



## ***The Business of Coaching is Change***

Clients come to coaches and consultants because they want change and traditionally see the coach as a change agent. There are many coaching models on the market to choose from. Most have a lot of merit and can book positive results. I recently discovered *Solutions Focus*, not a model but an approach to change with some impressive and lasting results.

### **Solutions Focus**

What is Solutions Focus (SF)? Mark McKergow, director of the Centre for Solutions Focus at Work in the UK, calls it the new wave of change technology. It is an approach that has swept the world the past 20 years and has its foundations in the Solution Focused Brief Therapy work of Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg and their colleagues of the Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee. It has however outgrown its therapy background and is now used in varied fields of coaching in the business and organizational world. Global names like Nationwide Building Society (UK), Royal Bank of Canada, Lufthansa (Germany) and Canon (Japan) are benefiting from the SF approach.

### **Change is happening all the time**

One of the tenets of SF is that change is happening all the time. This means that the coach is not so much a change agent but has the job to help clients find useful change already present in their life and to amplify it as the difference that makes a difference. SF coaches help clients to make progress in the direction of their own choice.

### **SF Principles and Tools that Enhance Positive Change**

We acknowledge the problem but the focus is on the solution and not the problem. We believe there is no link of necessity between the problem and the solution. We do not analyze or diagnose but look for the shortest road to the solution. We ask the client: What do they want to change? How would that be different? What would be the benefits of the change? Hereby we translate problem descriptions into goals and objectives. We never ask "why" but "what" and shortcut many hours of fruitless delving into the problem. We use a tool called the "miracle question" to elicit a specific and concrete description or example of the change that is desired. We ask the client to imagine a time in the near future where the problem has disappeared and the desired change has taken place. What would then be the first thing they notice? What would they do differently? What would significant others notice? Our experience is that this creates hope and that the projected solution becomes more tangible and therefore more possible..

We can then discover what works already and do more of it as seeds of the emerging future. We look into the past for strengths and focus on what is going well. We use a tool called the scaling question which helps clients to evaluate their current position, 10 is the desired future and 0 is the absolute opposite. Then we investigate how clients managed to get from 0 to their current position. What strengths and competencies are present that they can build on? Next we might investigate what  $n+1$  would look like. What small steps can clients take to move up the scale? Small steps are an excellent tool, its easy, it can be done quickly, it creates hope and has a snowball effect towards the emerging future. The combination of a clear direction and small next steps is amazingly potent in difficult situations.

## Conclusion

There is a lot more to SF than stated here but hopefully this will influence you to do some investigating into SF. It will be worth your while as SF is big on the world map of coaching and consulting. I am finding it very useful as an approach to change.

## References

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As published in COMENSAnews June 2009