



The McKergow Quarterly

News from Mark McKergow and the Centre for Solutions Focus at Work

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SF and the Asian connection

This issue of the McKergow Quarterly focuses on different ways in which SF is connecting and making a difference in Japan and Asia.

We're just back from J-SOL 5 – the *fifth* Japanese SF-in-organisations conference. The way SF has taken off across Asia has been one of the more surprising elements of this work – The Solutions Focus book went first into Korean, then quickly into Chinese and then Japanese in 2008.



It seems that there is a great affinity in Asia for SF work. This may be down to several factors:

- SF gets you to listen very hard – and very respectfully. This is very important in Asian cultures – even more so than in the West.
- SF has appreciating and affirming high on the agenda – in Asian eyes

this is seen as 'gaining face', very respectful and relationship-building.

People want to get things done – in a respectful way. SF therefore ticks both boxes!

Read about J-SOL 5 and the impact that SF is having in Japan – [click here to download the PDF.](#)

SF, rutenso and the aftermath of the 2011 Japanese tsunami

I have been writing occasionally about the overarching idea of 'rutenso' – the art of working with, and thriving in, constant change. Japanese solutionist Yuzuru Yoshida (pictured with me below) has made some connections during his relief work in the tsunami-affected area. He has written movingly about how rutenso and SF, and the big idea of small steps, fit well with the Japanese culture, particularly in these challenging times.



Read more about Yoshida-san's reflections on the sfwork blog – [click here.](#)

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SF and Kaizen – not all small steps are equal

Kaizen

改善

To make better

You've probably heard about the Kaizen way of thinking – continuous improvement with small steps. I recently got thinking about how this connects (or not) with the way that SF uses small steps for change. Read my blog post at <http://sfworkblog.wordpress.com/2012/03/20/sf-and-kaizen-not-all-small-steps-are-equal/>

The Quarterly Case: SF as a tool for managers (rather than consultants)

One of the stand-out elements from the J-SOL conference in Kyoto, Japan was the number of managers (as opposed to consultants) who were attending and sharing their ideas.

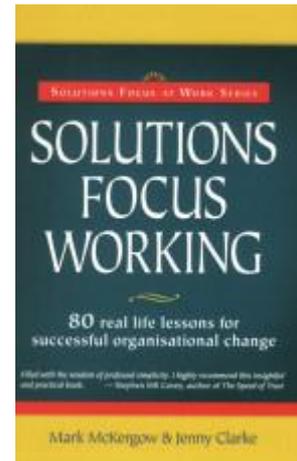
One such company is ZACROS, a manufacturer of medical packaging. This successful organisation has been SF enthusiasts for a while, and the managers are regular J-SOL participants. You can see their smartly-jacketed team during their presentation.



Their workshop this year focused on how they teach SF to new joiners as part of their induction training. They teach TWO ways of thinking – 'fact focus' (FF) and 'solution focus' (SF). FF is their (rather good) term for conventional problem solving – which is of course still applicable in the workplace in contexts where a good dose of evidence gathering and logical thinking will help.

They then teach SF as a separate way of thinking, to be used in more complex situations, where people are key, and where FF isn't working. This seems very good thinking to me – and it echoes the experience of people like Sky TV here in the UK, who found that SF and problem focus could both work – as long as they were separated by a coffee break or something, so as not to mess too much with the heads of those involved.

The Sky TV experience is written up by us with Trevor Durnford as a chapter in our casebook Solutions Focus Working – [click here for more details and to buy the book from Amazon.](#)



"Filled with the wisdom of profound simplicity. I highly recommend this insightful and practical book."

Stephen MR Covey, author of The Speed of Trust

"A superb book for anyone interested in how to address change."

Mike Brent, Ashridge Business School

"A 'must read' recommendation... It immediately expands the applications of the brilliant Solutions Focus approach"

Paul R Scheele, author of Photoreading and Natural Brilliance

Book focus: Foreign language editions of The Solutions Focus

While we're talking about Asian language editions, here is a list of online purchasing sources for The Solutions Focus book in different languages:

Japanese:

組織の成果に直結する問題解決法
ソリューションフォーカス

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Swedish: Lösningfokuserat Ledarskap

Italian: Punta Alla Soluzione

Lithuanian: Susitelkimas á sprendimus

Dutch: Oplossingsgericht denken

Chinese (simplified characters): 跳過問題, 直接做對

Korean: 성공한 CEO는 단순하게 해결한다



Randomised controlled trials in a complex world

I am a member of the Synthesis thinktank here in London. Under the excellent leadership of Greg Fisher we look for ways of using complexity science – of which SF is one strong practical exemplar – to influence public policy in the UK and elsewhere.



The Synthesis team produces a regular blog which is well worth signing up for at <http://www.synthesisips.net>. I recently contributed a post about the latest UK Cabinet Office

advice paper on using randomised controlled trials to test public policy.

This is basically a good thing – why on earth is so much energy expended on ideological debate on what to do, which is never then properly evaluated. However, in a complex world it isn't quite that simple... Read more at <http://www.synthesisips.net/blog/test-learn-adapt-and-repeat-learning-and-adaptation-in-public-policy/>

Transform your SF skills with Mark: 16 week online course starts 15 September 2012

Our next SF Professional course with University of Wisconsin Milwaukee is starting on 15 September 2012. The course is 16 weeks packed with interaction, reading, exercises, coaching practice, project work, tools, ideas and everything you could wish to know about SF work in organisational settings.

The course has many advantages for people seeking a top-class training in SF for organisational settings like coaching, team development, OD and change management:

- Builds from the basic SF tools into more advanced applications
- Work on Skype to coach international partners
- Real-life exercises mean you're working on your

own challenges right from the start

- Your final project can count towards professional recognition with SFCT
- Mark works with you throughout the process – commenting, encouraging, expanding on the learning
- Gather a great circle of international friends and colleagues
- Become an SF leader for your own organisation!

"The impact with clients who I have in the past experienced some sense of "stuckness" has been amazing. I have seen a rise in energy and commitment by the client to take action."

UWM have produced a great new two-page flyer – click on the image below to download and share the PDF.



You don't need to have SF experience to enjoy and benefit from this course, which can also lead to full membership of SFCT (www.asfct.org). Places are limited and are already going –

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sign up before 15 August for the early bird discount and save \$300.

[Click here for more details on the sfwork website.](#)

SFCT UK chapter meeting, London, 15 October 2012 – open invitation

SFCT, the professional body for SF coaches, consultants and trainers, holds regular UK chapter meetings. The next one is in London on Monday 15 October at the offices of BRIEF. Our lead topic is SF, Appreciative Inquiry and strategic planning, led by David Shaked.

I am issuing an open invitation to anyone interested in SF in organisational settings to come along to the meeting, **even if you're not a member**. Learn something interesting, meet some great people and find out what we're doing in SFCT.

The meeting runs 12 noon to 6pm to allow travel on the day. Come and join us free.

Rippling out... SF coaching keeps on going in the NHS

In 2008, we were invited to train groups of managers in SF coaching, using our very popular 'SF Coaching for Leaders' programme. Between then and 2012 we've trained eleven groups of managers, with the twelfth group about to start.

The programme uses our OSKAR coaching model – a very popular way to introduce SF to groups of

managers as it's catchy and memorable.

What we hadn't really expected was the way that, given a great set of tools, people will start to use them in ways we had never expected or bargained for. Yes, they used the approach for coaching, and they also started to apply SF thinking to all manner of tough and challenging situations.

After a year or so, AWP were referring to this work as 'the tools that unlock leadership' in the NHS journal – you can read the article [here](#). We helped them to apply SF thinking to different situations including negotiation and conflict. And finally we are now embarking on a programme to build 'recovery conversations' with their service users – the patients themselves.

It's been a remarkable journey – and you can read about it in our recent article in 'Coaching At Work' magazine – [click here](#). Or download the pdf by clicking [here](#).



[Click here](#) for more on the SF Coaching for Leaders programme.

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Open invitation to join Mark, Jenny and other SF practitioners. David Shaked is presenting on SF, Ai and strategic planning. Free.