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## Developing and Sustaining a Successful Family Business: A Solution-Focused Guide -Written by Louis Cauffman

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Developing and Sustaining a Successful Family Business: A Solution-Focused Guide

Louis Cauffman

Routledge, 2022, 230 pages, ISBN 9781032045603, \$160.00 hardback, \$39.54 paperback (eBook edition available)

Review by Julio Príncipe

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Coach and Systemic Consultant

Louis Cauffman is, without a doubt, a pioneer in the application of the Solution-Focused Approach in the organizational world. He had been trained in psychology and economics already, to which he added his Solution-Focused training in the 1990s. He then combined those three approaches. At that time, Louis had been working in the field of family businesses. This book is a well-sourced account of the experience he has accumulated in those fields

*Developing and Sustaining a Successful Family Business: A Solution-Focused Guide* is one of those books which are generous in models, practices, and possibilities, both from a theoretical and a practical perspective. The main storyline involves John and Annie and their family, and how they went from employees to entrepreneurs and then founded and led an innovative and successful family business which faced generational transitions. The book promises to unfold this story line and it completely delivers, while including conceptual and practical models drawn from the author's experience with family businesses, while emphasizing the Solution-Focused Approach.

As we know, the global economy is, directly or indirectly, largely driven by family businesses. There is a substantial number of family businesses being born and dying every year, regardless of the economic growth of their home countries. This means that this book is tremendously relevant both for entrepreneurs and for managers, as well as for researchers and business school faculty members, and for coaches and consultants, since, quite likely, we will find ourselves working in a family business, with a family business, or we will be founding our own! Of course, if you are already in the field of family businesses, this book will provide you with valuable examples. And if you are in the field of the Solution-Focused Approach, it will provide you with examples of interventions with members of a family business which might be inspiring and encouraging to aim your practice in that direction.

The book covers various aspects of family businesses, such as general concepts, leadership, and transitional and generational succession processes. In addition, the author has skilfully combined the principles of the Solution-Focused Approach with the demands and parameters of a book about family businesses. This means that, although the book title reads *A Solution-Focused Guide*, strictly speaking, it is not a typical book on the Solution-Focused Approach, but it uses its principles and features useful management techniques for family businesses. In addition, it includes the reality of LGBT+ people in family businesses, without turning it into the focal point or dramatic focus of the plot.

As an organizational consultant I found the book refreshing, even when it presents already known models. It does not organize them as a classic textbook or step-by-step manual would. Rather, the spirit of finding resources is present. As a practitioner of the Solution-Focused Approach, the book showed me possibilities, especially in conflict situations. Moreover, I wonder which other possibilities might appear if the book also included, in addition to solution-focused practices, a more systemic and contextual paradigm, particularly to look into matters such as leadership not only in terms of leadership qualities but to address the conditions in which leadership occurs and is co-created by the team, the family, and the rich world of family businesses. I imagine that this perspective would slightly change some of the ideas presented as tools, and would, maybe, open other conversations, at the risk of decreasing the book's attractiveness for consultants and managers, who pay more attention to straightforward application.

In any event, I highly recommend this book to anyone who wishes to know more about –as the book title says– how to develop and sustain a successful family business in time, with interventions and outlooks which privilege resources and solutions rather than delving into problems and limitations. I encourage you to read it and implement its advice.

**The reviewer**

Julio Príncipe is a Coach and Systemic Consultant. He provides coaching and systemic consultancy services worldwide, both in person and online, in Spanish, English and Portuguese, and is an expert in the application of systemic constellations.

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