Appreciative Inquiry
About the Tutorial

Appreciative Inquiry is a new perspective of thinking, where the conditions in which an organization works best is closely assessed, contrary to the usual idea of finding out drawbacks, deficits, and flaws within an organization to improve its functioning.

In this tutorial, we will try to figure out how one can use the power of Appreciative Inquiry to determine what works out best for his organization and come up with solutions that have already been proven effective.

Audience

This tutorial will help all those readers who work in the capacity of a manager in any industry. It will sensitize them about the art of Appreciative Inquiry in extracting the best from their team members and increasing the productivity of the system in the long run.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are expected to be familiar with working in a team environment. In addition, you should know the basics of organizational structure and the working model of your company.

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About the Tutorial</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright &amp; Disclaimer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. APPRECIATIVE APPROACH – BASIC PRINCIPLES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. APPRECIATIVE APPROACH – METHODOLOGIES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – THE 4D CYCLE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – THE DISCOVERY PHASE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – THE DREAM PHASE</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – THE DESIGN PHASE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY – THE DESTINY PHASE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. APPRECIATIVE ADVISING</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Phases of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Disarm Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Discover Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dream Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Design Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Deliver Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Don’t Settle Phase of Appreciative Advising</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ORGANIZATIONAL ARCHITECTURE</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appreciative Inquiry is a new perspective of thinking, especially helpful for managers who need to motivate their team members regularly in order to extract their best output. If all the members in a team know what they are supposed to be doing, then there is no loss of motion due to confusion or uncertainty. Instead, a motivated individual will be in action, and a team full of motivated individuals will feed off of each other and help keep that motivation going.

The basic foundation of Appreciative Inquiry is to ask positive questions, rather than focusing on the negative aspects. It basically focuses on the possibilities instead of the problems.

Experts suggest that Appreciative Thinking is not actually thinking out of the box. Instead, it’s more like thinking from within a different box. In case of Appreciative Thinking, various possibilities are explored, instead of solving the problems. Instead of asking “Why is this solution not working?” an Appreciative thinker would ask “What other solutions do we have?” You can easily see that the latter exudes enthusiasm.

**What is Appreciative Inquiry?**

Appreciative Inquiry is a positive approach which is very effective in inducing a feeling of positive experience within the organization. In fact, owing to its positive nature, Appreciative Inquiry is the best possible way to utilize the positive energy of the people within the organization.

Appreciative Inquiry, at its core, involves the practice of asking pertinent questions that strengthen an organization’s capacity to improve its efficiency.
Dealing with Change

Change is the only permanent thing in life and in business. Change is crucial for the development of individuals, groups and organizations. The points of departure between Appreciative Thinkers and regular managers in approaching a situation are usually based on their analysis of the reasons behind the issues.

While managers often want to give their observations about you as a way of sharing feedback, Appreciative Managers would ask you to answer questions that directly emphasize on the issues that an employee might be facing in his workplace. These questions might initially cause a negative resistance within people, rather than inducing a feeling of enthusiasm, however in the long run, it promotes transparency between the people and yields greater trust and mutual understanding. Some of these questions could be:

- What is the reason behind your lack of motivation?
- Why is there a lack of understanding within the organization?
- Why doesn’t something work out?
- Why are they so much stressed?

The solution to these problems would probably be in finding out another approach that creates a positive vibe within the organization. And thus, the Appreciative Approach of problem-solving was developed.
Appreciative Inquiry involves a clear and transparent understanding of the working procedure of any organization. To achieve that understanding, it’s very important for the person to be a good communicator. The basic foundations of Appreciative Approach are based on some scientific assumptions regarding human behaviour.

**Speaking should lead to doing**
Words are not simply a medium of conversation between two individuals. By talking together, we get an opportunity to create a reality for us. What we say has an effect on our relationship with others. Hence, the influence that words have on others can’t be ignored.

We cannot underestimate words by simply regarding them as tools for talking. We can construct a vision for the future by conversing together. The words that we speak inspire our thoughts and motivate us to do better in life.

**To know is to change**
We challenge the reality of a fact when we ask a question. As a conversation moves in the direction of a question, we realize that there can be nothing such as a neutral question. Most questions will end up being tough to answer, especially in a working environment where important discussions are made.

**We create the new by looking ahead**
Everything changes. We need to look forward to a change that has the ability to bend the future to our advantage. This is the key motivation behind people who make speculations about the future.
People get strongly motivated by positive images
A choice of positive sounding words and a positive performance always attract people. Thus, possibilities and capabilities are always an outcome of positive images. Positive actions, the core of sustainable change, are always led by positive conversations that paint a welcome image in the minds of listeners.

Choosing with creativity
Appreciative questioning encourages people to have an open future. If you focus your attention on your choices, you become creative. Questions on what makes you happy has a different effect on your psyche’ than questions about what make you unhappy.

Coherent relationships can be created by stories
By sharing stories of real life events with our partners and coworkers, we become more and more committed towards them, and they towards us. A feeling of trust develops among the people by doing so. This also gives us the opportunity to learn.

Relationship between people
When people engage themselves in sharing something, they tend to get along. This bonding with one another determines the outcome of the partnership. Questioning in an appreciative manner enhances the chances of a good quality relationship.
In the words of the author and award-winning consultant, Diana Whitney, "Appreciative Inquiry refers to the concept of the basic entity that makes human systems possible to operate in its best possible condition." This strategy of change has its foundation in the fact that the questions you ask and the conversation that ensues are responsible for bringing the change.

It’s been observed that people get an increase in their mental strength after having a conversation on dreams, hopes, values, success and strength. For a better understanding, consider the following classic questions on the outcome of deficit thinking:

- How do the failures affect you? (non-appreciative)
- What went wrong and how do we make it right? (appreciative)

This first question looks for possibilities, opportunities and success stories. The approach in this question is to prepare a case study based on past failures of the person. The person won’t feel inclined to participate in a healthy manner in this conversation.

In sharp contrast, the second question follows the basic principle of Appreciative Inquiry. It addresses the root of the issue and tries to find out solution. It visits the past to look for symptoms and corrective measures, instead of historical value.
Appreciative Inquiry

**Appreciative Research**

When you appreciate something, you are well aware of its value. You search for what works well within the scheme of things, and find out more ways to implement good plans.

People are more likely to work within their strengths and attempt what they can do best. But, most importantly, you should learn to embrace change with an open heart. That includes the courage to be open enough to accept unexpected answers.

You should also develop a curiosity to learn new ways of functioning. In order to do so, you need to initiate conversation with someone who knows stuff you don’t know, so that he can guide you on whether your plans are working, and keep you aware of the solutions you need to implement.

Such guides help you to assess yourself and your subordinates, and to find the right answers to your questions. In the long run, you will be able to become a guide yourself for your team, and manage to educate younger employees in the processes of running an organization.
End of ebook preview
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