

DFA's Approach to Appreciative Inquiry

TRADITIONAL OD PROCESS	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
Define the problem Fix what's broken Focus on decay <i>What problems are you having?</i>	Search for solutions that already exist Amplify what is working Focus on life giving forces <i>What is working well around here?</i>

In its most basic meaning, "Appreciative Inquiry" is a form of organizational study that selectively seeks to *locate, highlight and illuminate* what are referred to as the "life-giving" forces of the organization's existence.

In this sense, there are two basic questions behind any appreciative study:

- A. What makes the organization possible? And,
- B. What are the possibilities of a newer and more effective form of organization?

Appreciative Inquiry seeks out the very best of "what is" to help ignite the imagination of "what might be". The aim is to generate new knowledge which expands "the realm of the possible" and helps the partners of an organization envision a collectively desired future, and then to carry forth that vision in ways which successfully translate intention into reality and belief into practice.

As a method of organization analysis, appreciative inquiry differs from problem solving. The basic assumption of organizational problem solving seems to be that an organization is a problem to be solved. The process usually involves:

- 1) identifying the essential problem, 2) analyzing the causes,
- 3) analyzing solutions, and 4) developing an action plan.

In contrast, the underlying assumption of "Appreciative Inquiry" is not so much that the organization is a "problem to be solved" but that it is a "solution to be embraced." The steps are:

- 1) Identifying and valuing, 2) Envisioning, 3) Dialogue, and 4) Creating the new vision.

Reasons for Use of Appreciative Inquiry

- 1. Building on the best energies already in the organization**
- 2. Has the potential for healing communication**
- 3. Empowering--- Each person establishes personal goals and commitments**
- 4. Fosters consensus decision-making**
- 5. Models continuous improvement**
- 6. Future of organization is engaged in and committed to by all**
- 7. Gets past negative resistance**
- 8. Supports conducting an impact-analysis on all human and organizational elements**
- 9. Links to other existing models (Six Sigma, TQM, etc.) easily**
- 10. Gets the whole organization engaged**

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

A Typical Process

(This is a process for a system or culture change. Variations and adaptations are made depending on the unique needs of any group)

- 1. The consultant/coach surveys the organization and talks with significant people at strategic levels and positions**
- 2. The coach/consultant designs questions that seem like they might bear fruit and generate thinking**
- 3. A beginning group is selected**
- 4. Each member of the group is interviewed by the coach/consultant**
- 5. The results of the interviews are correlated and with the members, the group themes are developed**
- 6. From these themes "provocative propositions" or creative solutions are developed**
- 7. The solutions are evaluated with tools and in dialogue**
- 8. From the evaluation new questions are developed**
- 9. Each member of the group then interviews five others**
- 10. The process is repeated**