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An Introduction to
*Appreciative
Inquiry*

presented by

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*Appreciative Inquiry seeks to discover the root causes
of success rather than the root causes of failure.*

The term “Appreciative Inquiry” comes from:

- “appreciate” • to value or admire highly
• to recognize with gratitude
• to increase in value, like money in a term deposit

- “inquiry” • to seek to understand through the asking of questions

“Appreciative inquiry” (AI) involves making a very conscious and deliberate choice to ask only positive questions when we seek to understand what is needed to make life better in organizations; we want to ensure that the very act of our asking questions causes what is “best” about the organization to “appreciate” (grow in value). (And in the process, the “problems” tend to wither away.)

“The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths . . . making a system’s weaknesses irrelevant.” Peter Drucker

There are two general approaches for initiating or managing change in organizations. The problem solving approach has been around forever. The appreciative approach was first defined by David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in 1987 in a paper called "Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life." The two approaches ask very different questions and focus on very different aspects of life in organizations.

Two Approaches to "Managing" Change

Problem Solving Approach

Asks: "What are the problems here?"
Focuses on: Problems, deficiencies, what's wrong, what's broken, what isn't working. Seeks "fixes" to problems. (This has been a traditional source of work for management consultants. "Please look at our organization and tell us what we need to fix to make it better.")

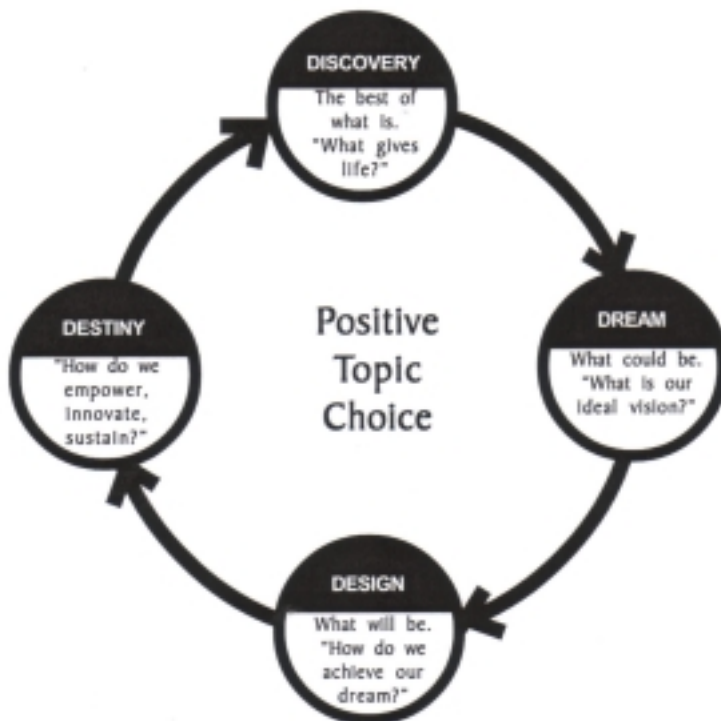
"Appreciative" Approach

Asks: "What works well here?" What is this organization like when it is at its best?"
Focuses on: Peak experiences, best practices, life giving/life enriching forces. (This approach generates lots of positive energy and momentum for change at the end of the intervention.)

Five Generic Processes Common to All Models of AI

from Appreciative Inquiry: change at the speed of Imagination, see Sources/Resources

1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
2. Inquire into stories of life-giving forces
3. Locate themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry
4. Create shared images of a preferred future
5. Find innovative ways to create that future



The 4D Model

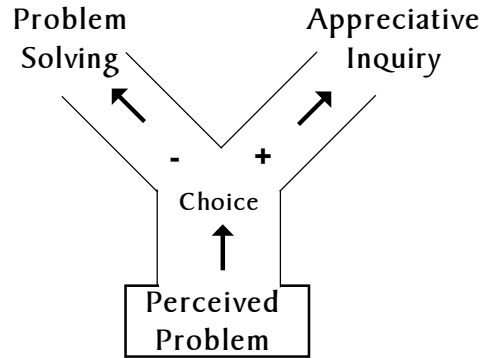
One of the original Appreciative Inquiry models was the "4D" model developed by the Global Excellence in Management Initiative.

The 4th D was originally called "Delivery", but this has since been changed to "Destiny", because at its best, the 4th D more closely resembles an inspired movement than a neatly packaged and engineered "change program". For example, in the year following the company-wide AI process at GTE Telecommunications, *employees suggested 10,000 innovations to improve the operations of the company.* As a result, GTE was given an award by the American Society for Training and Development for having the best organizational change program in the United States in 1997.

Critical First Step: Choose the Positive as the Focus of the Inquiry

"The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find,' and what we 'discover' (the data) becomes the stories out of which the future is conceived, conversed about and constructed." David Cooperrider

- ☺ Choosing the positive leads the inquiry in the direction of "life giving" forces in the organization, group, community.
- ☺ Whatever we focus on grows. The questions asked at the beginning will determine the shape, "spirit" and feel" of everything else that follows. The organization will move in the direction of its questions.



Example

What can we do about "machismo" attitudes? Who is harassing women and when are they doing it? What circumstances give rise to harassment? What kinds of harassment policies do we need? What is preventing women's advancement in the company and how can we reduce the barriers?

Problem Solving

Appreciative Inquiry

What are some examples of the very best work experiences men and women have had working together in this company, experiences that were very positive for both? What circumstances made these positive experiences possible? How can we recreate these conditions so that men and women have more "best" experiences working together?

Women feel devalued in this company. They complain about male coworkers' attitudes towards them, about workplace harassment, and about limits on the jobs available to them.

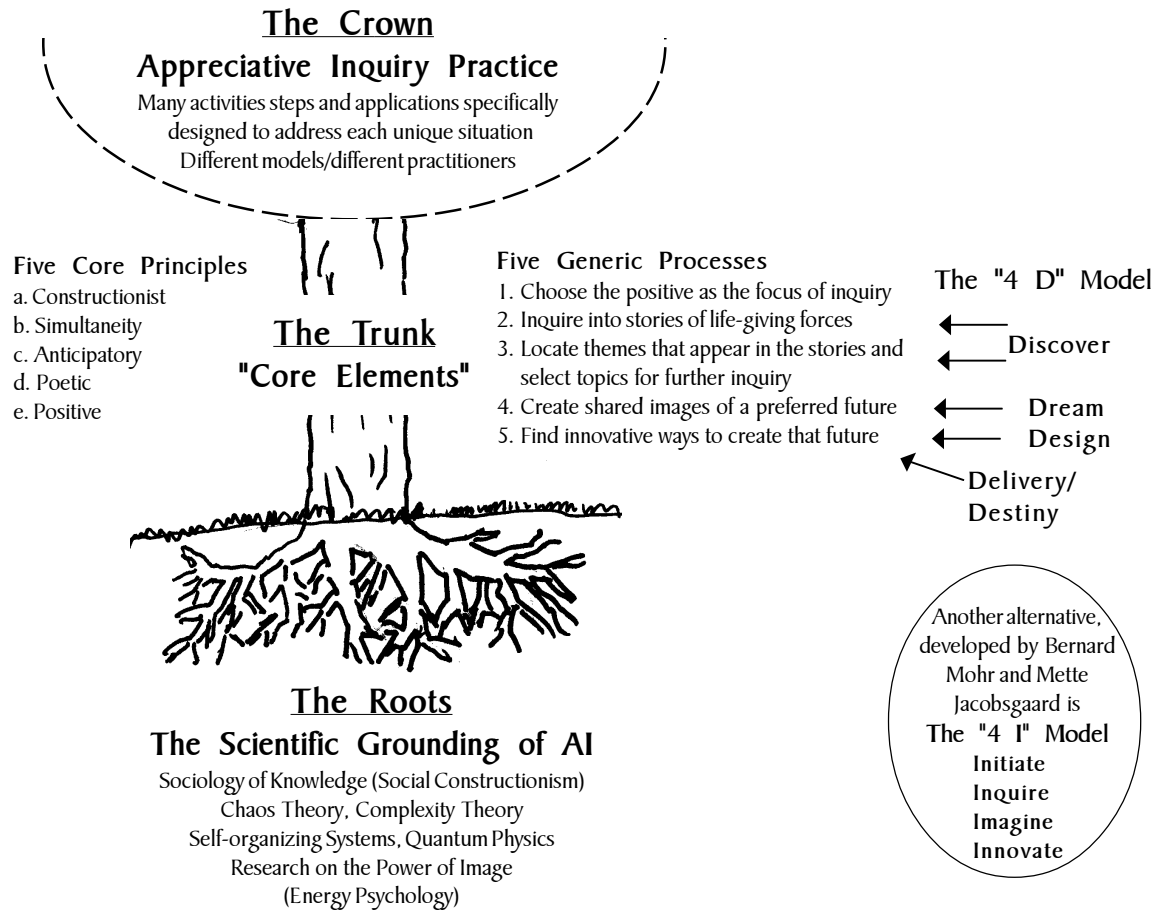
Avon Mexico

Winner of the 1997 Catalyst Award for being the best corporation in Mexico for women to work in.

"Appreciative Inquiry can get you much better results than seeking out and solving problems. That's an interesting concept for me—and I imagine most of you—because telephone companies are among the best problem solvers in the world. We troubleshoot everything. We concentrate enormous resources on correcting problems that have relatively minor impact on our overall service and performance (and which)...when used continually and over a long period of time, this approach can lead to a negative culture. If you combine a negative culture with all the challenges we face today, it could be easy to convince ourselves that we have too many problem to overcome—to slip into a paralyzing sense of hopelessness....Don't get me wrong. I'm not advocating mindless happy talk. Appreciative Inquiry is a complex science designed to make things better. We can't ignore problems—we just need to approach them from the other side". Tom White, President of GTE Telops - "Speeches of the Day" 1996

The Structure of Appreciative Inquiry

*adapted from Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination
see Sources/Resources -back cover*



The Five Core Principles Defined

The constructionist principle: social knowledge and community destiny are living, human constructions created through the conversations that we have with each other. "Reality is a negotiated interpretation." Shapiro & Carr, 1991

The principle of simultaneity: inquiry and change occur simultaneously. It is not the case that "first we do the analysis and then we decide on change." The very process of inquiry/analysis creates its own changes.

The anticipatory principle: current behaviour is guided by images of the future. Organizations are not "pushed" by their past as much as they are "pulled" by the collective image they hold of their future. self-fulfilling prophecy: "Pygmalion effect", "placebo" effect.

The poetic principle: human organizations, including communities, are an open book, constantly being revised and co-authored. Its past, present and future are an endless source of learning, inspiration and interpretation.

The positive principle: the momentum for change requires positive thinking and social bonding-qualities like hope, inspiration and joy in creating with one another. Positive questions guide organizational development and foster long-lasting and effective changes. People, businesses, organizations and communities move in the direction of their questions. "What impact is my question having on our lives together ... is it helping to generate conversations about the good, the better, the possible ... is it strengthening our relationships?"

A Process for Launching an Appreciative Inquiry in an Organization

1. **Senior management decides to adopt the AI process:** may set *general* area for the inquiry, e.g. customer satisfaction, improved quality of work life, team building, partnership building.

2. A **“steering group” is selected:** should be a diagonal cross section of the organization, with representation from all levels of the organizational chart. Working with the AI consultant, this group then:

- is trained in AI concepts and engaged in the AI process; members practice “appreciative interviewing” on each other
- identifies the specific topics of focus of the inquiry; there are usually 3-5 for an inquiry
- frames the “architecture” of the inquiry: who will be interviewed and by whom - within or across functional groups
- frames the “appreciative protocol” (the actual interview questionnaire) This process achieves clarity about the purposes of the inquiry and determines the questions to be asked
- tests the appreciative protocol on itself and, based on the results, revises if necessary

3. **“Storytelling” - the appreciative interviews are conducted - (Discover):**

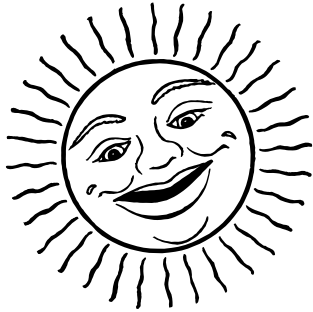
- these are usually one-on-one interviews lasting one to two hours; ideally, everyone in the organization is interviewed; failing this, a representative sample is interviewed; often includes stakeholders outside the organization
- involves active listening & eye contact on the part of the interviewer; if necessary, the interviewer may “reframe” negative comments into positive ones which still address the underlying issues
- interviewer makes brief but precise notes during interview; makes more extensive notes immediately after interview is completed
- the “data” is analyzed, themes are identified, organizational circumstances and conditions that give rise to “peak experiences” and “best practices” are defined

4. **Imagining a “preferred” future - (Dream):** based upon the best of what has already been, a future is imagined where the best is achieved more often; “images” are created - may incorporate art, sculpture, drama, music; “provocative propositions” are written that will guide movement towards the imagined “preferred” future.

5. **Finding innovative ways to create the preferred future (Design and Destiny):** structures and strategies are devised to take action on short-term, and longer-term goals; action plans are prioritized and implemented; change strategies are made sustainable through adjustment and improvisation and the creation of a “appreciative learning organization”. Ideally, the Design/Destiny phase will involve “recycling” the process through new 4D cycles.

Appreciative Inquiry in Organizations

Image by James E. (Jim) Taylor



The Sky

The Vision of What Could Be

Imaginatively co-created by everyone in the organization
 Amplification of "best practices";
 Positive "wishes", "best hopes" for the organization;
 Nurtured by "life-giving" forces in the organization;
 Vision provides "pull" for organizational practices
 (heliotropic principle)

The Crown

Outcomes of the Inquiry

high morale, high productivity, common vision,
 more effective teamwork, increased employee satisfaction,
 increased customer satisfaction, improved work relations
 energy, enthusiasm, empowerment, sustainability
 appreciative learning culture

Necessary Conditions

a. Management commitment to a genuinely participative process and willingness to allow the process to "unfold"

b. Broad participation from all levels of the organization

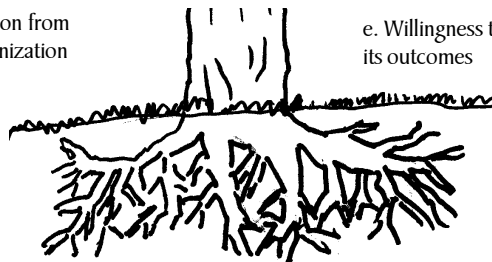
c. Openness to multiple interpretations of the "data"

d. Willingness to commit necessary time to the inquiry.

e. Willingness to trust the process and its outcomes

The Trunk

"Core Elements"



The Roots

The best of "what is": peak experiences/best practices from the organization's past and present.

"AI is based on a deceptively simple premise: that organizations grow in the direction of what they repeatedly ask questions about and focus their attention on. AI does not focus on changing people. Instead, it invites people to engage in building the kinds of organizations they want to live in. That's hard to resist." *Gervase Bushe*

"In a very real sense most human searches are a success. Not only do we seem to find whatever it is we are looking for but, as the legendary CEO Sam Walton demonstrated, when we search the world around us for what is best about a human system, the positive qualities tend to multiply. The active surfacing of good news - of opportunities, strengths, achievements, visions, innovations and the like - is not an avoidance of reality; it is the best way to improve reality." (from the introduction to *Encyclopedia of Positive Questions. Vol 1*)

The Discovery Process:

*Inquire into stories of life giving forces
(Discover the best of "what is")*



The "Discovery" stage uses interviews/conversations to learn about the very best of *what is*, creating opportunities for people to share stories about their "peak experiences" in organizations. People talk about their organizations when they function at their very best, and about their own individual strengths and resources. The interview guides introduce each topic with a positive prologue and then may use a phrase like: "Tell me a story about" Seeks stories of personal experiences of those interviewed. Then it identifies themes in the stories and the circumstances that gave rise to the excellence/achievement, and analyzes the unique factors that contributed to the peak experiences.

Examples of Discovery Stage Questions

<p style="text-align: center;">Introductory Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To start I'd like to learn about your beginnings at XYZ. When did you come to the organization and what attracted you to it? What keeps you at XYZ? What sets us apart and makes the <u>difference</u> for you? In your work at XYZ, you have probably experienced ups and downs, twists and turns. For a moment I would like you to think about a time that stands out to you as a high point, a time when you felt energized, passionate about your work and most effective—a time when you were able to accomplish more than you imagined. Please describe in detail the situation, the people involved and what made it a high point experience for you. What actions did you and others take? How did these actions translate into business results? Let's talk about some things you value most—specifically about yourself and XYZ as an organization. Without being humble, what do you value most about <u>yourself</u>—as a human being? What are the most important qualities or strengths you bring to XYZ? What is it about the nature of <u>the work you</u> do at XYZ that you value the most? What is most interesting or meaningful to you? 	<p style="text-align: center;">If the Focus is Team Building</p> <p>Some of the most satisfying work experiences come from being part of a really well functioning team. Tell me a story about the best experience you have ever had being a member of an effective team. What contributed to this being a peak experience? What made the team effective? What kinds of relationships were there among the team members? What do you think was your own most valuable contribution to the team? What, specifically, did the team do? What did it feel like to be part of that team? How does it feel now, recalling and talking about that experience? What could your organization do to promote these kind of experiences?</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">If the Focus is Leadership</p> <p>Good leadership empowers people by supporting their growth and development. Recall a time when someone provided an environment that allowed you or others to learn, to experiment, to take risks. What was going on? What was it about the leader that you value most? Describe his / her qualities. Describe what you were able to accomplish under the guidance of this leader. How did you grow? Recall a time when you supported someone else's growth and development, when you saw their potential and supported them to go beyond their previous limits. What was going on? Tell the story in as much detail as you can.</p>

Follow-Up Questions to Gather More Detail

*Would you elaborate on that? Can you say more about that? I'm beginning to get the picture. Please tell me more.
What happened specifically? What were you doing? What were others doing? How did this fit together to produce something exceptional?
When did that happen? Who all was involved? What role did you play? What role did others play?
Where were you during that time? How did that come about?
What would it feel like to have such moments on a deeper or more frequent basis?*

The interview protocol for the Discovery phase concludes with questions, like those below, designed to learn individuals' hopes for and vision of the future, and what they want to preserve from the present as the organization moves into the future.

Questions to Envision the future:

Tonight when you go to sleep, you have a very deep sleep, and wake up 4 years later. It is 2013. When you arrive at work, you begin to notice that XYZ is as you always imagined it could be — the way you believe it ought to be. Describe what you see happening. How is it different? Describe what is going on in 2013 that exemplifies the ideal XYZ you have always imagined.

If you could change or transform XYZ in any way, what three things would you do to heighten the overall health and vitality of the organization?

What single small change could we make that would have the biggest impact in improving XYZ right now?

What bold change could we make that would have a big impact in improving XYZ?

Question About Preserving the Existing "Positive Core" of the Organization

Great organizations know how to "preserve the positive core" of what they do best, and are able to let go of things that are no longer needed. As XYZ grows and expands, what are three things - core strengths, values, qualities, that you want to see preserved and leveraged as we move into the future?

Recording and Using the Data Generated by the Interviews

Interview notes can be taken on laptop computers during and after the interview or on forms created for that purpose (like those used during the workshop). It is best if the interviewer takes brief notes during the interview so that he or she can attend to the interviewee and follow up with appropriate supplementary questions. If this is done, however, it is essential that the interviewer flesh out and make more complete notes *immediately* after the interview is concluded. The interviewer then compiles the best content from the interview on an interview summary form based on the model shown below.

Appreciative Inquiry Interview Summary Form

What was the most quotable quote that came out of this interview?

What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview?

Overall, what was your sense of what was most important to this individual?

What were the 1 – 3 positive themes that stood out most for you during the interview related to:

This person's best experiences and values in relation to working for our organization. *(provide space for three answers.)*

(each of the 3-5 topics of the inquiry) *(provide space for three answers for each topic)*

Vision of the Future *(provide space for three answers.)*

Carrying Forward What We Value Most *(provide space for three answers.)*

Ideally, the completed interview summary forms should be shared throughout the organization as widely as possible, since this content forms the basis of all subsequent work in the inquiry.



The Dream Process:

Creating shared images of a preferred future

The “Dream” stage focuses on *what could be*; people challenge the status quo by imagining a better, more vibrant, more “life-giving” future. It is both *idealistic* in that it creates an image of an “ideal”, future, and at the same time it is *realistic* because it grounded in the best of what has already actually occurred in the organization. Building upon the extraordinary moments from the organization's history and the themes identified in the “Discover” stage and recorded on the interview summary forms, people create a shared image of their organization as if it were “at its best” in all of the themes.

Three Wishes/Changes

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Writing of “Provocative Propositions”

A good “provocative proposition” is:

- written in bold, affirmative language in the present tense
- “provocative” - it offers stretch and challenge (but is achievable)
- grounded in the best of what the organization has already achieved
- a reflection of people's highest aspirations for their organization; it provokes passion

Two Examples of Provocative Propositions

The examples below are from an Appreciative Inquiry I have been conducting with the Red Deer Public Library since 2006.

Social Responsibility

The library is a leader in applying best practices to all of its operations to ensure that they are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. The library is supportive of staff initiatives to become involved in social causes (e.g. food bank, United Way, "Run for the Cure" etc.) that benefit the community as a whole. The Library champions inclusion by welcoming everyone and treating them equally regardless of socioeconomic status, disabilities or language/literacy barriers. We conduct all of our affairs with care and responsibility and are accountable to the community at large.

Communication

We communicate openly, honestly, accurately and in a timely manner while being sensitive to the context and individuals involved. We recognize that individuals have different preferred methods of communication, and we accommodate these differences as much as possible. All staff have access to a single internal point of contact to communicate essential information. We provide appropriate channels to facilitate the free flow of information up, down and throughout the organization and to our external stakeholders.



The Design Process:

"First we shape our structures and then our structures shape us."
Winston Churchill

The "Design" stage focuses on determining what *will be*; participants work to discover innovative ways to bring into existence the "preferred future" they have envisioned in the "Dream" stage. By designing "with an appreciative lens", the group can embed their most cherished values in the structures that guide individual and collective action – locally and globally. In this stage you can design the social architecture of your organization or community (the relationships, practices, programs, processes, products, services, policies, communications and technology) *so that your values are inevitable.*

Two Examples of Values Based Organizational Design

Value: Openness, Transparency

Architecture: Executive Offices – First Floor, Glass Walls.

Social Architecture: Meeting Participation – Open to one person from any other department, just had to rsvp in advance.

Social Architecture: Financial Information – Open books to all employees.

Value: Human Well Being for all employees

Architecture: Office Space – Secretaries' desks by the windows; Managers' offices on the inside walls since they spend most of their time away from their desks in meetings.

Social Architecture: Executive Sabbatical – Each executive goes away from the company for 6 months every 5 years.



Destiny:

Originally known as “Delivery”, in the Destiny stage, group members mobilize resources, form new relationships, acquire new skills and implement their action plans. Ideally, in the Delivery/Destiny stage, an “appreciative learning culture” is created, and the process becomes self-sustaining.

Once a given “Destiny” has been achieved, it gives rise to new “peak experiences” which can be brought to light through a new “Discovery” phase, leading to new “Dreams” and new “Destinies” and so on.

5 Steps to Achieving the Destiny*

1. Review and communicate achievements to date to everyone in the organization, and *celebrate* what has been achieved.

Everyone in the organization should be invited to answer the invitation: “Tell me about all the positive changes that have happened around here since we started the Appreciative Inquiry.”

2. For each provocative proposition, generate a list of all possible actions

Ask: “What are all the ideas you have for tangible actions, programs or processes that will bring the design into being?”

3. Self organize for Inspired Action Projects

Allow individuals to “self select” for membership in cross functional teams to address each set of action steps. This will allow informal leaders to “emerge” and take on leadership roles.

4. Support Success of the Self Organized Projects

Formal leaders with access to resources need to be recruited as “champions” for each innovation team.

5. Systematically apply Appreciative Inquiry to all aspects of the organization

Apply AI to all the organization’s processes and procedures to bring them into alignment with the positive vision that has been created for the future of the organization.

* thanks to *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry* (See “Recommended Books” next page)

“And so we end this book repeating our mantra: *Appreciative Inquiry* is a way of seeing and being in the world. It is based on the belief that we can create what we imagine when we open our minds and our social processes to the widest possible dialogue among the largest number of people who are involved and invested in our enterprise. *Appreciative Inquiry* applied, whether as a planning process or an evaluation process, becomes empowering and life-affirming in any human system.

The two-cup tumbler with one cup of water is, indeed, both half empty and half full. How we describe it is our choice to make. We wish for each of you the image of half full; a life lived, like the sunflower, turned towards the sun; and days full of powerful and positive images of a future that is generative, creative and joyful.”

Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard J. Mohr - from the concluding chapter of "Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination.

Sources/Resources - Recommended Books

Encyclopedia of Positive Questions Volume 1, Diana Whitney, David Cooperrider, Amanda Trosten-Bloom, Brian S. Kaplin, ©2002 Lakeshore Communications Inc. ISBN 1-893435-33-4

Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination, by J. Watkins and B. Mohr Copyright ©2001 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 0-7879-5179-X

The Appreciative Inquiry Summit, James D. Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard J. Mohr & Thomas J. Griffin ©2003 Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc. ISBN 1-57675-248-8

Appreciative Inquiry Handbook, David Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, Jacqueline M. Stavros ©2003 Lakeshore Communications Inc. ISBN 1-57675-269-0

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change, by Diana Whitney & Amanda Trosten-Bloom Copyright ©2003 Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc. ISBN 1-57675-226-7

Recommended FREE Resources

There are lots of free resources available on my web site; www.rolyatcorp.com and links to other sites. Several of my favorite papers are available there, with comments, and the valuable 300 page ebook: *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*, by Charles Elliot. Keep coming back to my web site, as I plan to continually add new material to it.

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(4 measures), Interpersonal Relationships (5 measures), Supervision Skills (11 measures), Leadership Skills, Client Service, Decision Making etc.

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For more information, visit our web site www.rolyatcorp.com then click on BARS and then the link at the bottom of the page.

Two Additional Consulting Services from ROLYAT CORP. LTD./JIM TAYLOR

Communications Services

Jim is a polished writer of curriculum materials, funding proposals, manuals and easy-to-read reports. If you have information that you want communicated clearly, concisely and persuasively, in written format or in presentation, we can help you.

Meeting Process Design and Facilitation

Jim has demonstrated considerable skill in designing and managing group processes that help everyone to stay civil when strong feelings are in play. He has helped several groups engaged in conflict to identify and build upon areas of common interest.