

Case Studies

Effects of solution focused leadership training on productivity and behaviour – the story behind

Urban Norling

The previous issue of *InterAction* (Volume 6, Number 2) republished the peer-reviewed paper *Effects of SF training on productivity and leadership behaviour* (2007) by Klaus Hoffman, Peter Luisser and Günter Lueger. The programme was designed and performed by the two trainers Björn Johansson and Urban Norling from Sweden. As Björn is no longer with us in person, this paper is in his honour, presenting the “story behind” what was actually done. The results have been presented at many seminars, workshops and papers, but very little has been said about the training that led to the results, what was done and how.

Abstract

The training, designed and performed by Björn Johansson and Urban Norling, was performed over 6 training days with 3 half day follow-up and coaching sessions from the end of January until the end of April 2005. In summary, the results were that the SF leadership training carried out in the production plant effected significant improvements on the level of leadership behaviour as well as on the level of hard facts like productivity. The essence of the training program in its design was based upon the basic principles of SF:

- *Find what works and do more of it*
- *If it does not work – do something different*
- *If it is not broken – do not try to fix it (you may break it)*
- *If it goes too slow – slow down*

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Our main intentions as trainers were to “keep it simple” and stick to these basic principles. We also had the intention to be observant and responsive when we got new ideas, and to discuss these ideas along the way in order to make use of valuable and exciting insights. In our view, taking good care of upcoming thoughts and ideas would give us a good base for creating and developing new instruments along the way. In addition to the basic SF principles according to Steve de Shazer, we used Jackson & McKergow (2002) and our own SF tools, the learning cycle, the MOP scale and the WYYSH line (McKergow & Clarke (2007))

Starting point

Already back in 2003 we were asked by different private companies to help in facilitating large groups of managers and executives in organisational development processes. We were asked because some managers and executives had seen us coaching ice-hockey teams in an SF way. The word spread and curiosity made people approach us wondering what we were doing so well. Ice-hockey (as well as many other sports) is a result-driven activity. Attention is given to high performers and winners. However, when it comes to these result-driven activities, we soon discovered that both Björn and I had quite a different agenda from most others. Our objective was to coach participants in an SF way that enhanced self-awareness and to focus on what was working and doing more of that. We gave a larger mandate to the individual to come up with ideas and suggestions of what to try, develop or do different. In this way we gained engagement, commitment and collaboration. We used an old saying very frequently: *“motivation beats class”*. Our success in the sportsfield resulted in ideas and requests for proposals from the business community who were wondering whether our “success” could be applied in a working environment. So, in 2003 we were asked to give a 1-day introduction of SF-approach to the steering group (all managers and executives) at the Kraft Foods industrial plant at Diesenå, Norway. The

company had planned for a 3-day workshop setup since they had a lot to discuss, plan and decide. Day 1 was given to SF introduction and days 2 and 3 were set for specific company issues. In introducing SF we made use of the company's own agenda (the specific issues for day 2+3) and started to work right away with "real company issues" in an SF way. When the day was over – **ALL** issues that had been planned for discussion by the company (for the next two days) had been addressed, discussed and given clear and specific action plans (small steps forward). Unsurprisingly for us, the managing director of the company made a classic statement before closing the day: "Since we have already achieved all that we came here for, I would like to ask you all to bring your best ideas (to evening dinner) in how we can make best use of the remaining 2 days".

**If it works – do more of it,
if it doesn't – stop doing it (or do something different)**

We continued to do more of what worked. Over the years that followed we conducted similar workshops in different settings. During this time we had an on-going desire and drive to challenge ourselves (and SF) in setup and design so that we could compare and measure the outcome. Our ideas developed into a search for an opportunity to do a good piece of research on the outcome in behaviour and productivity due to an SF intervention. The tipping point for us was when we read a thesis by Peter Nilsson (2005), stating that over 4 billion SEK (approximately €437 million) were spent on team and management consulting activities in Sweden during 2000 and that no results on hard facts are being measured. It was here that we wanted to make a difference.

Project idea

In our project we wanted to investigate the impact of a comparatively limited SF activity concentrated on key people

and on the behaviour and productivity in a traditional industry. Paying close attention to daily issues at different levels, we also were attentive to the possibilities of developing useful tools and strategies suitable to the customers' conditions. To enable a combination of SF training and coaching we developed and used "The learning cycle", which is a combination of training and coaching, whereby the next step is built on developments, progress and current issues.

Our previous experience of working with small concrete steps formulated into action plans encouraged us to take one (little) step further. We consistently coached the participants in working with steps and action plans put into action within ten days.

Other significant aspects for this programme were:

- frequent follow-up of progress at two- to three-week intervals,
- all ideas on what the participants will do as a next step are generated from ideas and experiences from a working context (no ideas should be based on causes of problems),
- attention paid to emerging processes,
- pedagogic variation in which principles of Solution Focus and Accelerated Learning are used, and
- continuous reflection about the training-coaching process, in order to adjust and improve.

To realise the idea we looked for a production company interested and competent enough to meet the requirements for such a project. For designing and supervising the study we looked for an interested and credible university. Consequently, we chose to offer Disenå, Kraft in Norway and PEF, the Private University for Management in Austria, the project. Our collaboration with both surpassed our highest expectations.

The target group for the training were shift leaders at middle management level, responsible for operation in the area of production and maintenance process, in charge of 72

shop-floor workers. The training started at the end of January 2005 and ended in April 2005. In this short period of time, six training days and three coaching sessions were held. The setup was 2 training days + ½ day coaching + 2 training days + ½ day coaching + 1 training day + 1 training day + ½ day coaching.

The evaluation method was based on the four-level model for training evaluation of Kirkpatrick (2006). The aim of the evaluation was to analyse the two top levels of Kirkpatrick's model – (1) change in leadership behaviour and (2) productivity results. In order to achieve these goals, the evaluation design encompassed four different instruments: qualitative interviews, self-rating forms and questionnaires (subordinate perception of 55 employees and the self-perception of the trained team leaders). The productivity ratios of the management information system offered hard figures on the level of results in the production. Measurements were taken by the instruments before, during and after the training, starting in January 2005 and ending in June 2005.

Concerning the level of results, five different ratios, “returns by customers”, “absence”, “loss of packaging material”, “faults in production” and “the Overall Equipment Efficiency”, were used to find indicators for differences resulting from the SF training. All measured figures have in common that they depend on various different factors. Therefore, a Swedish production plant using the same production process was ideal as a control group for the interpretation of the development of these five ratios.

Company goals

The company already had a clear setup of the company goals for 2005 and 2006. These were:

Each employee should come up with 10 ideas to improve the following areas:

- Well-being and positive working environment.
- Measures to prevent accidents.
- Improved quality.

- Improved productivity.
- To get effectivity up to 70% (OEE. Overall equipment efficiency).
- Reduce returns (by customers) by 5%.
- Reduce absence by 5%.
- Reduce loss of packaging material by 5%.
- Reduce faults in production by 5%.
- Each employee takes responsibility to keep his/her work area tidy and ordered.
- Boilers on the chips line: Close monitoring of potato and water usage.

Our strategy

Our objective was to educate and coach key personnel responsible for production in SF methods and ideas. Our goal for the training and coaching of key staff was to be able to measure different effects on human resources among employees on production lines. Our hopes were that the training would produce positive results, both in aspects of human resources and production figures (waterfall diagrams). Our strategy was based on the pre-supposition that change is happening all the time and that we identify progress and success through observation and do more of that – in building on what works (stop doing what does not work – see Figure 1).

Setting the platform

In preparing the intervention, we as facilitators told the management that it was very important that the participants felt that the company gave them full support in this training. In practical terms “full support” from the company meant that the participants were given the time needed to attend the training, and that the training was prioritised by the managers before other duties. We invited the participants as experts. We wanted them to feel that they were experts in their job and their environment. As facilitators and trainers our job was mainly to ask questions and share SF ideas and tools.

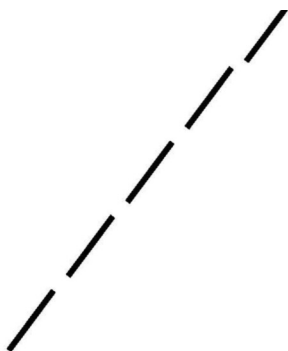
Strategy



Change is happening all the time.



Identify progress and success.



**Do more of and build on what works.
Stop doing what doesn't work.**

Figure 1

The participants were to decide about what issues to address, in what order, what to prioritise, and what steps to take. In doing this we created a good starting platform in which the participants felt respected, involved and capable of making progress, and also that they could influence the process.

SF tools

The core route for us as trainers and facilitators in this project was to stick to the basic SF principles, and keep it simple, not too simple – but simple enough. In using SF tools and principles we also followed the direct route to positive change. Here we were inspired by the SIMPLE way to Positive Change by Jackson & McKergow (2002).

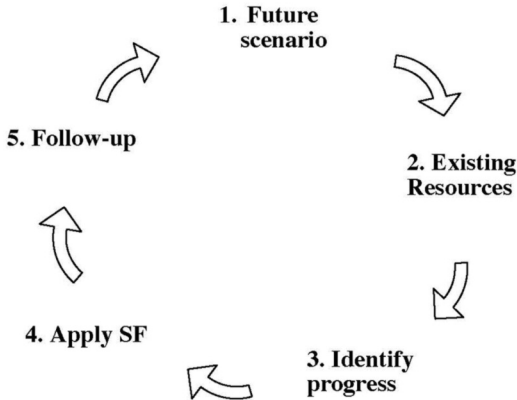
1. Describe what's wanted instead.
2. Discover what's working already and find strengths.
3. Take small steps.

As trainers and facilitators we had an agreement between the two of us to remind each other to stick to the basics and trust the process. Whenever one (or both) of us hesitated or had second thoughts about whether what we were doing was helpful – we gave each other signals to “keep it up, trust the process, stick to the basic principles”. It helped. During the training we used and developed SF tools that turned out to be helpful in the emerging process and in the solution building process. The most used tools were “The learning cycle” (see Figure 2) and the MOP scale (see box and Figure 3).

The MOP scale (multiple organisational project) was used in order start the process and to generate relevant “projects”. In working with the MOP scale all the participants, regardless of area of responsibility and regardless of their own “working-agenda”, could benefit from other colleagues’ ideas and input for improvements. The MOP scale was a “generator” of relevant projects and ideas. When participants experience an activity as meaningful and relevant, it affects motivation, engagement and participation in a positive way (Day, 2001).

The learning cycle

Situation-adjusted solution focused training



The learning cycle is a combination of training and coaching integrated with each other, whereby the next step is built on developments, progress and current issues and situations.

1. What do you want to happen?
2. Explore good examples and find resources.
3. Next Small Step (ideas what to do).
4. Connect to SF tools and ideas.
5. Follow up what is better.

Figure 2

In addition to the MOP scale we worked frequently on an individual base with “The learning cycle” where the application of SF tools/ideas and “follow-up” was added.

One can find variations of “The learning cycle” (as we call it) in different reports, e.g. Learning loop work, Argyris and Schon/Waldman (2010). In using “The learning cycle” we built on relevant questions and issues addressed by the participants connected to the different “projects” generated by the MOP scale. In this way the participants were given the opportunity to work in detail with relevant, urgent and important

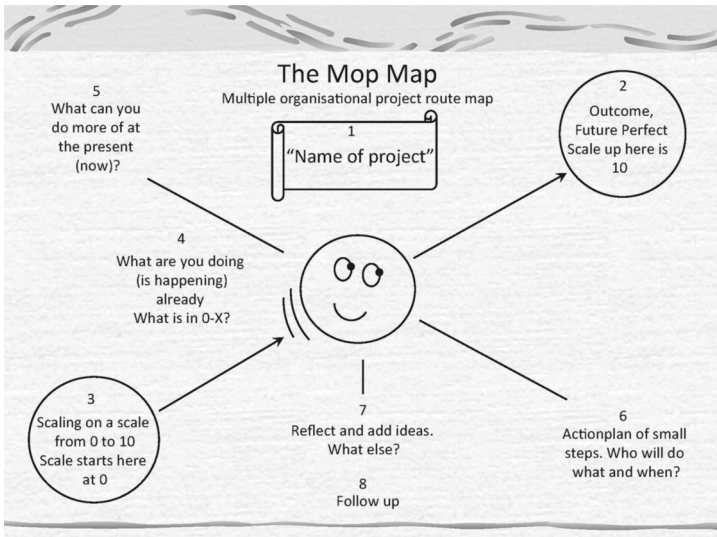


Figure 3

issues and processes. Schein (1998, p. 3) states that we are not so skilled in thinking about processes, in observing them in action, or in designing processes that will accomplish what we intend. In the SF process we co-create solutions together with the participants. By discovering and enhancing good examples and skills “already there”, we start to build the participants’ confidence and motivation in using the SF perspective. Very soon the participants start to use SF questions in their working context, discovering and making use of already existing examples of skills and good examples. In this way the participants quickly noticed a difference in the workers’ attitude and willingness to cooperate in building solutions. Goldstein & Ford (2002, p. 191) states that “*people support what they have helped to create*”.

Example (P1=participant 1 + coach=one of the trainers: either Urban Norling or Björn Johansson)

1. FUTURE SCENARIO

- P1 There are very few initiatives from the floor workers when it comes to taking action on faults in production . . .
- Coach Hmm, so when these few initiatives happen, what is different then . . .?
- P1 . . . well . . . I guess they can get hold of me quickly to get support . . .

2. EXPLORE GOOD EXAMPLES AND EXISTING RESOURCES

- Coach . . . so, when they (floor workers) can get hold of you quickly, they take more initiatives . . .
- P1 . . . I guess . . .
- Coach so . . . regarding “more initiatives”, what do you want to happen?
- P1 . . . I would like them to take more initiatives so that OEE (overall equipment efficiency) goes up so that we can meet the production targets better . . .
- Coach . . . it seems like you have a good idea of what you want to happen and what outcome you would like to see as a result of that . . .
- P1 yes!

3. IDENTIFY PROGRESS – NEXT SMALL STEP

- Coach . . . so, what ideas do you already have about what to do that would be a small step forward . . .
- P1 maybe try to spend more time in the area of production . . . make myself more visible . . .

4. APPLY SF (CONNECT TO SF TOOLS AND IDEAS)

- Coach what will the floor workers see you do differently . . .
- P1 . . . the big difference is that they will see more of me . . .

- Coach ... being more present ... what else will they see you do different?
- P1 ... maybe talking less in the phone ... it's buzzing constantly ...
- Coach what will they see you do instead?
- P1 ... eh... I ... I'll turn the phone off if it rings when I'm talking ...
- Coach how will the reaction be to that do you think, that you turn off the phone if it rings while you talk to people on the floor ...?
- P1 ... well ... it is respectful ... maybe they feel important ...
- Coach ... maybe ... very explicit idea to try as a step forward ... observe what happens and look for signs in the coming days that tell you that it is helpful in what you want to happen ...

5. FOLLOW UP WHAT IS BETTER

- Coach I'm very curious, what has been better since last time?
(here we always started to ask in a general sweep for "what's better?". Doing so gave us examples of all kinds of progress that we could make use of and build on).

The programme in detail

Here are our ideas of our design together with the adjustments we made during the training.

Training program day 1 (full day)

Welcome!

Give the big picture of the training, presentation of ourselves and the participants, socialising, practical things.

Resources and identifying change

Small group exercise: The ABC (The Björn exercise).

Basic ideas of SF

Metaphor, do more of what works etc., SF vs PF (problem focus), exercise “hobby interview”.

Structure

The Albert model (by Mark McKergow).

Put into practice by interviews

Practice, interviewing in pairs.

Coaching goals

The W.W.Y.S.H-line (tool by Björn Johansson).

Start to work on relevant projects/issues

MOP-scale (tool by Johansson & Norling), generate common goals and progress and compare them to Kraft Disenå goals 2006.

Introducing the self-rating scales

Homework.

Training program day 2 (full day)

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group, self-rating questionnaires.

SF in different situations

Generated examples/questions, role-play and discussion.

SF tools

Goals and signs of change in a 10 minute poster exercise.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Action plan within 10 days

Both individual and group.

Closing

Comments regarding the first two days of training

During the first two days we mixed the training with coaching exercises and discussions. The goals of the participants matched the company goals very well, except the goal about water using/boilers. All other company goals were represented in the work of the WWYSH-line – What Would You Like to See Happen – timeline. WWYSH is an SF goal/process-tool that gives an “overview” and set timeline, often 6–12 months (the length of timeline is set by the participants so that it is meaningful and relevant to them). Setting the timeline and marking out relevant counters (known by the participants), together with “what would you like to see happen”, presents a “big picture”, relevant and meaningful to the participants. In this stage we make use of the MOP scale to work more in “detail” with issues and projects along the route. A metaphor used at this stage is “paving (parts of) the road ahead”. Also during the first two days we gave an introduction to SF ideas together with examples and tools as a first step in implementating “hands on SF” into daily work. We also had several discussions and exercises to identify small signs of change and action plans in small steps.

First half day of follow-up (coaching)

This follow-up meeting had a time frame of 2,5 hours where we worked with “What’s better? The participants reported 5–8 different examples each of progress since the beginning of the training. Examples were:

- Examples of better routines for communication with employees.
- Examples of new routines for employees on sick-leave.
- Examples of how to give better priority.
- Examples of systematic positive feedback when employees handle break-downs correctly.

- Examples of increase in giving feedback – compliments to employees.
- Examples of practical conditions and improvements regarding information-communication (white-board, telephone).
- Examples of SF usefulness in work with TPM.
- Examples of spending more time on the lines with the employees.
- Examples of going from “fire-brigade” to strategic planning.
- Various examples of the use of SF tools in conversations.
- Different examples of surprising progress in daily work.
- “We have been discussing this all year – now it’s happened!”
- Different examples of collaboration between participants.
- Generally more optimistic/positive approach described.

Ideas (steps and observations) generated for the next 10 days

During the “follow-up” coaching session we worked with ideas and steps in the coming 10 days ahead. Examples of subjects where the participants made small action plans with steps to take within 10 days:

- How to handle things before they become problems and develop collaboration.
- How to spend more time “on the floor” with the employees.
- How to develop the technical meeting dialogue with leaders.
- How to continue using the tools and skills and reflect.
- How to work with planning and recruiting for the summer holidays.

Training program day 3 (full day)

Welcome back

Training agenda (big picture), sharing of good moments and stories.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Repetition

Golf ball metaphor, Albert model, the 4 steps in starting change. SF tools, scales.

Follow up using “what’s better” interviews with all participants

Examples given were:

- There is more participation on the lines.
- Workers were there to help when there were problems with burned peanuts.
- I’m thinking of SF every morning when I go to work.
- I listen more actively.
- I take in more comments from employees.
- I’m more present in the production, not only when there are problems, I’ve been working hard on that.
- I have practised coping.
- I have noticed problem- versus solution-patterns in meetings with the manager group.
- The SF sound is there!
- Have raised ideas of how to improve communication.
- Employees are beginning to take more responsibility.
- Good experience from including the SF ideas into appraisals.
- Employees have been more involved in decisions.
- Better dialogue with the manager group.
- Felt like the top managers are listening more to what I have to say.

- The managers would probably say that I'm more assertive now.
- Brought them out for a two hour walk in the plant.
- I have better dialogue and understanding from them.
- My employees work more independently now, due to the fact that I have given them more positive feedback when things are working well.
- They do more by themselves (the floor workers).
- I don't have to be a babysitter for them, they probably would say that they have been given more responsibility.
- Have used the SF ideas in conversations with employees.
- It's easier to talk with them, which I noticed in the "chats" at the lines.
- I have discussed the approach with a colleague.
- I'm at the same level as the employee in the conversation.
- More positive view of things now.
- The group feels that they have better communication within the group.
- I see better meetings, better atmosphere, it spreads happiness.

Generating of relevant training and development areas

Ideas of different types of conversation that build solutions. Give feedback when something is wrong and when you have to break a negative process. Active training – role play.

Follow up "what's better" interviews

Presentation of the idea of "follow-up" structures and techniques. Illumination of the process including both planned steps and the improvements that emerged during the process for the groups. Identifying unplanned progress, basic tools, teaching and training, role play, structure.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning. Sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Action plan within 10 days

Both individual and group.

Closing

Training programme day 4 (full day)

Examples of situations/questions

Discussions in both pairs and whole group.

Review of production

Discussion/clarifying of waterfall diagram (production measures).

Priority of most important (production) lines to work with

Discussions in both pairs and whole group.

Coaching

MOP Scale (starting processes with the most important lines).
Big Pellets line and Peanuts line. The realising of relevant action plans.

Working with typical situations

Examples of “difficult” conversations, role play and learning processes in the group. Applying tools/techniques.

Coaching of important questions

- How to improve the handling of information between evening and night shift.
- How to keep the production going during the holiday.

Working with personal goals (participants’ goals)

Each participant’s ideas of what they will focus on during the period from now until the next training session. Examples were:

- Pay attention to conversations (better observations).
- Try to think SF and digest the input from these sessions.
- Pay attention to using SF tools and think and try it out in conversations, especially in order to coach the employees to come up with suggestions by themselves.

- Listening to what other people really want; engage the people around me.
- Try to carry out the action plan from the MOP scale; use scaling questions.
- Do more planning with my colleagues.
- Focus on the action plan from MOP scale and try to do less overtime.
- In giving more structure will lead to faster improvement in solving every situation.
- How I distribute work tasks.
- Consider the way I formulate information.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning; sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Action plan within 10 days

Both individual and group. Small specific steps.

Closing

Second half day of follow-up (coaching).

This follow-up meeting had a time frame of two and a half hours working with “What’s better” interviews. Examples described;

- I’ve been working with the (MOP) plans.
- The employees would probably have noticed that we are more at the lines.
- I’m more structured and do less overtime.
- The big pellets lines have been working better (productivity).
- Have had a weekend for implementation of the TPM system.
- Tools and things are kept in better order; cleaning up has improved.
- There is a better tone between people.

- I see more engaged employees.
- The 400 line has been working very well.
- We have finished the job with getting tools in order at the peanut line.
- I'm more visible in the production and pay more attention when something is needed.
- I've focused more on the problems we have in a much more positive way.
- The employees pay more attention and react more quickly now.
- There is another and better tone from employees when we talk on the telephone.
- The employees take me more seriously.
- Some meetings have been better, more effective and more structured; we get more things done now.
- Questions are raised and taken care of by the employees, since they can do things by themselves now.
- It saves time when employees help me to send the right man for the job.
- Have given positive feedback at the lines.
- I have had good phone calls with people on sick leave.

Working with next steps

- Get employees to use the time when the machines work well, to keep the lines clean.
- Follow up about cleaning – using good examples.
- Be more present in the production; we are taking it seriously when employees have ideas and suggestions for improvements.
- Use simpler language.
- Inform the employees about our market share and business in general.
- Keep on listening actively.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Action plan within 10 days

Both individual and group. Small steps.

Closing

Training program day 5 (full day)

Welcome back

Training agenda (big picture), sharing of good moments and stories.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Meeting management (management participation half day)

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Management coaching

Coaching subjects; appreciation, focus, steps forward, improving better relations between top management and middle management. Reflecting over what's foreseeable and what is not.

Follow-up through “what's better” interviews with all participants.

Examples were:

- The communication with the manager group has improved.
- Employees have accepted TPM, as they were a part of the process.
- Given more positive feedback, gone from 4 to 6 on a scale.
- OEE (overall equipment efficiency) has gone up.
- We have been more out (visible) in the production.
- I've had more response from team leaders when I have been more out at the lines.
- Begin learning the VMS.

- The increase of OEE can be explained because our focus has been on it.
- The plant manager has invited us for more and better conversations.
- The big pellets line is better and the package machine goes more evenly; the speed has increased and we can produce more.
- I've continued the routine with phone calls to employees on sick leave which works very well.
- I've had good appraisals doing follow-ups.
- I've received a positive response when dealing with the fact that employees are concerned about learning to operate new machines.
- The conversations with employees (the dialogue) is more relaxed.
- I have been more visible at the lines.
- The employees have confirmed that it is no problem to do overtime; we have better communication and an increasing collaboration between line and maintenance.
- How employees stick to their breaks (keep the timeframe) has risen from 4 to 7.5.
- I'm planning the day more which has lead to less return of raw materials. I also plan the raw materials before the nightshift so they don't have to start with getting raw materials.
- We have become one person less but we have kept it running anyway.

Next steps (examples given)

- Work with signing after washing.
- Give more positive feedback when we have worked well, even if it's only temporarily.
- Spend more time on conversations.
- Spend more time organising the work with my colleagues at maintenance.
- Get employees to open their eyes to make sure that there are enough raw materials and supplies.

SF approach and ideas

Customer, visitors and complaint relationship, techniques, principles, role play applied to generated situations, examples.

Evaluation

Participants' feedback and ideas.

Training program day 6 (full day)

Welcome back

Training agenda (big picture), sharing of good moments and stories.

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group.

Generating relevant issues and questions

Examples:

- How to handle unpopular and sensitive issues.
- Different situations of how to engage the employees at work or on sick leave.
- How to handle issues related to dismissals.

Coaching

Coaching in questions above. Repetition of SF basic principles and Albert model.

Follow-up using “what’s better” interviews with all participants

Examples given were:

- Lots of things have been solved before the revision.
- One specific unit works much better now.
- Collaboration with the management group works better (communication and understanding that investments are necessary).

- One participant who is involved in the management group talks more with the plant manager, feels that he can say what he thinks and he has settled down in his new position.
- We feel that we have done the best we can.
- The communication with employees has improved since we gave more affirmation to them.
- To raise the “right” questions avoids conflicts.
- Has handled three dismissals and resolved itself in a good way with personal conversations and with positive feedback, listening and coping questions.
- Got positive response when I offered help.
- I’ve been more present out at the production lines.
- Very positive to be at work early in the morning to plan the shift.
- The production at M400 and potato snack is increasing.
- Employees are coming up with more suggestions, ideas and solutions towards the company goals.
- One participant is turning out to be more of a co-ordinator and has been accepted by the managers; co-ordination has improved as a result.
- The information around production, where we are sitting with first hand information, is used better, which leads to a better use of resources and better internal communication.
- Started up with training programmes for employees who before were against developing new knowledge and skills.
- I listen more which helps me to be less angry but instead, to reflect and consider.

Next steps/ideas

- Reflect and value how we are spending our time (what we do and what we prioritise), e.g. do we discuss unnecessary issues or issues that affirm and give people hope? What does not work has become irrelevant, let’s do less of that and continue to talk about how to do more of what works.

- Do follow-ups of what works and catch ideas and generate learning of what works; give signals that there is a pay-off with focus on what works; give feedback between the shifts.
- Acknowledge that there is better involvement on the night shift where there is less help at hand.
- I think and plan before I give suggestions of training programmes.
- I make use of employees' special skills and interests.

Coaching + MOP scale

Limited version of a MOP scale (imagine- June 2006), what's going on? What have you done to get you this far? What will you do during the next weeks (10 days).

Next steps

- Positive feedback about what works.
- Follow-up the training sessions every week; show that we pay them attention.
- Focus on the OEE.
- Train ourselves in reading the waterfall diagrams.
- Optimise the production at each line. Be clear and explain to employees. Pay attention to the fact that there is only current information on the information board.
- Plan the holiday period. Give orders with clear responsibilities.

Leadership

Discussion of the participants' roles as leaders, scaling (each individual).

Reflection

Time given for reflection and learning, sharing ideas and thoughts in the group, self-rating questionnaires.

Action plan within 10 days

Both individual and group.

Closing

Third half day of follow-up (coaching).

Meeting management (start by meeting the management team)

News, evaluation, reflections about the project.

“What’s better” interviews (with participants)

Examples given:

- We sometimes plan for three things, and two other things improve instead. It’s good to have the skills to handle that.
- I use coping questions in conversation with employees, such as now when there is lots of speculation due to dismissals.
- I gave concrete feedback related to specific actions, and got a good response.
- Have felt more confident using techniques in conversations, which have improved.
- It is more positive thinking about this training (gossip).
- Got the lubricating programme to work.
- Planning the holiday replacements has worked out well.
- A very positive period with more constructive “talk”, which is positive for the whole plant.
- The management group has had strong indicators that things are working better.
- It’s easier to get the right raw materials.
- I have continued with training programme for employees.
- Shift plans have improved, better changeover.
- I have thought about “building solutions” all the way here today.
- When shift plans and training for employees are finished, things will calm down.

- The pellets line works better – we highlight that.
- Peanut line works well – we highlight that.
- Employees embrace their new tasks they did not want, or could not do before.
- I give more “compliments” now even if I sometimes only want to criticise.
- I have completed holiday replacements at my department.
- Employees over 60 will do only daytime shift so I have started to plan for a reorganisation. We keep on working in small steps.

Coaching – ideas for sustainability

Discussion and planning in pairs. The participants (middle managers) had the following ideas:

- SF supervision every 3rd month.
- Continue talking with each other both during daytime and during nightshift (SF way).
- The collaboration between managers will increase up to 1-2 hours a week.
- Continue to give positive feedback, spread the ideas of employees around in order to improve the culture.
- Spend some days together, perhaps one such meeting before summer.
- To have group meetings every 3rd week in an SF way.

Future perspective

Discussion about forms for continuing the learning/coaching during the autumn.

Evaluation

- 1) Rating this programme from 0-10 where 10 is absolutely worth while taking part, while 0 is the opposite?
- 2) What's in 0-X?
- 3) What are you doing differently as a result of this course?

- 4) Ideas what to continue to do (more of)?
- 5) In what way has it influenced you with relation to
 - a. Colleagues?
 - b. Employees?
 - c. Manager group?
- 6) What do you think about the format of this training (duration, variation, presentation, balance, education, coaching)?
- 7) Free comment.

Examples of change in behaviour

Manager / participant 1

P1 is more visible out in the production lines than before (not only when there is a problem). He has started to give more positive feedback to the employees. He has also become more specific and clearer in giving information to the employees, regarding the production figures. P1 notices that the employees take on more responsibility. They try to correct any malfunction themselves before asking for support. They also give more suggestions regarding improvements and solutions. P1 has started to give positive feedback when he sees “wanted” and “appreciated” behaviour. P1 gives very specific and “action-connected” feedback.

Manager / participant 2

P2 says that she is more present out in the production lines. She has started to plan her day differently in order to be more visible out on the lines. She has started to use her time travelling to and from work to plan her working day. She also reports that the employees are more involved and that there is a better atmosphere on the line (increase in interaction). Another thing that has improved is the willingness to work overtime when there is a superior worker present. Internal training programmes have also started with employees who have previously been against training programmes. P2 thinks that this has come about because of increased attention being paid to making employees feel welcome and accentuating the

benefits. P2 has also improved her communication with employees and she is more attentive to what employees really want. She listens and thinks before talking and giving suggestions. She tries to see things from an employee perspective. She has started to give affirmation to employees, for example; “I used to answer the phone even if I was talking to an employee. Now I turn the phone off in order to show that they have my full attention”. P2 also reports that she has a calmer tone of voice when communicating with her employees. She believes that this makes a difference in that they seem to take her more seriously. Another thing is that P2 tries to involve employees more in decision making and solution finding, e.g., “when I get a phone call from an employee about a situation, I ask more questions now about what ideas they have themselves about solutions. I think this results in them taking more responsibility and reacting faster and therefore we get more things done”.

Manager / participant 3

P3 has started to give employees more positive feedback when things are going well and when things work. As a result, P3 sees that employees not only take on more responsibility than before, but also take more initiative. For example, the employees have to sign their names after washing machinery, which has been a task that P3 often had to follow up in order to check that it had been done. Now however, he doesn't have to, it works. P3 thinks that in general things work better in his area.

Manager / participant 4

P4 also thinks that the atmosphere in general has improved. Employees are more co-operative and willing to take part in finding solutions and solving issues. P4 has improved his planning of the day in order to prevent returns from customers (defaults). He also plans ahead for the night shift so that they have enough raw materials.

Manager / participant 5

P5 is more aware of how he speaks in terms of using more “solution language” rather than “problem language”, and he is also more present out on the production lines. He considers himself more strategic and structured, in that instead of putting out “fires”, he plans and gives priority to what has to be done during the week in coordination with the production plan. There is an increase in co-operation between production and maintenance. Employees go more and more to P1 (the production supervisor) instead of calling P5, which means a decrease in unnecessary callouts. P5 also reports that he has taken on an increased role as co-ordinator, which also has support from top management. The flow of internal information has also improved which has led to a better use of resources.

Manager / participant 6

P6 is trying to use an SF approach in his conversations with employees and finds that it has become easier to keep a dialogue going. He has also been more present out on the lines and is more interactive by having more “small talks” with employees out in production. P6 feels that conversations are more relaxed now. One thing P6 finds very useful is giving compliments in situations that work, even if they are only temporary. His experience is that he can accomplish a lot more just by changing the way in which he asks questions. The participants also point out that there is increased and improved communication between middle management and top management. The plant managers have been invited to more meetings and the meetings have become more structured and clearer regarding the setting of goals (due to the use of SF questions).

Manager / participant 7

P7 says that after one year of talking things started to happen when the training started. Things went from talk to action. The technical meetings have improved as the top managers are more understanding and listen more. This has a positive effect and eases the pressure on middle managers. P7 says that he is

more assertive in his communication with top managers, and has taken them on a two-hour walk around the plant to explain and clarify aspects regarding maintenance and support in production. P7 feels that he has received an increased understanding regarding changes, investments and structure in his work.

About the results/outcome

In summarising results, it can be stated that the SF leadership training carried out in the production plant effected significant improvements on the level of leadership behaviour as well as on the level of hard facts like productivity. As a result of the SF leadership training, the training participants felt more comfortable in their role as team leaders. A significant increase of their leadership abilities due to the evaluation of their subordinates was observable and can be highlighted as a major change in the level of behaviour, Hoffman & Luisser (2007).

The results show that when participants are invited to contribute to making a difference it affects the motivation and willingness in a positive way. Making use of existing ideas, skills and resources acts as fuel to the on-going development processes. The SF training gave the middle-managers actual tools to try and results to observe. The basic principles of SF were guidelines in keeping the SF practice on track through the whole process. Overall, findings indicated that the value of social interaction and individual possibilities to influence, as well as being involved and respected, are of great importance for the outcome. The data also indicates the value of social interaction within the social context of the actual organisation in that it enhances individual motivation. Furthermore, the results also indicate the importance of the attention and encouragement given by leaders in order to create motivation and engagement in the organisation.

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The MOP MAP (Multiple Organisational Projects)

1. Set up a platform

- What are the different projects? Formulate them into action. (Something you do or are up to that you want to develop, eg get better meetings, more collaboration in the team, etc).
- Build groups around each project. 2–6 people who have the project in common. 20 people can for example work with 5–6 different projects.
- Make sure the project is an urgent question and that the group can see themselves as a part of the project.
- Clarify frames and conditions, if this is needed, to some of the group members.
- Write project name on the Mop Map.

2. What do you want to reach? The outcome?

Pretend you all are sitting here X months from now and this project you have worked with has developed surprisingly well. In some ways you have made progress that has changed the situation in the way you wanted. Pretend you have come to X (month) and things are working really well.

Instruction: Just think, don't answer, and write some keywords.

- What signs are telling you that you have reached what you want?
- What else?
- In what way is it different?
- What are you doing different as a result of that?

Instruction: Discuss in the group what you are doing different when you have reached what you want (what will others see you do and hear you say?). DON'T discuss what you will do to get there (wait until you get to 7). One person in each group takes notes (write your answers on the map – be specific).

3. Scaling

On a scale from 0 to 10 where 10 stands for Project has developed just as you want. 0 is the opposite from 10 (when you started)

- Where would you say you are right now (make an average).
- Place an X on the scale-line.

4. What are you doing already?

- What of the things you are doing at I0 are you doing already?
- What is in 0–X?
- Find as many things as you can think of. List them and be concrete.
- Write on the map.

5. What can you do more of?

- Which of these (your answers in 4) can you do more of, in the coming weeks, to make progress on the scale?
- Too many ideas? Prioritise them.
- Write down your ideas and formulate them into action (write on the map).

6. Action plan

- Make an action plan involving who, when, what etc. Rather small steps than big. Give priority to ideas if necessary.
- Add your action ideas from 5.
- What small action steps will you take in order to make progress towards I0?

7. Reflection and adding

- If you are more than 1 group and you work on different projects, let all groups present their MOP MAP very briefly. The other groups listen carefully and are given an opportunity to reflect and to maybe add ideas and give support. If you are a single group, use the reflection and adding section in letting each group member reflect and add in the same way.
- Is the MOP MAP good enough for taking action on this project? Action plan do-able? If not – what else is needed?

8. Follow up

- Time to re-group (if you are several groups) and decide when to follow up (write on the map).
- Maybe give observation tasks of what works.
- If possible – place the MOP MAP where it is visible and can be seen.