

## Appreciative Inquiry

### What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophical approach developed by David Cooperrider in the 1980's, based on looking at what is good, what works, and what is successful - rather than looking at life as a series of problems that need fixing.



It encourages us to look for what is working well and then explore how we can have even more of that. The approach encourages people to come together to share best experiences, identify collective strengths, envision possibilities, and commit to making the world (or the organisation) an even better place.

The table below contrasts the typical problem-solving approach with the Appreciative Inquiry approach.

<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>Appreciative Inquiry</b>
Focus – what needs fixing?	Focus – what needs building?
Thinks about problems, symptoms, causes and blame.	Thinks about what is good, strong, and possible.
Takes a linear, piece-by-piece approach – often fragmented.	Keeps the big picture in mind and connects everything to the big picture.
Slow pace of change based on logic and left-brained thinking.	Quicker pace of change using whole-brain thinking and positive energy.
Assumes an organisation has a lot of problems that need fixing, that the organisation is deficient.	Assumes that the organisation has huge potential capacity and is abundant in resources.

The approach is strongly aligned to Positive Psychology, which takes a deeply appreciative approach to people's lives, work and communities.

### Why does it work?

- It encourages energy and motivation – it makes people feel good.
- It facilitates the sharing of insights and best practices.
- It promotes openness and disclosure, rather than secrecy and defensiveness.
- It helps rapid innovation by building on what is already working.
- It supports respectful conversations and relationships

## The 5D Appreciative Inquiry Model

While Appreciative Inquiry is a philosophical approach, there is also a 5D Appreciative Inquiry methodology that is used for managing change. It can be applied over several months or used as a facilitative approach with a group of people over just one day, depending on the scope of the planned change. The Table below outlines the stages in the 5D model, example appreciative questions to ask and a top tip for each stage.

STEP	QUESTIONS	TOP TIP
<b>Define</b> Defining the focus of the Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the desired outcome?</li> <li>• What change do we want to make?</li> </ul>	Use positive, motivational language e.g. 'Delighting Customers' rather than 'Addressing customer issues'
<b>Discovery</b> Uncovering and acknowledging strengths and what is already good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What examples do you have of best practice?</li> <li>• Who is really good at this?</li> <li>• What strengths do we have in this area?</li> </ul>	Look for what's right, not for what's wrong.
<b>Dream</b> Articulating wishes, hopes and aspirations for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What 3 wishes do you have the future?</li> <li>• If this was the best it could be, what would it be like?</li> </ul>	Stimulate self-belief by finding inspiring stories of great achievements.
<b>Design</b> Making decisions about the how to deliver the dream.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most important things that we need to do to achieve the dream?</li> <li>• How can we ensure we enjoy and learn from the journey?</li> </ul>	Focus on the whole picture - task, process and climate.
<b>Destiny</b> Planning and committing to actions to deliver the dream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What am I going to do to make this happen?</li> <li>• What would you like to do?</li> <li>• Where do we need to start?</li> </ul>	Stand firmly in your own power – take responsibility for making things happen the way you want them to.

## Recommended Reading

'Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management' – Lewis, Passmore & Cantore

'Appreciative Inquiry Handbook' – Cooperrider, Whitney & Stravos

'The Joy of Appreciative Living' – Jacqueline Kelm

'The Right Questions' – Debbie Ford

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>