



Positive Governing: An
Introduction to Appreciative
Inquiry for Cities and Towns

Barbara Lewis



Objectives



- A bit of AI theory and experience
- Learn new skills
- Discover best practices in positive governing
- See opportunities for AI in your city/town

Agenda

- Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry
- Interviews
- Discovering the Positive Core of High Performing Partnerships
- Appreciative Skills: The Flip

Lunch presentations – City of Longmont


- Dream - The Power of Visioning
- Designing the Future
- Destiny – Achieving Results
- Putting Ideas into Action: AI Projects
- Adjourn (4:00 pm)

What is Appreciative Inquiry (AI)?

The Case PROCARE

Auto Repair Company with 79% Customer Satisfaction

- Desire to improve.
- Focus groups with dissatisfied customers - only.
- Shared the information/results.



The Bottom Drops Out....Satisfaction Declines!

The Appreciative Alternative

Inquiry into *Outstanding Customer Service*

- Interviews with satisfied and dissatisfied customers.
- Generative benchmarking.
- Shared information/results.



In 8 months, increase to 95% fully satisfied!


Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is ...

The **study** of what **gives life** to **human systems** when they're **at their best**.

Process to **discover and build on the best**, understand **what we want** and **mobilize** to make it happen.

The Problem with Problem-Solving

- What happens when you focus on a problem during a meeting?
- What are the unintended consequences?




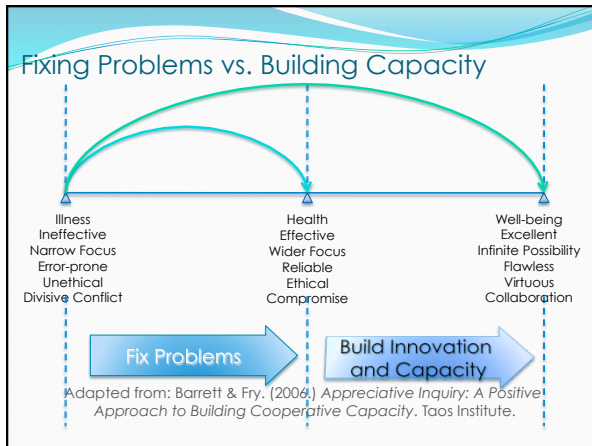
Thought
Action
Behavior

Downward Spiral

What Makes More Sense????

Appreciative Inquiry	Problem Solving
Doing More of What We Know Works	Doing Less of What We Don't Do Well





Sounds good but....

- Where are the concrete results?

Nutrimental Foods in Brazil

- 422% increase in profits
- 66% increase in sales
- 42% increase in productivity
- 95% increase in employee satisfaction
- Dreamed a safe, healthy and prosperous life for their children and grandchildren
- Changed purpose from food production to support healthy lifestyles

Roadway Express

- *“The AI approach unleashes tremendous power, tremendous enthusiasm, and gets people engaged in the right way in what we’re trying to accomplish.”*
- Involved dock workers, drivers, management and customers
- 25% increase in revenue
- The 5 sites leading these gains had been involved in the AI process

Positive Governing



Applications - Local Government

- Longmont Citywide Strategic Plan
- Denver Finance
- East Carroll Parish Head Start
- Fort Collins Community Marketplace
- Eagle P3 Project
- Aging Well in Boulder County
- Cleveland Regional Sustainability
- Amsterdam Transformation
- Imagine Calgary

Denver Finance Results

- Voluntary suggestions (up to 50 e-mails per day)
- Increased employee commitment to controversial cost savings measures
- Consolidation of services
- Consolidation of agencies from leased space to City-owned
- Downsizing of fleet services (\$370,000 savings)
- Reduced building security (\$358,000 per year savings)
- New incentive retirement program (\$1.5MM per year savings)



Our Strategic Focus

How might we create high performing partnerships?

Activity #1: Appreciative Interviews on High Performing Partnerships

Select an interview partner
A→B
B→A
 25 minutes each – Two full interviews
10 minute break
 Sit at a table with your partner

Appreciative Skills

Appreciative questions and interview
 Strength Spotting
 Meaning Making

Activity #2: Strengths “Spotting” and Sharing Stories

At your tables –

1. What strengths did you discover about your partner in the interview?
2. On a name tent: Write your partner’s name and at least one strength you “spotted.”
3. Introduce your partner - name, position and the strength(s) you noted.
4. Briefly describe their peak experience story
2 minutes per person.

Activity #3: Meaning Making - Discovering the Positive Core of High Performing Partnerships


1. For each story, identify the root causes of success. Be descriptive.
2. Record these on a flipchart.
3. Pick top elements (3 to 6) and share per instructions
4. Select a story to share that exemplifies one of your top elements.

Discovery

The Appreciative Interview
Meaning Making
The Positive Core

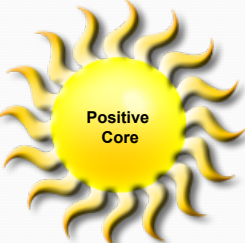
The Appreciative Inquiry Difference: Discovery

- Story based
 - Authentic, value-based
 - Inclusive – surfaces common ground
 - Connects to images of the ideal
 - Create emotions that lead to positive action



Story Telling

- Focus on bringing out the best
 - Creates confidence in positive change
- Relational
 - Improbable pairs create community cohesion
 - Wholeness brings out the best
- Cream rises to the surface – and ignites energy for action



Appreciative Skills: The Flip

What We Ask Determines What We Find



BRITISH AIRWAYS

Exceptional Arrival Experience!!!

Service Recovery!

Baggage Problems

From “Turnover” to...

- **Negative Issue/Problem Focused** – Turnover: How do we reduce turnover?
- **Good Question/Fixes the Problem** – How do we increase retention?
- **Great Question/Inspires Action** – How do we create a magnetic work environment?

Let’s try this out...

- What are some of your strategic challenges?
- How do we flip these ...

Flip Process

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
-	+	+++	???	!!!
Problem Complaint “Don’t Want’s”	“Do Want’s” Positive Opposite	Good to Great Topic	Inquiry Questions	Positive Evidence (strengths)

Dream

The Power of Positive Images and
Actions


Envisioning the Ideal
Ways to Dream

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
Albert Einstein

Anticipatory Principle

- Images of the future impact present and future performance.
- Henry Ford:
 - *Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.*

Positive Image Inspires Positive Action



"Watch out for the woods!"

Positive Emotions & Performance
 Prof. Barbara Fredrickson, UNC
 Author: *Positivity*

Joy...play, imagination, experimentation... **Innovation**
Interest...involvement, exploration... **New knowledge**
Optimism... confidence, perseverance... **Achievement**
Contentment... integrate complex ideas... **Deeper insight**
Love... connect, relate ... **Cooperation**

Positivity Ratio and Performance
 People flourish in the presence of positive emotions and communication.

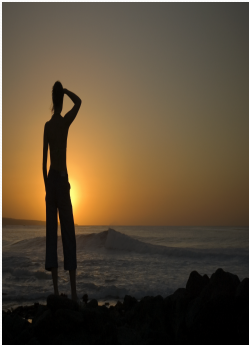
The Healthy Range is 4+ : 1- ----- 11+ : 1-

Marcial Losada, Chile
Successful Teams 5+ : 1-

John Gottman, UC Berkley
Long Term Successful Marriages 5+ : 1-

Envision the Ideal

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the people to gather the wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”
 -- *Antoine de Saint Exupery*



Activity #4: Sharing Future Images of Success

- Select a positive core element
- Select a future image that captures chosen element
- At table with those with same element:
 - First person: Introduce your chosen image
 - Pass to left
 - Next person share their connection and passes on
 - Continue until all photographs are shared
 - Identify most promising, compelling **collective** images
 - Choose one photograph that captures your shared image of high performance partnerships to share.

Alternative Dream Approaches


- Provocative films, slide shows
- Guided visualization
- Journaling
- Enactments
- Visual Explorer™ Cards
- Crafting of “dream statements” (vision statements)
- What else?

The Appreciative Inquiry Difference: Dream

- Built on the positive core fostering confidence
- Activates the right brain, resulting in creativity
- Positive Image, Positive Action
- Cream rises to the surface – the art of thinking together creates the collective dream

Keys to Dreaming

- Shift the energy
- Stimulate the whole brain
- Give voice to people's *hopes and creative imaginations*
- Build "higher" ground and **excitement** about potential directions
- Imprint images of the desired future



Designing the Future



*First we shape our structures,
then our structures shape us.*

Winston Churchill



Design Statements are...

- Descriptions of your ideal
- Stated in the affirmative, present tense as if the future has already happened
- Grow out of Discovery and Dream – They connect what we do well with what we want
- Provocative – They challenge the status quo.
- They suggest but don't prescribe action.

Sample Design Principles

- **Inclusivity:** Decisions are made in consultation with, and with consideration for, all affected stakeholders. In particular, we actively reach out to and engage members of the organization and community whose voices are not often heard.
- **Recognition:** We consistently recognize our colleagues with a variety of tangible and intangible rewards that uniquely honor achievements of individuals, regions and teams.

Activity #5: Crafting Design Statements

- Partner with one other person from your Dreaming group
- Craft a Design Statement for the element you have chosen
- Be sure to reflect what works best and what your dreams suggest you want
- Write your statement on a flipchart sheet and post it on the wall

Appreciative Feedback

- Gallery Walk to view the Design Statements
- Likes and Wishes
 - Where do you feel inspired?
 - What makes you curious?
- Reflect on what design statement most captures your attention.

The Appreciative Inquiry Difference: Design

- Results in a limited number of high impact opportunities, those the whole system finds most compelling for achieving the desired outcome
- Focus is on inspired action


Keys to Design

- Connection to purpose – priorities to best achieve the strategic focus
- Suggests but doesn't prescribe action
- Inspirational
- Free Choice

Destiny

Planning for Improvisation and Implementation

Destiny Questions



- Why – outcomes and measures
- How – principles for doing our best work
- What – tasks, activities
- Who – roles and responsibilities
- When – launch, milestones, target completion

Supporting Infrastructure

How might we....	Leverage Existing Systems and Structures	Create New Opportunities
Engage the whole system		
Facilitate cross-team communication		
Leverage technology		
Reward, recognize and celebrate		
Maintain and build leadership backing		

Activity #6: From Design to Destiny

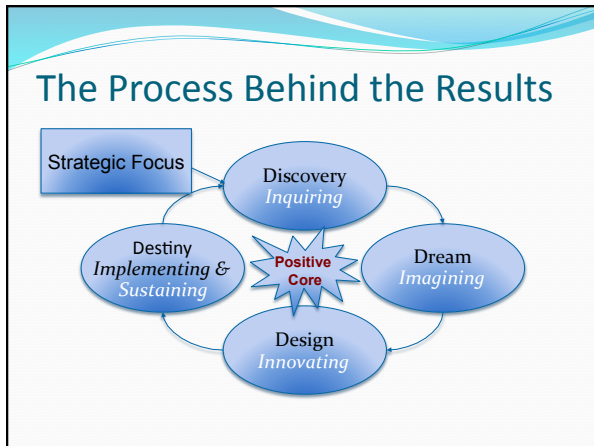
- Choose the Design Statement that you most resonate with
- Return to your partner from this morning's interview
- Share your responses to the following:
 - How might you apply this Design Statement to create high performing teams in your immediate sphere of influence?

The AI Difference - Destiny

- Improvisational
- Follows inspiration – Free Choice Principle
- Chaordic
- Celebratory
- Plan for integration and support

Keys to Destiny

- Decision makers need to be clear on commitments
- Plan for quick wins and celebrate
- Create a structure to support innovation teams
- Create a structure to integrate the efforts



Putting Ideas into Action

How can you use Appreciative Inquiry to benefit your city or town?

- ### Case Studies
- Focus on Longmont and subsequent processes
 - Denver Traffic Services
 - Denver Finance
 - Eagle P3 Project (Denver, RTD, DTP)
 - Sustainable Cleveland 2019
 - Boulder – Building Permit Excellence – in progress

'Hard Core' AI: One City's Answer to Tactical, Infrastructure Challenges

- Merging Traffic Services
- Mobilizing High-Performing Partnerships: Commuter rail to the airport
- Thriving in Challenging Times: Best financial practices to address Denver's budget shortfall



Merging Traffic Services: *One organization committed to hassle free traffic in Denver*

- 6 week process
- Staff, partner agencies, local businesses, citizens, transportation groups
- Discovery – 1 day 150 people
- Dream and Design – two ½ days with internal staff
- Destiny – ½ day whole system – identify priorities, plan implementation

Traffic Services Merger Results

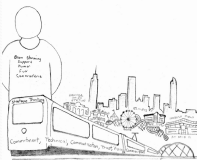
- Compelling mission for **one** organization
- Enhanced cooperation and collaboration
- Experience of being **one** department
- Enhanced trust and respect
- Performance Standards for ALL employees
- Decision to co-locate key players
- Minimized redundancies and streamlined processes and systems

Eagle P3 Collaborative Excellence

- Denver 2-day Refueling Station Workshop
- Interviews with all three entities
- Principles of Collaborative Excellence
- 1 Day Summit on Discovery and Dream
- 1 day Summit on Design and Destiny

Principles of Collaborative Excellence

- **Trust:**
 - I will start with a position of trust, rather than building it up slowly.
 - Denver needs to understand DTPs schedule and scope.
 - I will be honest, respectful and follow-through.
- **Shared Vision:**
 - I will always consider the walk from my Partner's point of view.
 - I will always bear in mind how this project will ultimately benefit the city.
 - Let's build a project that we are all proud of.
 - I will make my expectations part of every conversation, and listen and hear those of others.
 - We will represent the silent majority.
- **Respectful Relationships:**
 - At the end of the day, we only have each other.
 - No "I" in TEAM.
 - I have something to learn from everyone.
 - I will start from a position of respect, rather than building up to it.
 - Leave your baggage at home! "Let it go!"
 - Embrace 5:1 positive communications ratio.
- **Negotiate in Good Faith:**
 - Here is where I need to end up.
 - Communicate open and honest with the end result/ goal in mind.
 - If it is worth doing, it is worth doing right.
- **Positive Communications:**
 - Don't be afraid to complement the other team.
 - Always take the high road.



Summit Results


- Day 1
 - Broadened perspectives and relationships
 - Opportunities for Collaborative Excellence
- Day 2
 - Streamlined processes for the review and approval process for segments of the commuter rail line
 - New executive oversight and comment resolution process

Big and Bold: Sustainable Cleveland 2019



Sustainable Cleveland 2019: *Building an economic engine to empower a green city on a blue lake*

- 700 people
- 2 day planning meeting with civic, business, academic, non-profits
- City of Cleveland and beyond
- August 12 - 14, 2009




Discovery and Dream

- Discovery
 - When have you seen innovation and insight within the Cleveland community?
 - What is unique and special about the stakeholders represented here?
- Dream
 - Put yourself 10 years in the future. Visualize the type of economy you really want to work toward.
 - What will you be most proud of in 2019?
 - What are some of the challenges we have overcome?

Design and Destiny

- Design
 - What are the three smallest things that might come out of this summit that would have the largest impact on our aim to build an economic engine to empower a green city on a blue lake?
- Destiny
 - What are our best ideas?
 - Create a prototype.






SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT 2013
OCTOBER 3RD & 4TH
 Click here to register for the 5th Annual Sustainability Summit!

Building Permit Excellence

- In 4 2-hour meetings
 - Identified best practices
 - Envisioned success for applicants, staff and the city
 - Identified best opportunities for improvement



Building Permit Excellence

- Prototypes of Innovations
 - Process Checklists
 - Technology Solutions
 - Training Guide
 - Consumer Awareness
 - Workspace improvement
 - Expedited Process

We Live in a World Created by Questions

*How will you use
Appreciative Inquiry
to enhance your organization
– and your life?*

For More Information

Rocky Mountain Center for Positive Change
www.rockymountain.positivechange.org

Barbara Lewis
barbara@positivechange.org
