



Appreciative Inquiry

Overview

Appreciative Inquiry identifies and builds on what is already working well in the organization. It focuses on what is working well under the belief that if we study successes, we'll create more successes in other areas of the organization. Focusing on the positive, allows us to carry the best parts of the past and present into the future. Appreciative inquiry provides a method to envision "what could be" in a way that is grounded in the reality of the past.

When to Use

Use Appreciative Inquiry to resolve complex and ambiguous situations when it's important to value different perspectives and realities. By asking positive questions only, you can discuss differences without judgment and explore the vast range of assumptions, beliefs, criteria, and norms. This leads to more inclusive solutions that recognize, welcome and harvest all the deep assumptions and values of the participants, no matter how different they may be at the start.

Steps

1. Select the topic to explore
2. Ask discovery questions to uncover and appreciate what is working well. Below are examples or questions from an appreciative inquiry session about improving a product development process.
 - What was the best launch you ever led or participated in? ...
 - What made it so successful? ...
 - What part did you play? ...
 - How could you repeat that success with other products?"
3. Ask several "What if" questions to envision the desired results and create a vision for the future state
 - What if we had more resources, how would you use them?
 - What if we had more time, what would you do that we don't tackle now?
4. Design a plan on how the group can co-create this new reality
 - Discuss the specific actions required to make this vision a reality
5. Implement the plan innovating as required based on what actually happens

Options

- Ask participants to practice forming and posing positive questions with a safe topic. Notice interesting examples of good practice to share with the larger group.
- If the group is having difficulty getting started with Appreciative Questions because there is existing tension, ask them to use 'OPEN' questions to...
 - Understand the other person
 - Help him/her to think more clearly or communicate better
 - Sort out whether there is hidden agreement, miscommunication or actual conflict between you - and thus avoid false conflicts"

Sources: Theory developed by David L. Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University.