, 2006; Karasek, 1979)

Communication & Timeline

The communication of the proposed change was delivered through a series of structured communication sessions outlining the timeline for implementation. The initial announcement was made to the workforce on 29 November 2025, with implementation scheduled for 15 April 2026. The timing of the announcement, coinciding with the Christmas period, was widely viewed by employees as poorly timed for a restructuring process of this nature. During this period, fifteen personnel were expected to leave the business under the Voluntary Redundancy (VR) scheme or redeploy to alternative roles within the organisation.

A scoring system was to be implemented for those who were directly affected by this change, this scoring system is based on Attendance, Flexibility, Ability, Experience, amongst other factors. This scoring system was used to implement movements within the organisation should there not be enough volunteers to leave the business under the VR Scheme.

Managing the Transition

During the consultation period (November 2025 – April 2026), personnel directly affected by the change underwent aspirational interviews to determine whether they would leave the business under the Voluntary Redundancy (VR) scheme or remain within the organisation through redeployment. These interviews were conducted by local management and HR representatives. Personnel seeking redeployment also completed job-specific interviews to ensure appropriate placement within alternative roles.

No dedicated training time or resources were allocated to support role transition. Instead, training was conducted alongside existing duties, creating prolonged periods where employees were balancing operational demands alongside role transition. Employees were expected to maintain operational performance at reduced staffing levels while simultaneously adapting to unfamiliar responsibilities, increasing workload pressure and reducing work-life balance during the transition period (Karasek, 1979; Rafferty and Griffin, 2006).

Lewin's Force Field Analysis

Lewin's Force Field Analysis provides a structured method for identifying the factors that support or resist organisational change when used in the planning phase (Lewin, 1951). The model distinguishes between driving forces, which push the organisation toward change, and restraining forces, which act to resist or slow the process (Burnes, 2004). By identifying these competing influences, organisations can better understand the balance of forces affecting the success of change implementation (Hayes, 2022).

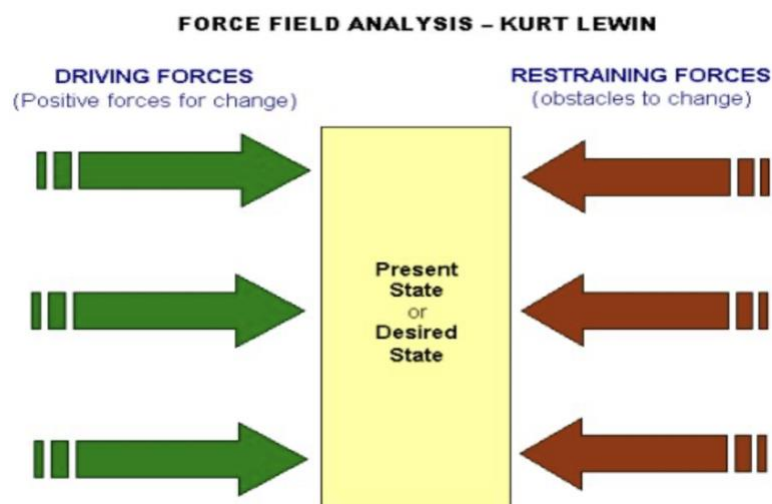


Figure 3 - Kurt Lewin Force Field Analysis Diagram (Connelly, 2023)

In the case of the HRP restructuring, several strong driving forces justified the need for change. A significant reduction in production demand created financial pressure due to the imbalance between forecast production output and fixed operating costs. The restructuring therefore aimed to reduce labour expenditure while improving operational efficiency and organisational alignment to remain financially sustainable.

At the same time, several restraining forces existed within the workforce environment. Previous restructuring activity had already reduced morale and increased uncertainty among employees. The introduction of further organisational change increased concerns regarding job security, workload expectations, and role stability. The balance between these driving and restraining forces is summarised in **Figure 4**.

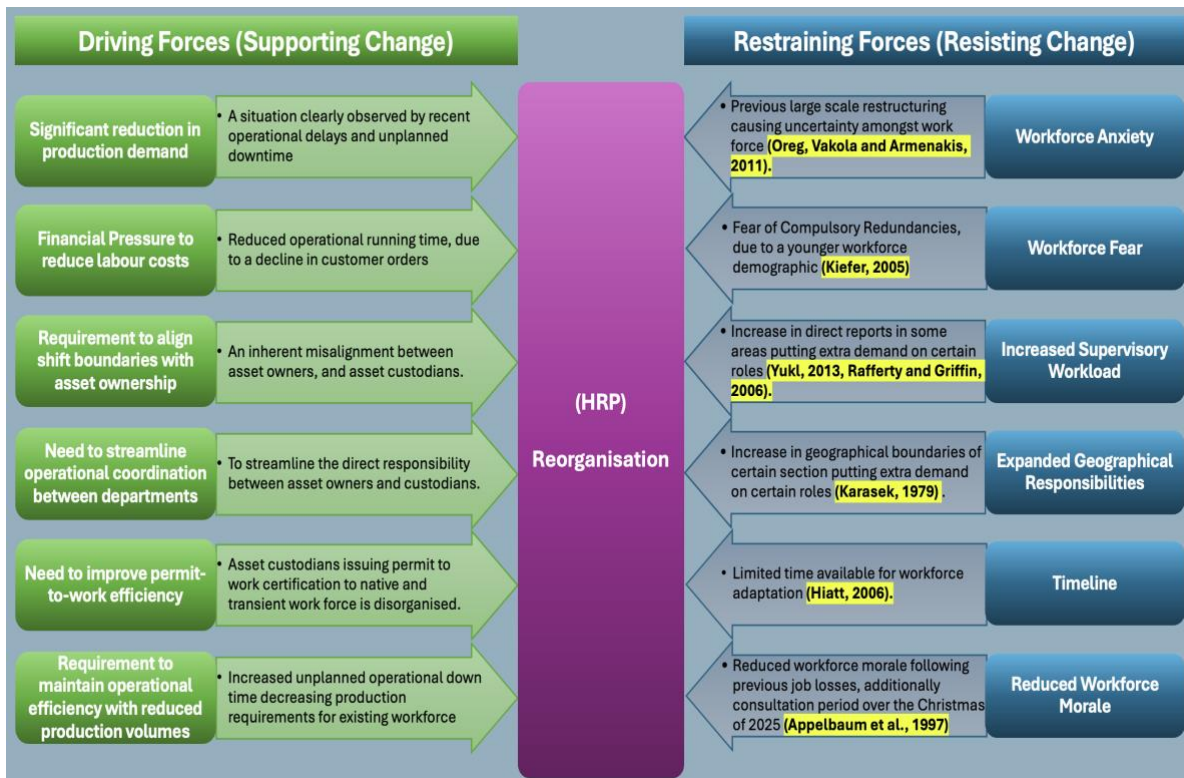


Figure 4 - Lewin's Forcefield Analysis of HRP's Reorganisation (Connelly, 2023)

The Force Field Analysis demonstrates that although the operational rationale for restructuring was clear, workforce resistance remained significant. Limited emphasis appears to have been placed on reducing restraining forces prior to implementation, contributing to increased employee anxiety and reduced acceptance of the change process (Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis, 2011).

Lewin's Three-Step Model provides a useful framework for evaluating how an organisational change was introduced and implemented (Lewin, 1947).

Lewin's Three-Step Model

Unfreeze Stage

The unfreeze stage involves preparing individuals to accept that change is necessary. In this case, operational pressures created a clear business justification for restructuring (Todnem, 2005). However, the workforce environment had already been affected by previous restructuring activity, reducing readiness for further change initiatives (Rafferty and Griffin, 2006).

Although formal communication meetings were conducted, employee concerns surrounding redundancy, redeployment, and long-term role security remained significant throughout the consultation period (Kiefer, 2005). Overall, the unfreeze stage was effective in communicating the operational need for change but less effective in preparing employees psychologically for transition. Lewin emphasises the importance of reducing restraining forces during this stage; however, workforce resistance remained largely unresolved.

Change Stage

The change stage involved implementing revised section boundaries, redistributing operational responsibilities to reduce operator and Section Leader roles (Kotter, 1996). Several positive outcomes were identified. Boundary realignment improved coordination between shift and day organisational structures, while permit-to-work processes became more streamlined through clearer authority boundaries (Yukl, 2013). However, redistribution of responsibilities increased workload demands for several Section Leaders, particularly where reporting structures and geographical responsibilities expanded simultaneously. In some cases, direct reporting responsibilities increased significantly, reducing available time for operational oversight. Geographical responsibilities also expanded, particularly within the Slab Yard area, increasing logistical and safety-management complexity (Karasek, 1979). Employees were additionally required to participate in interviews and redeployment discussions during implementation, contributing to increased stress throughout the transition period (Appelbaum et al., 1997). Limited training provision further reduced the effectiveness of the transition, as personnel were expected to adopt new responsibilities alongside existing operational duties.

Refreeze Stage

The refreeze stage involves embedding new working practices into daily operations to ensure long-term stability. This stage typically includes training, reinforcement of new behaviours, and ongoing evaluation of performance (Lewin, 1951; Burnes, 2020; Hayes, 2022).

In the HRP restructuring, very few training activities were introduced to support the transition into new roles. Employees were expected to assume full operational responsibility shortly

after limited training had been completed, reducing the opportunity to develop confidence in new working arrangements before full operational accountability was assigned (Hayes, 2022). In addition, there was limited evidence of structured reinforcement mechanisms following implementation. Lewin emphasises that the refreeze stage is critical for ensuring long-term stability of organisational change. Without structured reinforcement activities such as performance reviews, feedback collection, and workload monitoring, there is a risk that operational pressure may destabilise the new structure (Burnes, 2020). Overall, while the structural aspects of the change were successfully implemented, the refreeze stage appears to have been less effectively supported. This may affect the long-term sustainability of the organisational restructuring (Burnes, 2020; Kotter, 1996; Hayes, 2022).

While Lewin's Three-Step Model provides a broad framework for implementing organisational change, Kotter's Eight-Step Model offers a more detailed leadership-focused approach for managing workforce engagement and sustaining change throughout implementation. In the context of the HRP restructuring, workforce anxiety and uncertainty following previous restructuring activity represented significant restraining factors throughout implementation.

Operational and People Impact

The restructuring delivered both positive and negative impacts across operational and workforce domains. Improved alignment between shift responsibilities and asset ownership increased procedural efficiency. Permit-to-work processes became more streamlined through clearer authority boundaries, reducing duplication of responsibility. However, expanded geographical responsibility and increased reporting structures increased supervisory workload and introduced additional operational complexity. Limited training time and resources further increased the difficulty of adopting revised responsibilities.

Redeployment opportunities helped maintain workforce continuity, while voluntary redundancy opportunities were viewed differently depending on individual circumstances. However, ongoing restructuring activity across the department continued to affect workforce morale and confidence in organisational stability.

The timing of announcements during December 2025, combined with the proximity of voluntary redundancy deadlines, created additional pressure on employees. Personnel were required to make significant career decisions within limited timeframes, increasing stress and uncertainty (Rafferty and Griffin, 2006).

Conclusion

The restructuring of HRP roles and section boundaries was driven by declining production demand and associated financial pressures. From an operational perspective, reducing Section Leader and operator positions as well as redistributing responsibilities represented a logical approach to maintaining efficiency during reduced production activity. Improvements to organisational alignment and permit-to-work processes demonstrated measurable operational benefits.

Evaluation using Lewin's models identified that, although the operational rationale for change was clear, workforce preparation and reinforcement mechanisms were less effectively managed. Workforce resistance remained significant due to ongoing uncertainty, increased workload expectations, and limited transition support. During implementation, expanded geographical responsibility and increased reporting structures introduced additional supervisory pressures and operational risks.

Assessment against Kotter's Eight-Step Model further highlighted weaknesses in workforce engagement, communication and reinforcement activities. Kotter's model suggests that such restraining forces should be addressed through actions such as building a guiding coalition, communicating a clear vision, and reinforcing early successes (Kotter, 1996). Although urgency was successfully established, limited training provision and the absence of structured reinforcement mechanisms reduced workforce confidence. This weakened long-term embedding of new practices (Kotter, 1996).

The change impacted only the shift organisational structure, while the day structure remained unchanged, contributing to division rather than cohesion between organisational structures. Although the operational vision was clear, poor timing of announcements during the Christmas period and limited training provision reduced workforce confidence and increased

fear, anxiety and stress. Additionally, it weakened anchoring of new working practices. As a result, although the operational rationale for change was strong, workforce acceptance of the restructuring remained limited, particularly amongst employees directly affected by increased workloads and role uncertainty, demonstrating the importance of addressing human factors alongside structural requirements. An evaluation of these outcomes is illustrated in **Figure 5**.



Figure 5 - HRP Reorganisation Evaluation using Kotter's Eight Step Model (Kotter, 1996)

Overall, the restructuring achieved its operational objectives but was less effective in supporting workforce transition. Future organisational changes should prioritise earlier workforce engagement, structured training provision, and reinforcement mechanisms to improve long-term organisational stability and effectiveness (Hiatt, 2006).

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