

Embracing Sustainability: How Solution Focus (SF) Can Revolutionise Organisational Leadership

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Introduction

Suppose you are a leader with an interest in sustainability. In that case, you've probably wondered how we can treat organisations not just as projects with an end date but as living, breathing entities that evolve and thrive over time. This topic was exactly what we explored in an exciting session I led during the SOLWorld Unconference. Our insights may spark some fresh thinking about the future of your organisation. We analysed the distinctive ways Solution Focus (SF) can help us treat organisations not just as projects that wrap up and fade away, but as sustainable, evolving entities.

Organisations: Living Systems, Not Just Projects

First, we turned the traditional business model on its head. Instead of seeing organisations as project machines, we considered them living systems that must adapt continuously to survive. This approach challenges the typical approach that often prioritises quick profits and short-term political gains.

By focusing on sustainability and adaptability, we aim for long-term success that benefits the organisation and the broader ecological and societal contexts.

Solution Focus: A Game-Changer

Enter SF. This approach shifts the narrative towards the desirable futures we can create. Instead of getting bogged down by what's wrong or what could go wrong, SF encourages us to take small, manageable steps towards progress. This positive, action-oriented stance - based on solid evidence of what's already working - helps avoid the trap of oppositional attitudes or doom-laden predictions.

SF also empowers individuals by recognising them as experts in their own lives. This recognition can lead to greater engagement in broader political and social contexts, fostering a sense of agency and involvement. Imagine the potential for change when people feel truly capable and connected to the bigger picture.

Human Activities and Natural Ecosystems

We also discussed the importance of viewing human activities as part of a larger natural ecosystem. By adopting a holistic approach, we can draw on historical precedents from long-lasting institutions like religions, empires, and tribes. These entities have thrived through adaptability and sustainable practices, and there's a lot we can learn from them.

Key Takeaways from the Workshop

Here's a quick rundown of what we covered:

- 1. Treat Organisations as Sustainable Entities**
 - a. Think of them as living social systems.
 - b. Unlike projects, they shouldn't focus solely on quick profits or short-term politics.
- 2. Balance Tensions**
 - a. Individualism vs. collective and social needs.
 - b. Harnessing wealth and knowledge without self-destruction.
 - c. Balancing scientific analysis with human connections and synthesis.
- 3. Recognise the Importance of Dunbar's Number**
 - a. How many meaningful connections can we realistically maintain? The magic number is around 150.
- 4. Apply Solution Focus for Sustainability**
 - a. Aim for compelling, desirable futures.
 - b. Focus on what's already working rather than just analysing problems.
 - c. Empower individuals as influencers and experts in their own lives.
 - d. Take small steps to unstuck and make progress.
- 5. Learn from Long-Lasting Entities**
 - a. Look at what has worked for religions, empires, and tribes.
 - b. Value holistic approaches and the integration of humans as part of nature.

So, if you're passionate about making your organisation a beacon of sustainability and adaptability, embracing SF is the key. Let's continue the conversation and explore how we can all contribute to a more sustainable future.

