

# **Solution-Focused Approaches in Management**

## **Chapter 21**

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### **Introduction**

One feature of the spread of solution-focused (SF) approaches over the past 15 years has been the many applications found in the area of management and organizational change. In many ways, this is not a surprising development; the pragmatic and effective nature of the approach matches the desire for efficient ways to make progress found in most organizations. From the time of early experiments in the mid-1990s, the SF approach has become increasingly influential.

This book is mainly concerned with research results. While controlled studies are possible in the field of therapy, applications in the organizational sphere are much more often carried out on an ad hoc basis; the main concern is to make progress, and whatever helps to do this is welcomed. There is far less emphasis on recording, writing up, and publishing accounts of the work.

This chapter is not, therefore, an account of a research study. It is a collection of what has been recorded and documented thus far. We can safely assume that the impact of SF approaches on management is even more widespread than anyone currently knows.

### **What We Have Learned So Far**

It seems very likely that some clinicians exposed to SF therapy will have also noticed that the approach can be used in a more general way to make progress under difficult circumstances. They will then presumably have made use of it to help themselves in managerial roles. It is therefore very difficult to say when this approach first appeared in the context of management.

As far as I am aware, the first training course to address SF coaching explicitly was run by British practitioner Harry Norman at Bristol University in 1996. Others around the world were discovering the advantages of the SF model independently. The earliest books appeared in German (Schmitz & Billen, 2000), and Dutch (Cauffman, 2001). The first book to specifically address SF management in English (Jackson & McKergow, 2002) helped to spread the word even further, and the SOLWorld community (<http://www.solworld.org>) started by these authors and their Bristol Solutions Group colleagues has gone on to become a worldwide network of consultants, managers, coaches, and facilitators developing myriad applications and variations. The SOLWorld community now includes, remarkably, a thriving Japanese network with its own local conferences and events. A new, more formal professional body, the Association for the Quality Development of Solution Focused Consulting and Training (SFCT; <http://www.asfct.org>), has been founded to support the development of SF practitioners within the consulting, coaching, and training world.

### **SF Interventions in Management: Varied Contexts**

One of the challenges of translating the SF therapy approach into management contexts is that these contexts are much more varied than the usual client-helper situation of therapy and counseling. Situations range from coaching (which may involve an external coach, a manager coaching a worker, or peer coaching) through workplace conversations including reviews and appraisals, team

development, quality groups, organizational development, leadership development, outplacement, conflict resolution, career guidance, and many more. As will become apparent, these many different contexts have brought a reappraisal of how SF practice can be defined and described.

While the usual question-based descriptions taken from the therapy world provide a good start, the different relationships found in the workplace give rise to different needs; how (for example) to ask questions from a not-knowing position if one is the manager, has known all those involved for many years, and will need to continue the relationship long after the conversation has finished. Jackson and McKergow (2002) offered six "solutions tools" and six SIMPLE principles to guide managers:

- *Solutions* - not problems
- *In between* - not individual
- *Make use of what's there* - not what isn't
- *Possibilities* - from the past, present, and future
- *Language* - simply said
- *Every case is different* - beware ill-fitting theory

Hjerth (in Klingenstierna, 2001) addressed the same issue in a different way with the PLUS model:

- *Platform* - what is the issue
- *Look from the preferred future* - what is wanted
- *Utilize successes and resources* - use what is already working
- *Stepping the scales* - next steps forward

Cauffman and Dierolf (2006) have offered the metaphor of a dance between those involved, with seven steps (socializing, contextualizing, goal setting, uncovering resources, giving compliments, differentiating through scaling, future orientation).

All these efforts highlight the challenge in translating the subtle simplicity of SF practice for an audience that wants something quick and easy with which to work. None of these translations is definitive; indeed, their variety shows how challenging it can be to describe SF practice. The impossibility of developing a complete and definitive model of SF practice has brought challenges in spreading the word in management circles, as compared to approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry (see, for example, Cooperider & Whitney, 2001). However, it has also helped to generate many interesting variations, each of which may work well in particular circumstances. For a comparison between SF, Appreciative Inquiry, and Positive Psychology see McKergow (2005).

Solution-focused work is a very practice-oriented field, which may have resulted in the relative underdevelopment of the academic side (Gale Miller, as quoted in McKergow, 2009b). There are signs that this situation is also starting to change: David Weber is now teaching the SF approach as a consulting and communication methodology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and the SFCT journal *InterAction* publishes peer-reviewed papers.

## **Research Methods**

As I mentioned in the Introduction, there tends to be less focus on standardized testing/research in the organizational field than in therapy. Most organizations are primarily concerned with results in their own context rather than with adding to global knowledge, and even outcome research-trying the same intervention over and over and logging the results-is not a feature of the landscape. This

fact may be connected to less rigorous adherence to a diagnostic paradigm; after all, a diagnosis is supposed to provide valuable information for treatment, and the therapeutic conventions about diagnosis may lead researchers down the path of testing interventions against certain diagnoses. In the world of the manager, progress now-in whatever messy and confused situation-is of overriding importance.

In general, the research data that exist are more like case studies of bespoke interventions in specific situations. In some cases there are measured outcomes, in others simply a satisfactory conclusion from the organization's point of view. However, some projects have been written up and published with enough detail for the reader to be able to place confidence in the results, and it is these projects that I summarize here. There are many more interventions with anecdotal evidence of success.

## **Results of Research**

### ***Coaching***

Coaching has been one of the earliest fields to pick up on the possibilities offered by the SF approach. This may well be due to the contextual similarities between therapy and coaching: A helper talks to a client with the overall aim of helping the client make progress in a challenging situation. Anthony Grant of the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney was one of those to grasp some of the possibilities early on (Greene & Grant, 2003), although his work features much else besides SF ideas. Peter Szabó of Weiterbildungs Forum in Switzerland has been teaching SF coaching since about 1997, and his book with Insoo Kim Berg (Berg & Szabó, 2005) has been influential in the international coaching community. He has recently presented an even more brief and clear version of these ideas (Szabó & Meier, 2009). This chapter looks at coaching as a management tool. Chapter 22 offers a more detailed look at the coaching field and, in particular, the use of the SF approach in life coaching.

The development of coaching as a management tool during the 1990s was greatly helped by the work of John Whitmore (Whitmore, 1992), whose GROW model proved popular with managers. The easy-to-remember framework helped those learning to coach to stay on track during their conversations. Recognizing this, Jackson and McKergow (2007) devised the OSKAR model around the turn of the millennium to serve a similar purpose in SF coaching conversations:

- **Outcome** - what is wanted, for the client, the topic, and the session?
- **Scale** - on a scale from 1 to 10 where 10 is the outcome, where are you now?
- **Know-how** - what is getting you that high already? What other relevant know-how can you find elsewhere in the organization?
- **Affirm and Action** - what impresses the coach? What are some small next steps?
- **Review** - what's better since last time? How did you do that?

The OSKAR model has been used in many organizations as a simple way to engage managers with SF processes and ideas. Some projects that have been reported include those of Walkers Snackfoods (Jackson, 2005), the Metropolitan Police in London, and the London Borough of Merton (Sked & Waldman, 2006). Readers may note the element of sharing know-how contained within OSKAR; this was deliberately included at the request of clients and offers another dimension of finding "what's working."

Godat (2006) has worked with some 50 SF questions on cards. He reports that simply using these questions, drawn in a random way without any skill or design, can be an effective solution-building

aid for managers.

### ***Team Development***

Helping teams work more effectively together is a key task for managers. Often an external facilitator will be brought in to design and run group processes to help the team make progress in challenging situations, and the SF approach provides an excellent framework for this kind of practice. For example, Henden (2005) reports on remotivating a team facing a difficult future by using a "time-quake" to imagine themselves at a later date, having weathered the storm. This process serves as an equivalent to a miracle question; a better future is imagined without any consideration of what caused it to come about.

Meier (2005) has produced the SolutionCircle, an eight-phase process for managers and facilitators working with teams that has been used in educational (Szabó & Meier, 2007) and corporate contexts. The Solution Focused Reflecting Team format (see Norman et al., 2005) has proved popular with teams around the world. This format is a way of sharing group wisdom and bringing experience to bear on an issue that is held, on behalf of the group, by one of its team members.

Röhrig and Clarke (2008) have assembled a collection of activities used by SF facilitators from around the world. The number and range of contributions are indicative of the increasing acceptance of these methods. Jackson and Coombs (2009) have reported on a team event with art handlers from TATE in London. Interestingly, these very practical people seem to have been engaged well by the SF processes employed, indicating that such methods may be used with a wide range of work levels and staff. Korn (2006) has used SF ideas combined with the psychodrama of Moreno in developing a departmental team from an information technology (IT) service provider.

### ***Organizational Development and Performance***

Moving up from teams, SF methodology is also being used at the level of organizational change. Organizational development (OD) is an area where SF ideas can be readily applied. Clarke and McKergow (2007) report on the successful use of SF methods in a restructuring/reorganization project at a semiconductor factory. Glass (2007) shows how one manager can make small changes that ripple through a whole department, making sizable improvements to morale in a billion-pound conglomerate in the United Kingdom. Intriguingly, Glass identifies the power of many tiny interventions as opposed to one big and much-trumpeted change program; if small actions are made guerrilla style as part of the normal flow of work, then there can be no resistance.

Making a more effective organization is one thing. It is often argued that making a more profitable organization is quite another. Although the bottom line is easy to measure, there are typically many factors involved, and singling out the effects of particular interventions is challenging. Hoffman and Luisser (2007) report on a fascinating direct comparison study from two Scandinavian food production factories. In one factory, shift leaders at the middle management level received SF leadership training-6 days in four modules, spread across some 3 months, with three additional coaching sessions during the period. The impact on their performance, and on the performances of their subordinates, was measured using a mix of qualitative interviews, self-rating forms, and questionnaires including subordinates' perceptions. Five "hard" indicators of overall performance were also used-returns by customers, absence, loss of packaging materials, faults in production, and overall equipment efficiency. Results from this plant were also compared to those of the other "control" plant, producing the same goods in the same company and in the same overall

environment.

Improvements were seen in the areas of communication, time management, and leadership ability as perceived by subordinates. Even more remarkably, statistically significant improvements were seen in returns by customers and loss of packaging materials. Many small changes resulting from the training were being made as the study was being concluded, leading the authors to suggest that further improvements can reasonably be assumed. This study is unusual in its rigor.

Other senior managers have linked SF working to overall company results. Van Hogh (2009) introduced the management team of the Dutch IT company Hogendoorn to SF ideas via a workshop and a strategic planning exercise. The resulting changes to business plans and implementation led to a doubling in profit and halving of stocks and debtors in just 3 months. Van Hogh links this success with the way that SF methods helped connect the management and workforce and channeled energy and motivation into next-day action. He advised managers not to attempt to "convert" all staff to SF processes; starting at the top and engaging people was the way to go.

On a smaller scale, Bauer and Lueger (2007) used SF ideas to help increase the profitability of a small chain of sportswear retailers in Austria, using Lueger's (2006) idea of the power of positive differences-what makes things better, which is not the same as the opposite: what makes things worse-in time (sales in one shop over different periods) and in space (between different shops in the same chain). They found that this helped the staff move beyond statements of what was wrong (in this case, extended roadworks outside the shop in question) and focus on what helped (layout, furnishings, chat with the customers). Turnover increased by 20%.

### ***SF Approaches in Everyday Management***

The applications considered so far have related to attempts to improve specific aspects of personal and organizational performance. However, one aspect of management, as opposed to therapy, is that there are continuing relationships between those involved that may last for many years where there is no clear helper-helped context; those involved are supposed to be working together in the interests of the organization. It appears that introducing aspects of SF practice into this context can have a positive effect on the productivity of everyday operations.

One common feature of introducing managers to SF ideas seems to be that they will then apply these ideas in a flexible way to whatever they are working on at the time. This can result in all kinds of different tactics, from simply asking a single refocusing question in a meeting to tackling a whole project in an SF way. One reason for this might be that "what works?" conversations are by definition positive conversations.

Mona Hojab (2007) relates her experience of using SF ideas in everyday management in her role in a London housing association. She found many ways to use SF ideas, in particular the application of small steps in difficult situations. She describes this tactic as Trojan Mice: Like the famous Trojan Horse of legend, these small steps do not attract great attention but can lead to all kinds of interesting progress. Each small step is viewed as a kind of experiment rather than a done deal. It's impossible to tell which small steps will have an impact; the key thing is to watch what happens and learn. This is a good example of how one element of SF practice can find multiple novel applications in different contexts.

International human resources (HR) manager Antoinette Oglethorpe related her many uses of SF in an interview (McKergow, 2008). She identified as a key benefit the way in which SF methods

provide a framework for working alongside managers in a process way while keeping discussions focused and on track. Along with many other applications, Oglethorpe mentions employee management and retention; she argues that SF ideas offer an excellent way to encourage disgruntled employees who are thinking of leaving to change their minds, providing major cost savings in recruitment and training for organizations.

Hans Zeinhofer (2007) describes how he used SF ideas in his role as managing director of an electricity company in Austria. He was asked to lead a review of a near disaster in customer communication-and did so by simply asking, "What did we do right?" and "What will we do better next time?" This was not at all what his senior colleagues expected-they anticipated an exploration of what had gone wrong-but it proved eminently satisfactory.

### ***Leadership Development***

Exactly where management ends and leadership begins is something of a moot point in the organizational world. One old adage has it that "management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." While studies such as that of Hoffman and Luisser (2007) contain elements of leadership, other authors and practitioners have considered the question of leadership in more detail.

Mussman (2006) examined ways in which SF leadership showed in day-to-day work in a Swiss health clinic. Using interviews and questionnaires, she concluded that SF leadership can live alongside more conventional classical and authoritarian behaviors. The idea of "leading from behind," appreciating the work of others, and working in a process orientation were noted. Mussman also found that the managers saw their own SF abilities in a much more critical way than did their subordinates.

Garssen (2006) describes a top-level leadership development program in the city of Apeldoorn in the Netherlands. Taking inspiration from Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits" work (Covey, 1993) as well as SF, Garssen and his team worked with 120 managers with positive results. Johansson and Persson (2007) describe their work with the leader of a 40-strong Social Security team in Sweden, resulting in improvements in performance across the board.

One aspect of leadership involves working with messy and ambiguous situations. Röhrig (2007) describes working with those involved in ensuring that patients' views are taken into account in the German health care system. The Cologne Local Health Conference had commissioned a report, for which there were several hundred pages of data. Using a very simple SF approach combining an eye on the finished document and small steps along the way, Röhrig describes a successful way to work with a confusing mess of data without attempting to simplify it. In a similar vein, Dierolf (2007) reports on using SF methods to help an international chemical company pick a path through a maze of regulatory and stakeholder issues.

Brent and McKergow (2009) have addressed the application of SF coaching as a leadership tool. They see SF as an excellent practical strategy for dealing with complex interconnected situations (a description that can be applied to much of organizational life!). They have found capable managers trained in subjects like engineering, who naturally attempt to apply the same analytical skills to these complex situations. Solution-focused methodology offers a valuable alternative, stressing observation, awareness, and small steps over direction and false confidence in an unknowable position.

McKergow (2009a) has extended the idea of SF leadership with the metaphor of the leader as host. Although the idea of the SF therapist as one who hosts conversations has been around for many years, McKergow finds this metaphor as one with a rich resonance in the organizational community. Host leaders use the power of invitation, create spaces, and move backward and forward as demanded by the situation, producing a rich and flexible set of ideas for practice.

### ***Performance Management***

A key part of most managers' role is to appraise and review the performance of their subordinates, often as part of an organizationwide review process. Lueger (2005) has rethought this conversation from an SF perspective in a way that has proved influential in many organizations. Lueger's novel approach of preserving evidence of difference by allocating scores across several performance grades, rather than the more conventional practice of choosing a single grade to represent performance, can make possible a much wider range of conversations between the manager and the employee.

This approach has been applied in a number of large organizations. Powell and Coombs (2006) describe the application of this approach at TATE, the United Kingdom's main modern and British art galleries. These authors applied a variety of SF interventions, including coaching and performance reviews, with positive results. One measurable outcome was that the proportion of staff having a formal review increased from about 70% to about 90%. Powell and Coombs discuss the power of the "ripple effect"-also discussed by Kay (2006)-where change starts from small actions that then ripple through the organization through a variety of (mainly) informal channels. This is another example of an SF idea-making use of what's there-finding an interesting home in an organizational context. Fink (2006) reports on the application of Lueger's (2005) approach in a Finnish university.

### ***Quality Management***

The use of analytical (and problem-focused) processes to improve quality has been an important feature of life for manufacturing companies and others over the past 30 years. These methods usually involve the measurement and elimination of defects, aiming to achieve preset levels of quality. As such, this movement has been very effective.

Durnford (2007) reports on applying SF methods alongside these more traditional approaches. Working in the UK satellite TV business British Sky Broadcasting, he found that the different and positive flavor of SF applications could make a valuable contribution. In situations where conventional problem analysis was failing to produce progress, Durnford found that he could apply SF methods to open up new avenues and ideas. Also, classical processes sometimes shed light on what is to be done-but not on how to engage people in doing it. Durnford concludes that SF processes can play a good part in engaging workers in implementing new work practices. Clarke (2006) described a similar process as "clearing up after McKinsey" when she assisted with the implementation of a new manufacturing system devised by the leading consultancy firm. Heilbrunn (2009) describes how SF methods helped add great value to quality and make auditing more effective and efficient in his role as quality auditor with an aerospace component manufacturer.

### ***Conflict Resolution/Mediation***

The use of SF ideas in conflict resolution and mediation is not, of course, limited to management applications. Bannink (2009) has been a leading figure in developing SF mediation models. She

describes a three-meeting mediation between a team of nurses, as well as surveying many connections between SF ideas and the mediation literature. Working in a similar situation, Macdonald (2006) describes his use of SF ideas to "find co-operation quickly" in challenging circumstances. Schienecker (2006) used SF ideas in an organizational conflict situation with very positive results.

Stellamans (2006) describes his use of SF ideas in international conflict situations-Northern Ireland, Congo, and Kosovo. He makes the important point that while peace building is often preceded by an analysis and categorization of the conflict (based on previous conflicts), an SF approach looks instead for exceptions and small signs of progress and willingness in the present. Oglethorpe (2009) has developed the PARTNER framework to help managers, HR professionals, and mediators prepare for and handle conflict discussions.

### *Sales*

The process of selling goods and services is a key part of any business, and one that is often approached with trepidation by newcomers. Although it is a long way from its original therapeutic roots, the collaborative ethos of SF practice provides a useful framework for conversations aimed at finding out what people want and helping them achieve it. Sproson (2010) took an early lead in this area, reframing selling as "client recruitment." Regele and Regele (2006) used SF processes to help refocus a sales and marketing team from a multinational chemical company on attractive opportunities. Hofstetter (2008) has gone even further and drawn together much research from the SF and sales fields into a new approach to selling.

### *Strategy*

Strategic planning was famously described by McGill University's Professor Henry Mintzberg (1994) as "an oxymoron." He argued that it was clearly a misnomer to apply the word planning to something as complex and fluid as the long term. The SF approach, with its focus on useful change and positive difference, is clearly a candidate for some kind of "new strategic planning." Woodings (2006; discussed in Stewart, 2009) has developed and performed a trial of a form of strategic intervention based on alignment (of the people) and direction (of the organization) rather than the more conventional analysis, goals, and action plans. His work, first in a vast multi-billion-dollar oil project and subsequently with the BBC's Performing Groups, has shown that there is great potential for SF ideas to permeate further into these high-level organizational processes.

### *Training*

The positive pragmatism of the SF approach has found ready use in the training department of a number of organizations. Learning and development professionals have been quick to take on aspects of SF; encouragement to look at "what's working" when examining the presentations skills of a novice, for example, can provide a much firmer base for skill development than a detailed analysis of "things to do differently." McKergow (2007) cataloged 11 different kinds of application of SF ideas by the training department of a U.K. building society. These included uses in course design, facilitation, sales training, training needs analysis, e-learning, and strategic impact (working with the organization's executives).

The way in which SF (and anything else) is trained can also include SF ideas. Hankovzsky and Szabó (2002) have written about how they construct training courses using SF ideas where the content is better "caught" (by practice and demonstration) than "taught" didactically. The work of



Hirschburger (2006) in developing SF evaluation approaches has also been influential. He argues that any kind of training or intervention can be evaluated in a way that not only measures the impact, but also reinforces and builds on it. The use of SF questions in these processes gives a remarkable new aspect to this field.

### ***Limitations***

The studies and cases mentioned above show wide applicability of the SF approach to management and organizational contexts. However, this should not be taken to indicate that SF ideas will work wonders in any situation irrespective of the manner in which they are used. The authors cited above are mostly experienced and skilled SF practitioners who could be expected to carefully fit their actions to the context at hand, in keeping with the principle that "every case is different" (Jackson and McKergow, 2002).

The lack of any peer-reviewed material showing SF to be an ineffective or, worse, a damaging approach is notable but perhaps not surprising. It is unlikely that any SF practitioner, sensing that his or her work was going nowhere, would see it through to the bitter end and then write it up! This is surely not to say that there have been no disappointments along the way-just that, as in any organizational change process, nothing works all the time. The SF mantra of "stop doing what doesn't work and do something different" is helpful in ensuring that the frustrations of management are merely the ordinary frustrations of life rather than the repeated roadblocks of dysfunction.

### **Practice Guidelines**

One aspect of the results presented above is that these many applications seem to have all been extremely successful. The way in which the SF approach seems to fit all the different areas is remarkable. This should encourage others to carry on and develop their own new applications and mini-models to build on the basic SF framework in other areas. It seems unlikely that an SF intervention-done with care, respect, and skill-could cause real and lasting harm.

Many of the interventions and projects described above were undertaken by managers and consultants with strong experience in their specialist field (coaching, conflict management, or whatever). Within this, it seems to me that they have by and large kept the flexibility of the SF approach rather than assembling something overcodified and mechanical.

Practice guidelines therefore include the following:

- Build on your own speciality and experience; don't expect to go from SF coach to master conflict mediator overnight.
- Stay flexible and encourage others to stay flexible; this is a pragmatic approach stressing the uniqueness of each case.
- Be bold; develop new applications and models for SF within the management field.

### **Future Studies**

As the SF approach becomes more widely known and used in the management world, it will become increasingly important both to position what we do in relation to other management approaches and to be clear about what makes SF unique and different. This will be a challenge. The next steps might involve working with people more accustomed to other approaches, to see how

they view SF and what their views are about where SF might or might not be useful.

Longer-term follow-up studies would also be interesting. We know that SF therapy has good long-term results; is this also true in the organizational sphere? Do managers who learn SF keep on using it, and do they get better results as they become more experienced with the approach?

Another possibility is to make more connections between the relatively underdeveloped academic philosophical side of SF methodology and the well-developed practical side. Many business schools seem to me to be uncomfortable with an approach that is so flexible and under continuing development. Clearly, we do not wish to ossify and prevent further developments of SF approaches; and yet, if the field does not begin to find its place alongside other known approaches, there is a risk that it will disappear completely from the wider world and become the domain of a few dedicated followers. This would be a great shame; the insights and sharpness of the SF approach can make a big contribution over the decades to come.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined some of the ways in which SF ideas have been used in management thus far. There are many others for which there was no space, including applications relating to workplace environments, branding, health and safety improvement, and project management. There are also many other applications that have been used, but not yet published formally, such as the work of Yasuteru Aoki with Canon Finetech Inc. in Japan (recently published as Aoki, 2010), applications in career guidance and outplacement, and negotiation. There is no doubt a host of uses that will never see the light of day, aside from their benefit to those involved.

There are several important messages to take from all these developments. The first is that the SF approach, as a general philosophy of change, has applications far beyond its original therapeutic use. The developments led by the Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC team), described as "serendipitous" by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg (1995), have opened the door to a new and valuable way to approach challenging situations. The sheer variety and quantity of experience in the organizational field alone attest to this.

Secondly, the ways in which experience has been written, shared, and used has shown that the organizational SF community is one where the original values of modesty, care, sharing credit, and appreciating success are alive and well. Visitors to SOLWorld conferences often comment on the overwhelmingly generous and appreciative nature of the gathering, often coupled with remarks about how unusual and refreshing this is.

Finally, in a business world that thrives on protecting knowledge and intellectual property, the SF community has strived to keep an open-source ethos. Practitioners have their own favourite ways to present what they do, but by making everything open and encouraging people to apply these ideas and share what they have learned, there has been no successful attempt to trademark or claim ownership of these ideas; one attempt to claim ownership (not from anyone referred to here) in the United Kingdom was rejected by the Patent Office. The SOLWorld charter clearly states that "SF ideas and principles belong to everyone." By placing so much of our work in the public domain, I hope we have made it impossible for anyone to successfully claim ownership in the future, leaving the field clear for further development, sharing, and results. The Association for the Quality Development of Solution-Focused Consulting and Training (<http://www.asfct.org>), with its journal *InterAction*, is now acting as a focal point for new research and writing in this area.

## Key Findings to Remember

- The SF approach has relevance far beyond the original therapeutic setting.
- The SF approach has been successfully applied in many management settings.
- Broader definitions of the SF approach have been pioneered in the organizational field, which may help the field develop across the board.
- The use of SF is becoming increasingly important in the coaching world.
- The pragmatism, flexibility, and results of SF are welcomed by leaders and managers around the world.
- The international SF community has a reputation for openness, generosity, and appreciation, and is seeking to keep the approach open source in an age of licensing and intellectual property.

## Further Learning

- The Association for the Quality Development of Solution Focused Consulting and Training (SFCT) is the professional body for those using the SF approach in organizations, with professional reviews, accreditation, the academic journal *InterAction*, and national chapters worldwide. The Web site is <http://www.asfct.org>
- The SOLWorld community offers conferences, discussions, and an online community for those applying SF in management. The Web site is <http://www.solworld.org>
- The Centre for SF at Work has a large library of resources, articles, and other materials. The Web site is <http://www.sfwork.com>

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The solution-focused inventory: A tripartite taxonomy for teaching, measuring and conceptualising solution-focused approaches to coaching. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 7(2), 98-105. Grant, A.M. (2012). *Principles of child protection: Management and practice*. Open University Press. Lietz, C.A. (2011). *Articles. Solution-Focused Approaches in Management*. Chapter 21. *SF Approaches in Management*. Mark McKergow. An landmark review of the research and writings about applications of SF to management. They will then presumably have made use of it to help themselves in managerial roles. It is therefore very difficult to say when this approach first appeared in the context of management. As far as I am aware, the first training course to address SF coaching explicitly was run by British practitioner Harry Norman at Bristol University in 1996. Others around the world were discovering the advantages of the SF model independently. The earliest books appeared in German (Schmitz & Billen, 2000), and Dutch (Cauffman, 2001). Managing this new approach is the primary responsibility of Product and Solution Management. In the Lean Enterprise, these duties must be fulfilled in a far more Agile manner, as is illustrated in Table 1. *Responsibility. Collaborate with Solution Management* At the Large Solution Level, Solution Management plays a similar role, but with a focus on the capabilities of the larger solution. But building an effective solution is no more effective than the collaboration between the two roles. This involves participation in solution backlog refinement and prioritization, as well as splitting capabilities into features, and NFRs, as the case may be.