Rarely does a methodology have the potential to be as effective as Appreciative Inquiry in addressing challenging issues and effecting transformation. Because in AI the bottom-line objective is always to discover...what gives life? to this child? this family? this individual? this team? this class? this institution? this organization? this community? this nation? this planet?

It works because the Universe is specifically and strategically designed to support life. There is magic in lifting deficit-based community discourse out of the mire of the pathology-focused medical model: symptom – diagnosis - treatment. Or the organizational incarnation: problem – solution - strategic intervention. An Appreciative Inquiry process restores trust, generates hope, invites vision, and opens up infinite vistas of possibility.

No matter what the apparent intent of a typical communication, however well-meaning or disguised, the underlying objective is to gain and maintain an advantage. Analyze most conversations and you will discover that the real agenda, conscious or unconscious is power and control, notwithstanding for justifiably legitimate purposes. The effect is that it feels murky and undermines trust. Early on we learn it is not considered safe, or wise, to take anyone's words at face value, we must suss out the hidden meaning or agenda. Appreciative Inquiry is transparent; it suggests that true power and leadership eludes its self-serving pursuit as an objective, but emanates naturally from openness, vulnerability and an intention to serve the best interest of another.

Appreciative Inquiry teaches that language creates reality, and that change begins with the questions you ask. First, acknowledge that the act of inquiring is never neutral, it is in itself an intervention, and exerts some kind of influence. Secondly, the demeanor of the inquirer, as well as the wording of the question largely determines the answer; therefore, the responsibility for the outcome lies with the asker. In other words, you find what you look for. If you go looking for what's broken, you will find lots of broken stuff. If you look for what's working, you will find that most things are. What you focus on grows and expands. It confirms the wisdom of the old adage, "Be careful what you ask for, you'll probably get it!"

Appreciative Inquiry principles are intentionally naïve and psychologically sound. Whenever you surprise a subject and interrupt an anticipated script with new language and unexpected questions, they are forced to pause, struggle to find new language, new ideas with which to respond, and the rhythm of the entrenched cycle is broken. Without a familiar script, an interaction becomes a free agent looking for a context…which Appreciative Inquiry can undergird and establish on a new playing field. Add to the mix that the asker has just become a historian of the subject's best practices and a champion for the subject's future vision. In anybody's book that is a recipe for a successful intervention!
The moment you ask a question that requires people to go back into their positive emotional memories: "Tell me about a time when you felt excited, energized, alive, motivated…", the conscious, intellectual mind is circumvented, and you have direct access to the sub-conscious. Intellectualization and resistance evaporate. Then you unpack the event they describe, asking 4-6 questions about the elements that made the experience so memorable, motivating, energizing, satisfying, meaningful.

At that point the subject is re-experiencing and anchored in the present to the positive emotions they originally felt, often much enhanced, as memory is apt to do with good times. Then you pace them into the present and future with question two: "How can you get more of that? What would you need to do to bring those elements into the present? What skills did you use successfully that could be applied to the current challenges? What did you learn from that experience that would be effective here? Etc. " The third question pledges your support in their endeavor and closes the communication loop.

Some version of these three questions works in any situation:

1. What do you like about what's going on? What's working? Tell me about a time…?
2. What would you like to have more of? What would you like to do differently? What made that so exciting, meaningful, satisfying…?
3. How can I help? What do you need from me? How can I support you? What training, resources, etc, could I provide to help you succeed?

Once mastered this transparent, rapport-building communication style becomes second nature, and when infused throughout an organization is generative and transformative. Most people notice that the new communication behavior makes them feel better about themselves and is improving their intimate and family relationships as well.
MID-TERM REVIEW

DATA COLLECTION
AND
INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

The Appreciative Inquiry Process is a tool for exploring the "life-giving" factors of the organization. It is a process of discovery. The data you collect in interviews will enable you to locate, illuminate and understand the distinctive strengths, which lend the organization life and vitality when functioning at its best in terms of safety and Incident and Injury-Free performance.

Data Collection/ Narrative Exploration represents the core of the inquiry process. It serves as the jumping-off point for dialogue and the application of learning's toward a unique theory of organizational innovation and change. In traditional research processes, data is collected as an objective reality. It is assumed to stand apart from the people involved and the process through which it is generated. In the process of Appreciative Inquiry we do not seek objective data. Rather, we seek to explore and enliven, with those we interview, their stories of the organization. When collecting data we aim to stimulate participants' excitement and delight as they share their values, experience and history with the organization and wishes for the future. In addition, we seek to catalyze thinking and dialogue about positive possibilities otherwise forgotten in the social and organizational patterns of deficit language.

Data Collection/Narrative Exploration is a mutual learning process. Both the interviewer and the interviewee learn together as they explore the participants' values, peak experiences and wishes for the organization.

KEY STEPS IN DATA COLLECTION

Successful Data Collection/Narrative Exploration requires the identification of key stakeholders in your organization – those who have a vested interest in or strong impact on the organization's growth and future, and who can supply you with valuable insights of your selected topic area(s). After identifying the stakeholders, you will need to make arrangements for preparing your interview questionnaire, collecting the data, recording the information and collating or distributing the data. The data you collect at this stage will serve as the basis for the next stage of creating the organizational dream for sustaining an Incident and Injury-Free worksite.
GOOD APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Stated in the affirmative
2. A leading question that builds on "half-full assumption"
3. Gives a broad definition of the topic
4. Presented as an invitation
   - Expansive
   - Positive feeling words
   - Locating words
   - Experience words
5. Good questions enhance the possibilities of story telling and narratives
6. Good question are phrased in rapport talk not report talk
7. Good questions are sometimes ambiguous. This is OK. They give room to "swim around"
8. Good questions are valuing "what is." They spark the appreciative imagination by helping the person locate experiences that are worth valuing
9. Good questions convey unconditional positive regard
10. Good questions evoke essential values, aspirations and inspirations
TIPS FOR CONDUCTING MID-TERM INTERVIEWS

1. EXPLAINING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY. Like anything new, appreciative interviewing may seem awkward at the beginning. It may be equally awkward for the person you are interviewing. They, too, may be caught up in looking at the organization as a problem-to-be-solved, and may not give instant understanding to this approach. Usually, I say something like this:

Before we start, I would like to explain a little bit about what we are going to do because it may be a little different from what you are used to. This is going to be an "appreciative interview." I am going to ask you questions about times when you see things working at their BEST where you work. Many times, we try to ask questions about things that are not working well – the problems – so that we can fix them. In this case, we try to find out about the things at their best – the successes – so that we can find out what works and find ways to infuse more of it into the organization's performances. It is also like what we do with children athletes when we affirm their smallest successes and triumphs so that they will hold a positive image of themselves and then envision even greater possibility. The end result of the interview will help me understand those "life-giving" forces: which provide vitality and distinctive competence to your organization. Do you have any questions?

2. WHAT TO DO WITH NEGATIVES. Sometimes, people work in places they do not like. With an explanation like the one above, you can generally get them to identify things at their best. But people should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. Depending on my empathic understanding of where the interviewee is, I handle this in several different ways – or some combination.

- **Postponing.** I tell them that I would like to make a note of what they have said and come back to it late. Be sure to come back to it though.

- **Listening.** If they have some real INTENSITY about what they want to say about problems, let them say it. If it is that "up close and personal," you are not going to get any appreciative data until you get it out. Keep a caring and affirmative spirit.
**Redirecting.** If it does not seem that serious, or if you have listened sufficiently to understand the negative issues they are raising, and they are now just into the drama of it, find a way to guide them back. "I think I understand a little bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few of the ones you've heard), but I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you saw innovation (for example) at its best?" If they say, it never happened where they work, find out if they have EVER had the experience in any organization or work context ANYWHERE before giving up.

3. **USING NEGATIVE DATA.** All the stuff people find wrong with an organization represents an absence of something that they hold in their minds as an IDEAL image. What organizational processes, if present (rather than absent) might create the ideal organization that the negatives imply? DATA is DATA – Use it. But use IT AFFIRMATIVELY. In fact one would argue that there is no such thing as negative data. Every utterance is conditioned by affirmative images.

4. **THE INTERVIEW RHYTHM – STARTING WITH SPECIFIC STORIES.** There is a rhythm to these kinds of interviews. When you start to address your topic, start with specifics personally relevant to the person interviewed. Try to get them to tell a story about "A time when you..." or "Tell me a story about a time when you..." or Tell me a story about a time when you experienced (the topic) at its best." Probe deeply and intently, not like a dentist or a piranha going after the bait, buy like an interested friend hanging on every detail. Try to find out who did what WHEN... and what were you thinking ... so THEN what did you do – like gossips over a backyard fence. What you are trying to do is get what they DID (behavior) and what they THOUGHT or FELT (values) while they were doing it.

5. **THE INTERVIEW RHYTHM – GENERALIZING ABOUT LIFE–GIVING FORCES.** After you have heard their story, really probing it, go for the generalizations "What is it about this organization – its structure, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, strategy – that create conditions where cooperation (for example) can flourish?" If your topic (i.e. cooperation) is a plant, what you are trying to do is find out about the kind of organizational soil, water and sunlight conditions that really nourish it. Sometimes people do not know what you mean by organizational conditions, factors, or forces. Give examples: "Are jobs designed a certain way? For example, to foster cooperation, how does the culture or climate of the organization foster cooperation?" And so on, try your best to get them to think a bit abstractly about what is present in the organization that really allowed them to have that peak experience with your topic.
6. ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS. In order to get a sense of some of the organizational factors you will be listening for, if not asking about, things like: What was the structure like? Culture? Systems? Rewards? Etc. You do NOT have to systematically ask about each of these – the stories may contain information about all of them. If not, you may want to gently probe a bit.

7. WATCH YOUR TIME. If the interview is generally planned to be an hour, you will need to make sure that as you are probing with fascination what they are saying, that you are also aware of the time. If you decide that you are learning so much that it is OK if you run over an hour, check it out with the person also. Best bet is to pace your questions appropriately to the time you have scheduled.

8. IT IS A CONVERSATION – BE YOURSELF AND HAVE FUN. If you approach the interview like a piece of drudgery – you would rather be anywhere than with this person – you have lost before you have begun. You want to approach the interviewee as if they are a very special person, valuing the best of who they are. Be humble, as sophisticated as you are about the world, about the world of management, for this hour the interviewee is your teacher. Be yourself – do not try to put on some expert role or act like you have got to get every word in the interview protocol exactly right. Be a learner – realize that everyone likes to share their knowledge and wisdom with people that genuinely want to learn. If you have got an affirmative spirit going in, mistakes in wording will not stop you from getting great data. Finally, have a bit of fun. You are getting to know someone new and you are hearing some fascinating and important stories.

9. A WORD ABOUT YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY. Tell the interviewees you will keep confidential the conversation and the information they provide. You will use the data, but it will be compiled into themes using data from this interview and others. No names will be associated with the overall summary or report. Stories and quotes from interviews may be used without a name associated with them.
Attending to Others: Interviewing Appreciatively

Gervase R. Bushe Ph.D.

Appreciative interviews require a different intention and different set of techniques from the clinical interviewing skills taught in most interviewing courses. The purpose of a clinical interview is to understand the other person’s experience and point of view. The purpose of an appreciative interview is to help the person mine their experience to go beyond their current point of view.

In an appreciative interview, you are trying to dive into the concrete experiences of another person and, together, look at them from new frames and perspectives to generate new insights. Some basic clinical interviewing skills, like active listening are important prerequisites for appreciative interviews. But clinical interviews rarely help the other person gain insight. The following table lists some key differences between clinical interviews and appreciative interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical Interviews</th>
<th>Appreciative Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gather information</td>
<td>Generate insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be detached and objective</td>
<td>Be involved and empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor other's emotional response</td>
<td>Monitor own and other's emotional response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withhold own views and feelings</td>
<td>Share own views and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be rational, stay with the facts</td>
<td>Be intuitive, allow imagination to play with the facts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search for the objective “truth”</td>
<td>Search for energy</td>
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ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING

- Let the interviewee tell her/his story
- Listen to it attentively with interest and appreciation
- Belief rather than doubt is the proper orientation
- Intense focus and attention leads to the experience of being fully heard and gotten. Empathy is important to build connection and trust
- Generative question, cueing, using metaphors, guiding are part of appreciative interviewing
Appreciative Inquiry had significant and lasting impact as we went through a very large scale transformation of our business and culture. Even the employees that were most negative were transformed. The Power of Appreciative Inquiry is the handbook for those trying to drive businesses where they need to go during these difficult times. Mary Peery, former Senior Vice President, Hewlett Packard Company. About the Author. Diana Whitney, PhD, and Amanda Trosten-Bloom lead Corporation for Positive Change, an internationally recognized consultancy whose mission is to bring Appreciative Inquiry. 12 DISCOVER An Appreciative Inquiry Interview Form pairs with someone you least know. Use the interview question (on next slide) One speaks, the other listens and takes notes for themes (10 minutes) Switch Other speaks, the first listens and takes notes for themes (10 minutes) Debrief as group (5 minutes). 13 DISCOVER An Appreciative Inquiry Interview Describe a time when you successfully joined with others to significantly improve your school. It should be a time when you felt most alive and most effective. 16 The Interview Rhythm Explain Appreciative Inquiry Respect anonymity Start with specific stories Move to generalisations Listen for themes Keep track of time Have fun! It’s a conversation. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. (Goethe) WIN song.