Solution Focused Team Coaching

Second Edition

Kirsten Dierolf, Cristina Mühl, Carlo Perfetto and Rafal Szaniawski

ROUTLEDGE

"This new edition of *Solution Focused Team Coaching* is a real winner! The authors bring the whole stance and approach of Solution Focused work and put it context with expansions into narrative and agile methods. The many case examples and practical tools illustrate everything superbly. This could be the last team coaching book you'll need to buy, read and practise."

Dr Mark McKergow, *author of* The Next Generation of Solution Focused Practice

"As both a novice in Solution Focused coaching, and as an experienced team coaching practitioner, this book has been full of fresh thinking, fun analogies and new team coaching 'moves' for me to absorb into my own practice. The writing style is lively, insightful, practical and passionate – the same ingredients needed for a great team coaching session."

Dr Colm Murphy, *Managing Director of Dynamic Leadership Development and senior faculty Global Team Coaching Institute*

"This is a must-read guide for anyone who wants to engage in Solution Focused team coaching. The set of practical team coaching tools and case studies really helped me to become a better leader and transformed the way I coach my team. Read this book – and learn from the best."

Lydia Benton, *Principal Director at Accenture*

"I consider myself very fortunate to have been introduced to coaching by Kirsten. During my studies and all our interactions, I have always been impressed by her honesty and generosity. That is what this book is all about: knowledge and experience shared without reservation. Near or far, the SolutionsAcademy team is my safety net and Kirsten, Carlo, Raf and Cristina are people I can count on. This book demonstrates their ability to apply coaching principles to the team with pragmatism and elegance. The solutions, suggestions and reflections contained in it are the fruit of SolutionsAcademy's experience in this field and will be extremely useful not only to those in consultancy but also to those who manage teams within organizations."

Francesca Caroleo, *Deputy Head of People and Culture and Head of Centre of Expertise – Global Human Resources, Banque Internationale à Luxembourg (BIL)*

"*Solution Focused Team Coaching* presents a positive, hopeful and practical approach to team coaching and is an important addition to the growing discipline of team coaching."

Lucy Widdowson, *Performance Edge*

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Solution Focused Team Coaching

Solution Focused Team Coaching offers readers a simple, practical and effective way to coach teams. Its evidence-based approach, which has been applied successfully to many fields, is presented in an engaging, pragmatic and approachable way, making this book a must read for anyone who wants to broaden their horizon within the team coaching space.

This book presents the background and philosophy of Solution Focused team coaching and then moves on to explore its practical application in various formats of team coaching, with different audience dimensions. The reader will find a useful structure for team coaching processes as well as detailed descriptions for facilitating team coaching "moves" (conventionally called "techniques" or "tools") for both online and live settings. With this book, it is easy to plan a Solution Focused team coaching process from contract negotiation through workshop design to follow-up and evaluation. It covers difficult team situations such as conflicts, and different forms of teams from shop-floor to executive teams, Agile teams and special formats of team coaching, as well as how to facilitate larger teams. Additionally, readers who want to achieve certification and/or accreditation will find it extremely useful to read about ICF, EMCC and AC team coaching competencies and how Solution Focused team coaching is an easy way of embedding those competencies.

Solution Focused Team Coaching is a must for any coach, from those who would like to learn a pragmatic, impactful and easy way to move into team coaching to experienced team coaches who would like to learn a new approach and expand their skills, and anybody interested in exploring the fascinating world of team coaching.

Kirsten Dierolf has been coaching teams since 1996 and has been training team coaches since 2008. She is the owner and founder of SolutionsAcademy, an ICF and EMCC accredited coach training school. Kirsten started her journey with the Solution Focused approach when she studied directly with its founders, Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer, and since then has been passionate about the Solution Focused and other social-constructionist approaches.

Cristina Mühl is an accredited coach and team coach both with ICF and EMCC and also an accredited supervisor, working also with team coaches to develop their own practice. She started supporting teams back in 2010 and her passion for growing teams is transparent in all her team coaching processes and training interactions.

Carlo Perfetto began his career in coaching in 2013, studying and applying the Solution Focused approach in training and in team coaching. He works as a coach trainer, mentor and supervisor for SolutionsAcademy, to which he brings his vast experience and expertise in team coaching and developing people.

Rafal Szaniawski has been coaching using the Solution Focused approach since 2019. Raf also brings his natural enthusiasm and charisma to the training and team coaching space, making it easy to address serious matters in a relaxed manner, creating a safe environment for teams to work on their objectives.

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Carlo Perfetto and Rafal Szaniawski

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This book is dedicated to all our students at SolutionsAcademy – thank you for teaching us so much!

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Contents

Illustrations *xii*
List of cases *xiii*
List of exercises *xv*
About the authors *xvi*
Why a new edition? *xviii*
Foreword *xix*
Preface *xxi*
Acknowledgements *xxiii*
How to read this book *xxiv*

1 Foundations 1
Short history of Solution Focused practice 1
Solution Focused practice as a social-constructionist approach 6
The Galveston Declaration 7
Foundations of social-constructionist and Solution Focused team coaching 8
Other approaches: The cousins 19
Solution Focused coaching structures and moves 23
The art gallery metaphor 23
The double diamond metaphor: Partnering with the team 40
Differences from other modalities 44
What is a team? 50
References 61

2 Structure of a team coaching process 64
Introduction 64
Contracting 65
Interviews 77

Workshop(s): Concrete facilitation moves 83
Liberating structures 118

3 Special team coaching formats 120
Agile coaching 120
Kickoff meeting 122
Real-time planning meeting 122
Daily meeting 123
Check meeting 123
Retrospective meeting 123
Agile retrospectives 123
Shadowing 125
Regular supervision 126
Solution Focused reflecting team 128
Tetralemma 129
Team-building 131
References 135

4 What kinds of teams can you coach? 136
Introduction 136
Executive teams 136
Shop-floor teams 139
Team of teams 140
Educational sector 140
Hospitals 141

5 What size should the team be? 143
Large groups 143
Solution Focused real-time strategic change 151
Small teams 153
References 154

6 Difficult situations 155
Introduction 155
Difficult situations or participants? 155
Negative participants 156
Negative groups – mandated teams 158
Other possible difficulties 161
Dealing with strong emotions 167
The team wants to use a diagnostic instrument 168

Conflict in the team 169
Definitional ceremonies 179
Diversity and inclusion 186
References 187

7 Continuous development as a team coach 188
Initial training 188
Deliberate practice 191
Supervision 192
Accreditation and certification 193
Practise, practise, practise 194
References 194

8 Team coaching cheat sheet 195
Ticket office 195
Interviews 196
Mind map 196

Index 198

Illustrations

Figures

1.1 The Solution Focused art gallery 23
1.2 The double diamond 42
2.1 A mind map 81
2.2 Stakeholder map 100
2.3 Eisenhower matrix 109

Tables

1.1 Declaration of values 7
3.1 Differences between team coaching and team supervision 126
3.2 Structure for Solution Focused team supervision 128

Cases

1.1	Hierarchies and team coaching	10
1.2	Job-sharing conflict	13
1.3	Everything has been said, but not by everybody	14
1.4	Why are you not like us?	18
1.5	When the team cannot change the environment	27
1.6	A merger of two teams	42
1.7	Always me	55
1.8	What difference would it make?	59
2.1	But where is your feedback?	69
2.2	A second chance	77
2.3	Online warm-up	85
2.4	What is your favourite Christmas decoration item?	85
2.5	Discovery walk	92
2.6	Scaling instead of interviews	95
2.7	More or less communication?	96
2.8	The Russian countess	98
2.9	A miracle award	103
2.10	Scaling walk in training situations	104
2.11	In spite of everything, what went well?	107
2.12	Prioritization with Eisenhower	109
2.13	A useless presentation	114
2.14	A conflict disappears	117
3.1	Welcome to the jungle	134
4.1	Executive team coaching	137
5.1	Team coaching for strategy	146
5.2	Kitchen Table	150
5.3	Coaching a team of two	153
6.1	The negative engineer	156
6.2	Yet another change	158

6.3 The coach as idiot 161
6.4 Anger and frustration 167
6.5 Life is not a piece of cake 170
6.6 The files are in a mess 175
6.7 We are not talking! Never again! 183

Exercises

1.1	Your personal statement	19
1.2	Listening	25
1.3	Team coaching goals	31
1.4	Multipartiality	47
1.5	“Together in the middle of the bed”	47
2.1	Scaling walk for self-coaching	104
6.1	The coach as idiot	161
6.2	We have ways of making you talk	166
6.3	De-escalation	176

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Kirsten Dierolf has been coaching teams since 1996 and has been training team coaches since 2008. She is accredited as Master Practitioner Team Coaching by EMCC and holds the advanced certificate team coaching from ICF. Kirsten is the owner and founder of SolutionsAcademy, an ICF and EMCC accredited coach training school. She is an assessor for ICF MCC and PCC performance evaluation. Kirsten loves team coaching and is passionate about the Solution Focused approach and other social-constructionist approaches. She started her journey with the Solutions Focused approach when she studied directly with its founders, Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer.

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Rafal Szaniawski has been coaching using Solution Focused approach since 2019. He holds PCC accreditation with the ICF and Senior Practitioner accreditation with the EMCC. He works for SolutionsAcademy as a coach, mentor and trainer, and recently took up the project of establishing SolutionsAcademy in Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries.

Why a new edition?

The first edition of *Solution Focused Team Coaching* was published in 2013 (originally in German) with Kirsten Dierolf as the author. Much has changed since then. The world has gone through a pandemic, which expedited online teamwork and online team coaching. The large coaching associations, the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Association for Coaching (AC), have all published team coaching core competencies. The practitioner and academic literature has seen a flurry of publications on team coaching. In the Solution Focused world, practitioners from narrative, Solution Focused and collaborative approaches have started looking at what unites these techniques as social-constructionist approaches. The last ten years has also seen a lot of Solution Focused theory being developed and applied to coaching. This more than warrants a new edition.

The second edition responds to all those developments: we integrate online "team coaching moves" (traditionally called "techniques") and explore the contributions of the team coaching competences of the large associations and how Solution Focused practice might fulfil them. The new edition integrates what we have learned from the latest literature and describe the specifics of Solution Focused team coaching in terms of social-constructionism and commonalities with the other social-constructionist approaches.

The book is also written by a team: Kirsten Dierolf, Cristina Mühl, Carlo Perfetto and Rafal Szaniawski, who all work with SolutionsAcademy, training, mentoring and supervising coaches, team coaches, mentors and supervisors.

Foreword

When, many years ago, I first heard of the Solution Focused approach, I jumped to several inaccurate conclusions, based on the name. From both personal experience and clinical observation, I was aware that, much of the time, a coaching or mentoring client doesn't want or need a solution within the session. They want an advance in their thinking that enables them to work out a solution in their own time and in their own way. It is the coach who often brings the need for a resolution. And some issues are not solvable – the most beneficial outcome may in fact be acceptance of what is.

Of course, when done well, the Solution Focused approach does not just recognize but works with these realities of the client's world. It creates a safe thinking space, where a client reaches a heightened awareness of who they are, what they want and the resources they can exploit to get there. Unlike simplistic approaches, such as GROW, it does not seek to constrain the client within the coach's model, but rather creates conditions where the client defines their own model and narrative, releasing the creativity that permits them to identify and embrace new possibilities.

The Solution Focused approach draws significantly on the traditions of family and group therapy and the immense research base that underpins both these disciplines. It is not surprising that teams often like to think of themselves as a kind of family – a close-knit, mutually supportive unit. Like families, they are subject to conflicts of process and relationship. They create "voids" (topics it is too painful to acknowledge or discuss), get locked into roles, create shared narratives that reinforce their shared identity and have explicit or implicit power structures.

Our understanding of teams and the role of coaching in helping teams grow and achieve greater collaborative outcomes has increased rapidly over the past 30 years and more. We now have a lot more understanding of team dynamics. For me, one of the biggest advances has been the ability to see the team as a complex, adaptive system nested within other complex, adaptive systems. So many of the widely used models and approaches applied to teams are linear in concept and often badly evidenced. As a result, they can tie the team into time- and energy-wasting activities – for example, by trying to work through the linear stages of the Tuckman model or reducing their attention to a small group of internal interactions, ignoring other potentially more significant and external factors, as in the Lencioni model.

Mechanistic diagnostic approaches that have the well-intentioned goal of building appreciation of team members' cognitive and other differences often have the unintended result of "fixing" the shared narrative when what is needed is to liberate the team from a single narrative.

For teams, the Solution Focused approach is a collaborative process that enables greater collaboration within the team. It is a mutual exploration, stimulating curiosity to release the collective imagination. It allows the people in a system to see the system – a bit like enabling a fish to become aware of the water in which it swims – and to choose energizing paths into a shared future state.

In the following pages, the authors explain how the core concepts of Solutions Focus can be adapted to the complexity of working with teams. They demonstrate differences between the Solution Focused approach and other ways of supporting teams, offer tools and techniques, and challenge the reader to incorporate these powerful approaches into their team coaching practice. I recommend this book to any coach or leader who values an evidence-based approach to good practice.

David Clutterbuck

Preface

Solution Focused Team Coaching aims to enable coaches to move into team coaching using a respectful, resource and progress-oriented approach: Solution Focus. Chapter 1 will provide you with a firm foundation for the approach. You can learn about the history and development of Solution Focus in general and also find out about the philosophical foundation in social-constructionism. A paragraph on the cousins of the Solution Focused approach, Agile coaching, appreciative inquiry and so on, is also included.

In Chapter 2, you will learn about the practical foundations: how a Solution Focused coaching process can be structured, what questions we ask and what search spaces we open. Solution Focus is mainly interested in asking about what is wanted and what is working rather than what is not working and why something is wrong. In the paragraph on the double diamond metaphor, you will find a simple structure on how to partner with your clients in both individual and team coaching. We also present many different ways to facilitate a team coaching workshop.

The differences between team coaching, individual coaching and other modalities of team development are the focus of Chapter 3, which is followed by the Chapter 4, in which "team" is defined.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the team coaching competencies of the major associations, the International Coaching Federation (ICF), the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the Association for Coaching (AC). Ethics, coach presence and mindset, trust and safety, coaching agreements, competencies for working with the team in the moment and working with a co-coach are all explored.

In Chapter 6, we walk you through the structure of a team coaching process, from contracting to follow-up. Special team coaching formats, such as Agile coaching, Agile retrospectives, shadowing, team supervision, a decision-making tool and a format for team building, are presented.

In Chapter 7, we talk about different teams: executive teams, shop-floor teams, teams of teams, teams in the education sector and in hospitals. In Chapter 8, you will learn about how to facilitate larger groups in various team coaching formats.

Chapter 9 walks you through difficult situations that can arise in team coaching: negative participants, mandated teams, attacks on the coach, endless chatter vs.

nobody saying anything. Read this to be prepared in the unlikely event of encountering difficulties. The chapter also gives you structures for handling conflict in the team and situations in which diversity and inclusion play a part in team coaching.

Finally, Chapter 10 invites you to think about your continuous development as a team coach. We talk about initial training, reflective and deliberate practice, supervision and accreditation possibilities.