

CASE STUDY: Solutions Focused Techniques: Improving Mental Health & Employment Outcomes

REPORT PURPOSE

Solutions Focused Techniques have their roots in therapy but have evolved into a broader framework for lasting change and improving psychological health. Its “powerful effects” (Wells, Jobcentre Plus Work Psychology Dept, 2010) have resulted in the increasing application of techniques to organisational and executive coaching, as well as “brief therapies” to treat depression and anxiety.

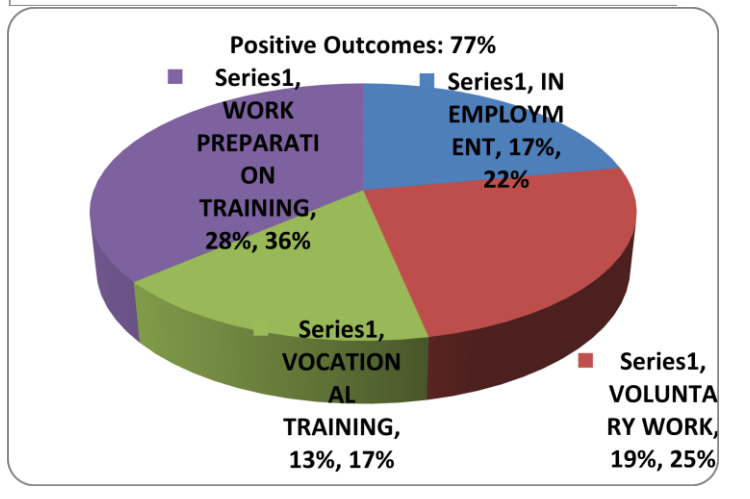
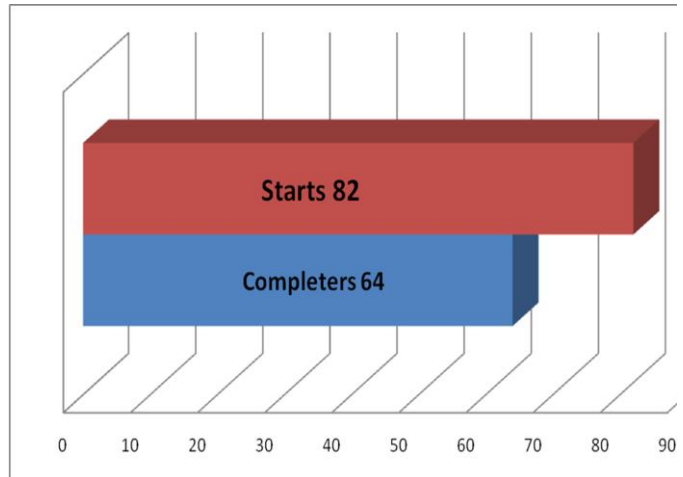
This report examines an overview of these techniques and their application, as researched in an “employment agency intervention” context and reported in the *Journal of Occupational Psychology, Employment and Disability* (Vol 12, No. 1, 2010).

What is a “Solutions Focused” Approach?

An “SF” approach is a solution-building, rather than problem-solving framework for facilitating lasting change and psychological improvement in an individual. It builds upon a growing body of evidence and research conducted over the past half century from renowned psychologists such as Iveson (2002), Seligman (from 1998), de Shazer (1985), O’Connell (1998), Rothwell (2005), Gingerich & Eisengart (2000), Johada (1982), etc.

SF techniques draw upon this research and incorporate specific communication skills, listening skills, enhanced interview skills and a fluid, goal-focused interview structure which ensures that the participant takes responsibility for their own improvement. Ixion Holdings Ltd delivers these techniques through their exclusive “OASIS Programme” in the UK.

SOLUTIONS FOCUSED TECHNIQUE. INTERVENTION RESULTS



KEY TENETS OF THE SOLUTIONS FOCUSED APPROACH (“SF”)

- If it works, do more of it. If it is not working, do something different.
- Small steps lead to big changes.
- Use simple terminology.
- The solution isn’t necessarily related to the problem.
- Aim towards a future that is both created and negotiable.

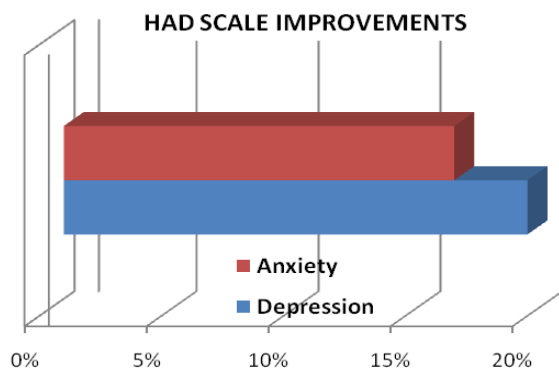


KEY FINDINGS

In research conducted by Alyson Wells *et al* of Jobcentre Plus NW Region in the UK, 82 unemployed customers with common mental health problems (depression/anxiety) were offered up to 6 **voluntary** Solutions Focused sessions. After each session they were offered the option to undertake an additional session. 78% of participants completed the full course.

The sessions were delivered by 10 Work Psychologists who had received 4 sessions of training in SF techniques, and arrangements were made for monthly supervision by an experienced SF therapist. It is postulated that more experienced SF “coaches” might have produced improved results. It is noted that results might have been negatively impacted by the onset of a “Global Financial Crisis” recession.

The results below were measured four months after the final SF session. It is proposed that a follow-up 6-12 months after the end session would have resulted in higher “Into Work” outcomes.



CSES IMPROVEMENT
(Core Self-Evaluations Scale)

Improvement in Self-Esteem, generalised self-efficacy, levels of neuroticism & locus of control. This scale has been shown to be reliable and significantly correlated with life satisfaction, job satisfaction & job performance.

+67%

BARRIERS TO WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

+10.6 points

Indicates *significant* improvements in customer beliefs about their ability to seek obtain and sustain work as a result of the SF intervention.

Customer’s belief in the likelihood of being in Work in 6 months’ time compared to pre-intervention:

+17%

CONCLUSIONS

Further research is certainly required. However, the Jobcentre Plus research published in the Journal states that, “Results were encouraging. Customers taking part reported significantly decreased anxiety and depression, more positive about the skills they have, more positive about being able to present themselves to an employer and more positive about their ability to sustain work.”

Alyson Wells, lead on JCP’s research, advocated as far back as 2007 “the use of SF techniques in the Work Focused Interviews carried out by Advisers.” She provided “a comprehensive account of the potential benefits of using SF techniques.”

Ixion Holding’s more refined “OASIS Programme” builds upon these the SF techniques that delivered these positive outcomes and will be applied to various unemployed groups: long-term, recently redundant, ex-Incapacity –benefit, young people and ex-offenders.

Ixion’s approach builds upon extensive scientific research and focuses upon enhancing the well-being of the individual – an approach increasingly adopted by No. 10, No. 11 and the French, US and Australian governments.