

Highlight change management – an introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

Change management. Fun stuff. Everyone loves change: take what you know and replace it with a promise. Then overlay that promise with the memory of accumulated missed efforts, half-baked attempts, and roads of abandoned promises.

In systems theory the ability to replace stock is neither easy nor fast, be it the stock of cod in the over-fished, Grand Banks or the stock of knowledge needed to replace accumulated FORTRAN programming expertise with Dart programming.

Hold On Change

A whole industry has grown to help change as well as books, PhDs, dissertations, studies on motivation, on visioning, on facilitation, on design, on planning, on communicating change.

On hope: the hope the change you need becomes the change indeed.

There are more change methods and strategies, but the essence of change is motivation. Our forefathers had it a bit different, change ... or die. Now, inability to change has a bit less dire consequence: people need to change and organizations need to change or skills decay into irrelevance and an organization's revenues die.

Change Your Question

The key to motivation is a person's intrinsic motivation to change. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) works around a premise that *we move and change in the direction we inquire*.

Inquiries into problems will find problems.

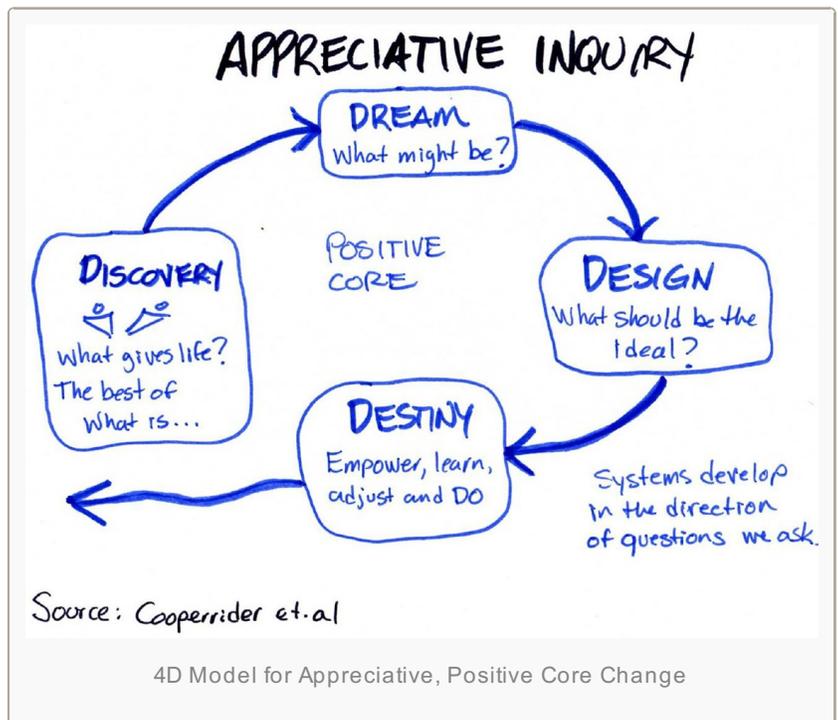
Inquiries into what is working or what is best shines a light onto what works and possibilities of how it could work.

The focus shift is on discovery. Discovery becomes the foundation to build upon the new, sustainable norm. With AI you move your strategic and talent management strategies from buy-in to commitment, understanding, and ownership.

AI is an amalgam approach to change, not one discipline, but an approach that came together



"Change management you say, looks all the same from here ... "



under the guidance of David Cooperrider's theoretical work to create a positive revolution in the leadership of change with **strength-based approaches** to multi-stakeholder innovation and sustainable design.

Change as Possibility, Not Calamity

While working on his PhD, Cooperrider interviewed leading clinicians at the Cleveland Clinic about their greatest successes and failures, but was drawn to the stories of success. He then decided to focus exclusively on them and as he reported them back into the Clinic those stories had a huge impact. Cleveland Clinic's saw the impact and asked for that same approach get rolled out to the entire 8,000 people in the organization.

AI is unique because of its ability to enable positive change, innovation, and sustainable design in systems of large and complex scale. I have been working with AI since 1999. The principles lay over any approach, any dialogue, any engagement, any interaction. Cooperrider notes inquiry into organizational life should have 4 characteristics:

1. **Appreciative:** AI looks for the "**positive core**" of the organization and seeks to use it as a foundation for future growth.
2. **Applicable:** AI is grounded in stories of what has actually taken place in the past and is therefore essentially practical. It is not a "pie in the sky" approach but instead seeks the best of "what is" in order to build the best of "**what might be**".
3. **Provocative:** AI invites people to take some risks in the way they imagine the future and redesign their organization to bring it about. With the security and energy gained from exploration of the best in the organization, people feel able to respond with "**provocative propositions**" about the future.
4. **Collaborative:** AI is a form of collaborative inquiry. It always involves the whole organization or a representative cross-section of the whole organization. In this way all voices are heard and everyone's contribution valued.

Every AI inquiry or endeavor is unique to the organization and the stakeholders. The principles retain their name, but AI as a total approach has an incredible ability to scale and create new approaches continue to emerge. As more and more people have used AI it has developed and new understandings have been gained.

5 Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

1. **Constructionist Principle:** that reality as we know it is subjective and socially created through the language we use and the conversations we have
2. **Principle of Simultaneity:** that inquiry in itself is an intervention, the moment we ask a question we begin to create change.
3. **Poetic Principle:** that organisations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it.
4. **Anticipatory Principle:** that human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. Therefore, the more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.
5. **Positive Principle:** that momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. The practice of Appreciative Inquiry has shown that momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core of an organization.*

I have successfully used AI in large and small organizations; commercial and not-for-profit; for large-scale organizational transformation and team interventions as well as executive coaching.

Cooperrider contrasts the commonplace notion that, "organizing is a problem to be solved" with the appreciative

proposition that, “organizing is a miracle to be embraced”.

There is a world of possibilities when you flip the coin. There is an [art of possibility](#) available to anyone.

Appreciative Inquiry Online Resources:

1. [David Cooperrider, Ph.D. – Case Western Reserve](#) faculty profile
2. [David Cooperrider, Ph.D. – Taos Institute Board of Directors](#) profile
3. [Resources for Getting Appreciative Inquiry Started – An Example OD Proposal, by David Cooperrider](#) *select for Adobe .pdf*
4. [*What is Appreciative Inquiry? Linda Joy Mitchell](#) *select for Adobe .pdf*

Appreciative Inquiry in Books:

Tagged as: [AI](#), [Appreciative Inquiry](#), [change](#), [change management](#), [crowdsourcing](#), [David Cooperrider](#), [human capital assessment](#), [risk](#), [strategy](#)

