

Think of Appreciative Inquiry as a new conversation, as a search engine for the positive core of a system, as a convergence zone or "space" creating a multiplier effect in the area of human imagination and intellectual capital. ~David Cooperrider

Dear Friends and Colleagues ~

What might this "new conversation" look like that Cooperrider describes as a "search engine," a "convergent zone or space"?

A conversation that acts as an amplifier of creativity and intelligence?

TELL ME A STORY...

At the heart of Appreciative Inquiry are stories. Its goal is to build relationships between people by getting them to share their deepest hopes and dreams of the future as imagined and described through stories of positive or peak experiences.

The telling of and listening to positive experiences with an appreciative ear conveys more than just facts. Rich meaning (which can be thought of as wisdom) and emotion are carried on the wings of stories. And it is through the shared flight into our most deeply held cores that the relationship is created.

The relationship created makes the "space" for a deeper exploration of shared meaning and learning about human organizing. The strategy for discovering stories with positive outcomes in an effective, efficient way is an interview process designed to find out what it is you want more of.

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT MORE OF?

Years ago a national organization spent nearly \$1,000,000 on sexual harassment training. An evaluation determined that harassment had actually gone up. Looking for a new approach, the Human Resources (HR) staff contacted Dr. David Cooperrider (quoted above) from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Cooperrider asked them the single most important question of any Appreciative Inquiry: "What do you want to know?"

The HR staff of the organization was confused by the question. For them it was not what they wanted to know that was important, it was what they wanted to do - which was to reduce sexual harassment.

Cooperrider asked the question in a different way. "What do you need to know to reduce sexual harassment?" After a lot of hemming and hawing they realized that if everyone in the organization knew what high performing cross-gender working relationships were like then the chances of reducing sexual harassment would be increased. Instead of trying to reduce something, e.g., sexual harassment, the staff defined what they wanted more of and then the search began for what they needed to know to make this kind of team the norm in their organization.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTERVIEW?

The AI "conversation" is structured in such a way that the interview creates a focused dialogue about what is it that is wanted by the group. As the interview process progresses,

*Submerged good rises to the surface. Incidents and examples of things at their best have a chance to be revisited and analyzed.

*Energy, commitment, and care characterize the stories. Feelings emerge along with proven strategies.

*Laughter and wonder mix with realization and acknowledgment. This is a conversation to be enjoyed and savored.

*Understanding deepens. For the space allotted, the interviewee is a teacher and the interviewer teases out details and meaning without interrupting the storyteller.

*Empathy grows. Everyone has a "voice" based on their experience and a listening ear allows that voice to be considered in the decision-making process.

*Trust develops. The experience of being fully heard creates a level of camaraderie and collegiality that helps people deal with the inevitability of change.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD INTERVIEWER?

The storytelling format of an AI interview and the positive nature of its questions tend to foster an interpersonal rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. (Each person usually functions as both an interviewer and an interviewee.) This rapport is encouraged by compassionate curiosity and good listening skills.

(These last two paragraphs were adapted from and inspired by Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination by Mohr and Watkins.)

"WHEN WE ARE LISTENED TO, CREATIVE WATERS FLOW."

Because listening skills of the interviewer are crucial to a successful AI, we would like to pass on this article recommended by a colleague in the community development field: "The Art of Listening" by Brenda Ueland
<<http://traubman.igc.org/listenof.htm>>.

Enjoy! Let us hear from you. We welcome feedback and relevant articles like the one by Ueland that you may have found useful as well. ~Trish, Chet, and Skip

Previous mailings may be read at <http://www.characterethics.com/appreciativeinquirylearningspace>.

If at anytime you wish to be removed from this "learning space," please hit reply and say, "Please remove" in the body of the email. Thanks!



Books are the bees which carry the quickening pollen from one to another mind. ~ James Russell Lowell

 Printer Friendly

Appreciative Inquiry Learning Space

To help create a learning community around Appreciative Inquiry, we are sending out mailings periodically with attachments or links to relevant articles. This is a repository of ones mailed to date. Feel free to browse and respond. ~Trish, Chet, and Skip

June 2005

Appreciative Inquiry as **"Good Company"**

"What is AI?" by Joe Hall and Sue Hammond

July 2005

Appreciative Inquiry as an **"Alignment of Strengths"**

"Sustaining Change" by Rodrigo Loures

"Appreciative Inquiry at Nutrimental: How Did It Happen?" by Larissa Marczak

"Case Study at Nutrimental" by Ima de Oliveira Barros

A Reader Responds...

July 19, 2005

After reading the attachment, the one thing that struck me is the similarity in approach and tone that Peter Drucker wrote about in the 50's and 60's. He is a very good read. His forward-perspective and positive approach is still relevant today, and I incorporate much of his thinking into mine.

Also, Dad taught me tons about problems, problem solving, human nature, and societal responsibilities. When I was in graduate school, a report came out stating that at that time about 70% of the CEO's of the Fortune 500 firms came from towns with populations of 50,000 or less . . . because of the small size, everyone HAD to contribute, communicate, and work together (granted, there were still the intrigue, cliques, etc). In business terms - team building, leadership, consensus building, etc., etc.

Now for a rhetorical question from me - what effect will the computer have on all that in the future? - I have known individuals sitting within five feet of each other sending emails instead of swiveling in their chairs

and going face-to-face. ~ Fred Williams

July 2005

Appreciative Inquiry as "Stories"

"The Art of Listening" by Brenda Ueland

A Reader Responds . . .

July 26, 2005

Thank you for the appreciative inquiry excerpts. Although framed betwixt a different sort of "wood," this idea is also the bottom line basis for providing positive things to do (and say) about any age child's conduct (especially for the child who does not follow rules), students' learning progress (albeit slowly and perhaps not "on grade level"), etc., rather than negative actions (and remarks) about these children's performances.

These positively-reinforced children then mentally create that visual of future success on a larger scale, rather than diminishing the dream or goal.

More sensitivity to these sorts of ideas by teachers and parents could potentially stimulate children towards more lofty and worthwhile and satisfying goals and hopefully help them achieve satisfying future dreams. ~ Joy Ritchie, Teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) K - 5

August 9, 2005

Appreciative Inquiry as "A New Kind of Performance Review . . . What's Love Got to Do with It?"

"White Space and Knuckle Balls" by Chet Bowling and Skip Lineberg

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