

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry

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Understanding Appreciative Inquiry

- **A major assumption of AI is that in every community something works. Change can be managed through the identification of what works, and focus on how to build on it.**
- **Focusing on what works as opposed to what problems the community is having differentiates AI from traditional problem solving approaches.**

Denise M.
Pizzulli:

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

- Inquiry into the “art of the possible” should begin with *appreciation*.
- The first task is to describe and explain those exceptional moments which give energy and activate members’ competencies and energies.

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

- Inquiry into what's possible should be *applicable*.
- Study should lead to the creation of knowledge that can be used, applied, and validated in action

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

- Inquiry into what is possible should be *provocative*.

An organization/community is capable of becoming more than it is at any given moment, and learning how to determine its own future.

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

- Inquiry into what's possible should be *collaborative*.
- There is an inseparable relationship between the process of inquiry and its content.

Appreciative Inquiry

- Appreciative inquiry helps us to *understand* the “best of what is” in an organization or social system; and leads to *imagining* and *creating* a collectively envisioned, *grounded*, future.

Inquiry

- Inquiry is our most important tool in creating positive change.
- The seeds of change are implicit in the questions we ask.
- The more positive the question, the longer-lasting the change

Problem Solving vs. Appreciative Inquiry

"Felt Need"

Identification of Problem



Analysis of Causes



Analysis of Possible Solutions



Action Planning

Appreciating

The Best of *"What is"*



Imagining

"What might be"



Shared Dialogue

"What we most want"



Innovating

"What will be"

BASIC ASSUMPTION:

*LIFE IS A PROBLEM
TO BE SOLVED*

BASIC ASSUMPTION:

*LIFE IS A MYSTERY
TO BE EMBRACED*

Note: From D. L. Cooperrider and Associates (1996).
A constructive approach to organization development and change.

Appreciative Inquiry Process

- Focus on key Affirmative Topics – topic choice is a fateful act.
- Identify and Value the “Best of What Is” using positive data collection techniques.
- Articulate Provocative Propositions.
- Collectively imagine what can be, building on this trustworthy foundation
- Innovate by creating the shared Vision.

Six Aspects of Change and Development of which to be Aware

- Knowledge of the community is critical to determining its destiny.
- The seeds of change are implicit in the first questions we ask.

Six Aspects of Change and Development of which to be Aware

- A critical resource we have for creating positive change in our communities is our imagination and the capacity to free the imagination and the mind of groups.

Six Aspects of Change and Development of which to be Aware

- Our imagination and mind are constrained by bad habits, limited styles of thinking, underlying assumptions and traditional rules of organizing.

Six Aspects of Change and Development of which to be Aware

- Our styles of thinking rarely match the increasingly complex worlds in which we work... We need to discover more creative and fruitful ways of knowing.

Six Aspects of Change and Development of which to be Aware

- All systems (organizations and communities), as living constructions, are largely affirmative and respond to positive thought and positive knowledge.

Harnessing Imagination

- **Appreciative Inquiry gathers positive stories and images**
- **Our minds are stretched by hearing what is possible**
- **Positive images lead to positive action**

Positive Image

Positive Action

- Medical research on the placebo effect.
- Medical research on the link between negative and positive effect on healing
- Education: Pygmalion Effect
- Sports Psychology on the power of imagery of differential self-monitoring.
- Emotional Intelligence

Positive Image-Positive Action

- Change happens at the level of discourse.
- The best clue to a system's health is to listen to how its members talk about the future.

Positive Image-Positive Action

- Our habitual styles of thought, assumptions, and rules of analysis often have ironic consequences of exacerbating the very problems we have so carefully diagnosed.
- *Energy flows where attention goes.*

How can we engage new constituencies and build community participation?

- Recognize what community values
- Connect people and opportunities
- Leverage existing community networks, especially organizations which cross boundaries (like faith communities, businesses, schools, hospitals)

Imagine Chicago

- Track record of building hope and civic investment on six continents
- Develops uncommon connections that expand what's possible
 - across generations
 - across cultures
 - across sectors
 - across divisions of geography and economics

IMAGINE CHICAGO

- Designs projects that build capacity
 - of the individual participant
 - of their organization
 - of the community

Makes resources available on-line:

www.imaginechicago.org

Imagine Chicago's (NGO) role

- Strategic design partner
- Community development model resource
- Trainer
- Facilitator

Host organization role

- Determine focus and scope of community building pilot
- Select design team
- Design and implement project
- Hold community summit
- Document project and share findings

Next steps: Designing what can be

Why: Key reasons to do the work and use this approach?

Who: Targeted collaborators? Staff resources? Leadership team?

What: Core focus/products and outcome goals?

When: Project/course timetable?

How: Which target community?

Creating what will be

- **This course will give you tools and practice in AI**
- **You will provide leadership to help develop this community of practice in Chicago**
- **Everyone will design and implement an AI protocol during the course, working alone or in teams with others**
- **Implementation must be completed and written up as a case study by Dec.15**