

Appreciative Inquiry

What is Appreciative Inquiry (AI)?

“Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system ‘life’ when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an “unconditional positive question” often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people.”

Cooperrider, D.L. & Whitney, D., “Appreciative Inquiry: A positive revolution in change.” In P. Holman & T. Devane (eds.), *The Change Handbook*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., pages 245-263.

Additional definitions see <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/>

Appreciative Inquiry

- A positive, strength-based approach to change
- Finding the best in people and the world around them
- Co-creating inspiring future images
- Focusing on what we want more of
- Finding and unleashing the positive core

Kelm, Jackie *“Appreciative Living: The Principles of AI in Personal Life”*, Venet Publishers, 2005

AI is based on discovering *what is working, what gives life, what is creating energy and excitement*, and then determining how to *create more of it*.

4-D Model for AI

David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney describe four steps in the appreciative inquiry cycle the four D’s are Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny.



How does AI work?

A typical Appreciative Inquiry design (called the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry) would have four stages.

1. **Discovery** – Inquire into the best of the past and the present. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry.
2. **Dream** – Use the findings and stories from the Discovery phase to create a compelling, memorable and ambitious picture of the desired future. Locate themes that appear in stories and select topics for further inquiry.
3. **Design** – Create shared images of a preferred future. Determine what should be.
4. **Destiny** – Determine what will be. Find innovative ways to create that future.

Founders of AI

AI was founded by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in 1980 (USA) – researching "What's wrong with the human side of the Organization" at Case Western Reserve University.

What are the Benefits of Appreciative Inquiry?

The possible, affirming nature of AI, where people discover and then build on the root causes of success rather than dissect problems, can be a powerful stimulus to change. It is non-threatening and empowering.

- Accelerates change of all kinds
- Increases the rate of improvement and the speed of attainment of goals and results
- Creates motivation and energy amongst the people who are changing
- Improves communication, trust, understanding and relationships
- Contributes to team building, and discovers, expands and sustains the best of what an organization can offer
- Changes the basic orientation from problem-focused to possibility-focused
- Increases curiosity and sense of vitality
- Empowering and gives people the confidence to take risks

Assumptions of AI

- In every society, organization, or group, something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities
- The act of asking questions of an organization or groups influences the group in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known)
- If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

Hammond, Sue *"The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry"* 2nd Edition, Thin Book Publishing Company, 1998

The Five Original Principles of AI

The Constructionist Principle

- Reality and Identity are Co-created
- Truth is Local. There is no absolute truth
- We See Things as We Are
- We Are Deeply Interconnected
- Words Create Worlds. Reality is constructed through language

The Poetic Principle

- Life Experience is Rich
- We Have Habits of Seeing
- Whatever We Focus On, Grows
- Find What We Want More of, Not Less of
- Develop an Appreciate Eye

The Simultaneity Principle

- We Live in the World Our Questions Create
- Change Begins the Moment We Question
- The Unconditional Positive Question is transformational
- Develop Your Sense of Wonder

The Anticipatory Principle

- Positive Images Create Positive Futures
- Vision is Fateful
- Create Vision Before Decisions
- What We Believe, We Conceive
- Big Change Begins Small

The Positive Principle

- Positive Emotions Broaden Thinking and Build
- The Positive Core expands as it is affirmed and appreciated
- Identify and Leverage Strengths

Kelm, Jackie *"Appreciative Living: The Principles of AI in Personal Life"*, Venet Publishers, 2005

Problem Solving Approach vs. Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Problem Solving Approach	Appreciative Inquiry Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Felt need & identification of problem ▪ Analysis of possible solutions ▪ Analysis of causes ▪ Action planning ▪ Assumes: <i>Organization is a problem to be solved</i> ▪ <i>Back Door – what’s in the way of what we want?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appreciate & value the best of <i>What Is</i> ▪ Envision: <i>What Might Be</i> ▪ Dialogue: <i>What Should Be</i> ▪ Innovate: <i>What Will Be</i> ▪ Assumes: <i>Organization is mystery to be discovered</i> ▪ <i>Front Door – what is it we ultimately want?</i>
<p>DEFICIT THINKING</p>	<p>POSSIBILITY THINKING</p>

Adapted from Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987)

Where can AI be used?

Appreciative Inquiry has been used in a wide variety of contexts to initiate, revitalize and accelerate change. In organizations some of the many applications include:

- Large system process changes such as restructuring and mergers
- Relational processes such as union/management relationships
- Shifting from hierarchical to horizontal team based processes
- Engaging the organization in strategic assessment and planning
- Designing inspiring and productive conferences and workshops
- Transforming training courses into powerful learning experiences
- Creating high performance teams
- Coaching for development, goal achievement or motivation

Resources

The "AI Commons" is a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing discipline of positive change.

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>