Appreciative Inquiry a Unique Way to Weal With Organizational Challenges

Swati Bisht

"Appreciation of an apprehended moment is a judgment of both value and fact. To appreciate apprehended reality is to embrace it. And from this affirmative embrace flows a deeper fullness and richness of experience."

–David Kolb

An organization is not the just the building people work in, the systems people work on, the culture people establish and then follow but it is simply the people and the people that make an organization 'the organization' .It is the human factor that adds life to an organization. The fate of the organization depends on the attitude and behavior of employees working in that organization. Human Behavior is complex and is indeed the biggest challenge for an organization to manage and take control of. Each employee wants the best from the organization they work for. It is impossible to control the level of aspiration of the employees but it is possible to help them appreciate the good side of their personality, other personalities around them and the better side of organization they work for. Every organization has both positives and negatives. If you focus on positives, the environment becomes positive. Appreciative Inquiry AI is based on the assumption that organizations change in the way they inquire and an organization that inquires into problems, challenges or complex situations will keep finding more of the same, but an organization that tries to appreciate what is best in itself its people, its systems will discover more and more of what is good and this will become better. Any challenge can be met to a great extent with the help of appreciative enquiry .It is a way to search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. It assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. It works on the base that What you focus on grows and expands. It confirms the wisdom of the old adage, "Be careful what you ask for, you'll probably get it!".

Introduction

Every organization wants to continuously learn from its past experiences and develop a base for a better future. If asked ,What would an organization choose prefer between an inquiry into failures, weaknesses and problems in the organization or an inquiry into its strengths, successes, innovations , high shared commitment. The most obvious answer seems the latter one that is any organization will aim at an inquiry into its strengths, successes, innovation, enthusiasm and high commitment over the weaknesses and roadblocks. It may sound like overlooking the weaknesses but in reality it is a positive approach to make the positives so strong that the negatives are naturally small and appear negligible in due course.

Pioneered in the 80's by David Cooperrider at Case Western University in Cleveland, USA, Appreciative Inquiry is today recognized as a major innovation in management and organizational development.

Appreciative inquiry is an effective tool of facilitating and bringing about a positive change in organizations. The basic assumption underlying it is that every organization has something that works well and focus should be on what works well. Appreciative inquiry is therefore a generative approach to organizational development. At a higher level, it is also a way of being and seeing.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciate + Inquiry= Appreciative Inquiry
APPRECIATE: The act of recognizing the best in people and the world around us; emphasizing past and present successes, strengths and potentials in order to perceive , comprehend and understand those critical factors or conditions that give life, strength and meaning to any living system. This also would mean increasing the value of each component and the system as a whole.

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*Associate Professor and Dean PGDM, Institute of Management Studies, Dehradun

INQUIRY : The act of gathering more information by asking questions and exploration leading to the discovery of seeing new perspectives.

Thus in short, appreciative inquiry is inquiry to appreciate the positive side of organizations. It helps in bringing about Change without resistance

Appreciative also includes the meanings "to see" (where you pay attention), "to value" and "to increase in value." Appreciation is the process of valuing.

Every person in this world has a set of positives and negatives. Most people look for an opportunity to find faults in others and go to an extent where they even try and confront them with problems they have. Ironically, people who find problems in others have problems in themselves also. The only fact is that if you appreciate good things in others you will be able to create a positive aura everywhere and strike a cordial positive cordial relationship. Also the person being appreciated will develop respect for the person appreciating him.

We See What We Believe

Everyone dreams of an ideal organization or community, but at times it gets difficult to see beyond problems.Most of the organizations waste time in getting deep into a problem and in the quest get deeper and deeper into it. As a result, problems take their most time and they forget to see the what we have.

If we see the positive side of things we will believe in the positive side of life. AI positively reinforces the frame of reference. It is positive move toward wholeness, completeness, and skillfulness and a world of positivity.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is about the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. AI seeks to build a constructive reinforcing unison between people and their past and present capacities. Every person does something good in life and has a set of achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, rich elevated thoughts , high point moments, lived values, core competencies and visions of valued and possible futures

Appreciative inquiry does not ignore problems. Rather, it shifts the lens and/or frame of reference that is used to define what is happening. Instead of looking for "what's wrong" or "needs fixed" the firm focuses on "what's right" or "what's working" and seeks to do more of it. In short, appreciative inquiry suggests that you can create change by paying attention to what you want rather than paying attention to problems. (Bushe, 2000, 99)

Appreciative Inquiry Helps Dealing With Challenges As

1) It helps channelize the best in people, organizations and the world around them

2) It is constructive since it looks at the positive side of things

3) The organizations through AI tend to develop more trust between individuals. This trust leads to soliciting support to find a successful response to any situation.

4) It liberates and gives human spirit a new dimension.

5) It emphasizes collaboration and participation of all voices in the system, thus leading to a more positive environment.

6) It improves communication.

7) It makes working a more enjoyable experience and so promotes loyalty and productivity

8) It helps improve relationships and thus overall productivity.

9) It Develops and nurtures communities in various ways.

Though there can be some disadvantages like being too time consuming and at times adverse environmental conditions may simply not make an organization and its people look at the positive side of things.

Why AI?

Human Nature is defensive. People get defensive and retaliate when they are informed about their deficiencies and drawbacks and this increases their resistance to change. If we enquire about what is positive in them they will come more openly with expressions and hence this will help get the best in them.

• Change requires energy and a focus on problems (is proven by research) to reduce energy and motivation and bring down the overall productivity.

• When problems are highlighted the human reaction is to place responsibility for them with others and this is when the blame game starts. This has a destructive effect on the communication, trust and relationships required to achieve change.

"Appreciative Inquiry is an emerging collaborative and participative positive approach to learning which emphasizes the art and practice of engaging the whole system in discovering what gives life; dreaming about what could be; designing and defining cultures, structures and processes that will milk the future we most dream of and want .This will mean living our destiny - gaining sustainability through ongoing inquiry. AI adopts a system-wide approach to seeing, identifying and enhancing the value of "life-giving forces" that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organizational term.

## A Move Away From The Traditional OD Method

AI focuses on what is working and this gives a mileage to what is working to work better. The more you look for problems the more the problems will appear. AI is definitely not a substitute of management but it is an effective tool of organizational and community development. Community development is about enabling people, groups and organizations to plan and move in a focused manner towards their own objectives.

Organizational development is about nurturing the health and effectiveness of the work group. Management, on the other hand, is about the conceptually more limited task of maximizing outputs for a range of inputs.

The traditional Organizational development method always focused on defining the problem, fix what was broken and focused more on the decay whereas appreciative inquiry focuses on search for solutions that exist, amplifies and focuses on what is working well around them.

Appreciative Inquiry Process
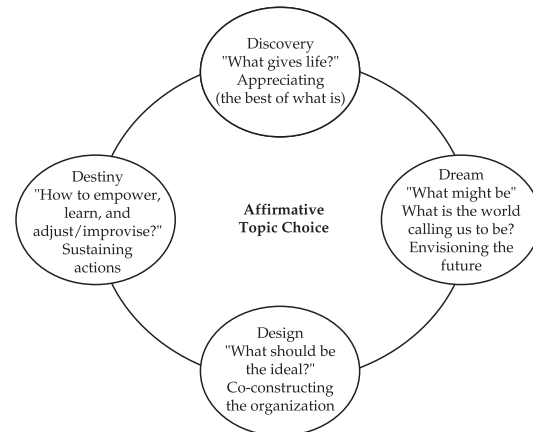
1) **Discover** and value those factors that give life and strength to the organization In each case the task is to discover the most positive, effective, best exceptions, successes or peak moments. Discovery involves identifying and illuminating those factors, forces, values, and practices that led to these superior performances and those achieved high moments. It leads to identifying

the stakeholders , employees deciding on who amongst them will be interviewed. Then conduct interviews, find a method to collect best inspiring stories , inspiring visions etc. This discovery begins with questioning and the interviewees should be open to answering questions and sharing.

2) **Dream** what might be. When the best of what is has been identified, the mind naturally begins to search beyond this; it begins to envision new possibilities. Seeing things beyond what is , becoming a dream. It is looking beyond what is. Envisioning involves passionate thinking" -- it means creating a positive image of a desired and preferred future.

> What we ask determines what we find.
> What we find determines how we talk.
> How we talk determines how we imagine together.
> How we imagine together determines what we achieve.

3) **Design** the construction of the future (Co-constructing the future) The design phase begins to build the bridge from the best of "what is" (present) within the organization towards a intuitive "what might be" (future). The interviewees will be asked to find examples of the best, the ideal, the desired. Dialogues will be invited on what circumstances made the best, the ideal, the desired possible. Record these circumstances in detail. Take down such stories and narrations and then envision what might be. Write strong statement that describes the idealized future as if it has already happened. Future is envisioned on the basis of such stories.

4) **Destiny** : innovation and action how to empower, learn, adjust,   improvise Sustaining The final phase of appreciative inquiry is destiny. Appreciative inquiry generates a revision of relationships with our self, others, and how we perceive the world. Interviewees by have discovered, dreamt of and designed an idealized situation and have detailed their destiny. Commit to what needs to happen next and who will do it. Identify the specific steps your group would like

to take to put your dreams into action.

The above stages are all seen through pass as a group activity and by the end of the activity the group understands what positives can give more positives and hence try to live this shared positive vision.

Conclusion

Appreciative Inquiry is an emerging approach of developing a deep and better learning and understanding into the art and practice of engaging the whole system in discovering what gives life; dreaming about what could be; designing and redesigning the cultures, structures and processes that will nourish the future we most want. This also leads to dreaming and living our destiny and thus gaining long term sustainability through ongoing inquiry.AI fosters organizational effectiveness by focusing on what one wants more (not what one wants less of). Getting people to inquire into the best examples, stories ,roles and visions of what they want more of creates a momentum towards the creation of more positive organizations and thus develops a more positive environment. The approach invites organizations to spend time creating a common vision for their desired future and developing the images and language to bring that vision to life and give soul to it.It is therefore a positive approach to getting the most out of everyone in a more positive environment .AI if practiced and appreciated in the right spirit provides an alternative to conventional team building processes and helps demonstrate the power and value of teamwork by highlighting ways in which teams give life to organizations.

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