



The McKergow Quarterly

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

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Engaging everyone

Equal access to learning and change

Something we're often asked about is engaging 'difficult people'. How about the ones who always argue, or the ones who don't share the views of the majority, or even those who don't like learning and working in certain ways. What if you could work in ways that allowed everyone to participate on an equal footing?

This is something we've been achieving for many years. This issue of the McKergow Quarterly looks at two different ways of thinking about the 'difficult people', and two practical ways – SF and Accelerated Learning - to work so that you don't meet any more of those people.

For a start, people are 'difficult' when they are not being heard, are not being taken seriously, or are being asked to do something they don't like (or can't see the point of). So how can you – as a manager, facilitator, coach or trainer – stop yourself putting those folk into that situation?

Solutions Focus: Every case (and person) is different

The first way is to really work with the SF idea (from The Solutions Focus book) that every case is different. Working what what's there – whether it looks useful or not – is a key element of SF

practice. When you start to slow yourself down, use your beginner mind, listen carefully and be impressed with the 'difficult' person (as opposed to arguing with what they are saying), you'll discover that co-operation and engagement are not so far away – at which point everyone is joining in with the work.

These skills can be developed quickly with a little help and guidance. [Mark's own online course](#) starts in February, where you can work on new skills to fit your own work context with an international group.

Accelerated Learning: Addressing EVERY learner preference from the start

When we design training courses or facilitated workshops, there's another potential way that people can start acting 'difficult' – when being asked to do something they don't like (or can't see the point of). Some people love to sit and read, for example, while others quickly get impatient to get moving physically. Some love to interact with other people (which was called 'cheating' at school in the old days, by the way) while others prefer to figure things out on their own.

As facilitators, our initial temptation is to use learning processes that WE like. That's fine for us – but what about participants who prefer something different. [Accelerated](#)

Where's Mark?

Upcoming events around the world featuring Mark McKergow and members of the sfwork team

■ London Bateson Salon

London, 5 February 2013

Nora Bateson and Mark will be leading another session: [More news soon – click here to join the Facebook group](#)

■ Online SF Business Professional

Online: Starts 24 February 2013

[Click here for full details and booking](#)

■ Accelerated Learning for Trainers

Missenden Abbey, 24-26 April 2013

Mark's fantastic material for trainers of all kinds is back for the only time in 2013. Limited to maximum 12 people - [click here to reserve your place.](#)

■ Conversation-Fest 2013

Houston TX, 15-16 March 2013

Narrative, collaborative and SF practices – Mark is giving a workshop. [More...](#)

■ AISB conference: Redefining mental 'illness'

Exeter, UK 2-5 April 2013

New ideas from enactive and cognitive science – [More...](#)

■ SOLWorld 2013 conference

Bad Pyrmont, Germany 13-15 May 2013

The twelfth international conference sharing and building SF practice in organisations. [More...](#)

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Learning is a way of deliberately designing workshop activities so that ALL preferences – brain, body, sensory, memory – are automatically included. That way, whoever shows up at your events will find a process then engages them.

Mark McKergow is a world-leading expert and practitioner in both these areas – that's why our trainings and workshops run smoothly and effectively even in difficult situations. Join the sfwork family – work with us, expand your know-how and your network, and never meet a 'difficult' person again.

Solution Focus 'a Copernican Revolution': new paper by Jenny Clarke



Sfwork's Jenny Clarke has written an [excellent new paper](#) setting out how SF practice is not only different to other forms of psychological and organisational work, but turns many conventional assumptions on their heads. In 1543 Nicolas Copernicus redefined how we look at the planets. Jenny shows with brilliant clarity how SF redefines how we look at each other.

[Download the PDF now.](#)

Join the Host Leadership community – next online event starts Mon 4 Feb

Mark's new Host Leadership website features online discussion forums, specialist groups and sharing opportunities – come and sign up now at



Our next online discussion event will focus on how leadership is a highly dynamic process – balancing planning and decision making with responsiveness and flexibility. Stick to the plan for too long – and everything grinds to a halt. Be too flexible – and everything falls apart. How do leaders work with and use this balance in real life? Join us and find out. Members of the site can download Mark's latest paper on host leadership free.

The Quarterly Case – Missions and Magnums at Unilever Walls ice-cream

We're great fans of molecular gastronomy pioneer Heston Blumenthal. In his recent Channel 4 programme about creating the world's biggest ice cream cone (complete with giant waffle cone and 99 Flake), Heston drew on expertise from Walls' ice-cream factory in Gloucester (part of the Unilever group).



The Gloucester factory produces some 3 million ice creams a day including Magnums and Vienetta. It's a big operation. A few years ago, Mark was contacted by site manager Cees Van Der Star to help create a new mission statement for the plant. You may have experienced the birth of a mission statement before – it tends (like other births) to be a long, painful and exhausting process.

However, with skilful use of SF tools including a 'Future Perfect' exercise, Mark helped the management team not only to wordsmith a new mission statement that would help everyone be clear on the plant's new priorities, but also to learn some SF skills as well. And all this took just one day! The clarity and focus of SF can bring wonderful rewards when difficult conversations are required.

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Transform your SF skills with Mark: next online course starts 24 February 2013

Our next SF Professional course with University of Wisconsin Milwaukee is starting on 24 February 2013. 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.

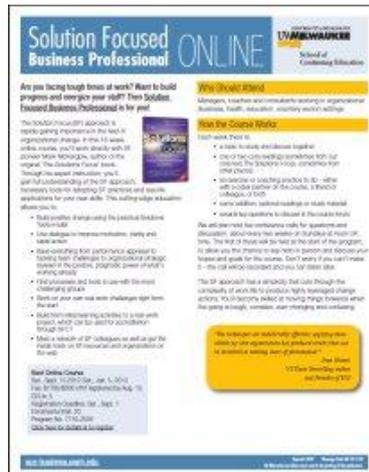
The course has many advantages for people seeking a top-class training in SF for organisational settings like coaching, team development, OD and change management:

- 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 below to download and share the PDF.



Yo

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 – sign up before 1 February 2013 for the early bird discount and save \$300.

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

Accelerated Learning is back – 24-26 April 2013

Mark's internationally renowned work on applying accelerated learning and SF to training of all kinds makes a welcome return. After enquiries from around Europe, we're delighted to announce that this three-day programme will run again on 24-26 April 2013.

The programme takes you through Mark's 'nine keys to accelerated learning', how to design and

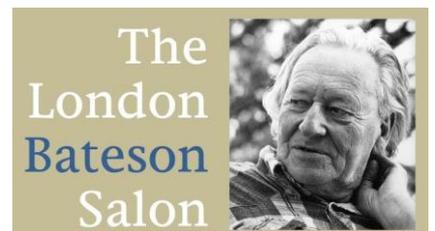
structure learning events, and how to respond and engage even with 'difficult' participants. You even get to redesign a course, lesson or module during the programme!



The programme will take place at a **Missenden Abbey Management Centre** outside London. Places are limited to just 12. You can reserve a place with a deposit before 1 March 2013. More details and booking at <http://accel-learn.eventbrite.co.uk>.

There are also discounts for SFCT members.

London Bateson Salon at the British Museum – Tuesday 5 February



The London Bateson Salon is meeting at the British Museum on Tuesday 5 February 2013 for a session on Play, Learning and Change. Join Nora Bateson and Mark McKergow for an exploration of our notions of learning and thinking, connected to the ancient artifacts at one of the world's finest collections.

There are just a few tickets left - <http://norabateson.eventbrite.com> for more information and booking. For more notice of future meetings join either the [Facebook group](#) or

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the [LinkedIn group](#) for updates as they happen.

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