# Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a process for positive change. It can be applied across whole organisations, individual teams, or departments. Indeed following the work of Kelm and her colleagues (2005, p. 219) it can also be used in a person's individual life. An Appreciative Inquiry can be "as formal as a year-long, whole system process involving hundreds of employees and other stakeholders in interviews, dialogue and decision-making. Or it may be as informal as a conversation between a manager and an associate" (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008, p. 101). Simply put "AI is a process for engaging all relevant and interested people in positive change" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 101).

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the 4-D cycle. The 4-D cycle is a dynamic and iterative process. The 4-Ds are:

- Discovery: What gives life?
- Dream: What might be?
- Design: How can it be?
- Destiny: What will be?

The first step in undertaking an Appreciative Inquiry is to select an *Affirmative Topic*. "Human systems move in the direction of what they study, [therefore] the choice of what they study is fateful" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 7). The Affirmative Topic shapes the Inquiry and is typically a subject of strategic importance to the organisation, team, or individual.

> They may be an aspect of the organisation's positive core, that if expanded would further the organisation's success. They may be a problem that if stated in the affirmative and studied would improve organisational performance. Or, they may be a competitive success factor for the organisation to learn about in order to grow and change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 7).

## Choosing an Affirmative Topic

An Affirmative Topic represents what people want to discover or learn more about and therefore the choice of the Topic is very important. Ideally the Topic would be selected by a team of organisational stakeholders – a microcosm of the organisation with as diverse a group of 'voices' as possible. The number of people on the team should typically reflect a variety of viewpoints and experiences as well as representing different levels of the

organisation where appropriate. Including voices from outside the organisation is useful too. Even though the purpose of this team is simply to choose the Affirmative Topic, it is important that all members have an active and equal role. All decisions should be made by consensus, and the structural hierarchy should not impact on the dialogue at either a conscious or sub-conscious level. It is important that neither the power nor the importance of any individual outside the AI process should be reflected within it. "All who participate [in this process] must be encouraged to speak their minds and say what is in their hearts" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 39).

The process of selecting an Affirmative Topic generally follows a similar process.

1. The members of the Topic Selection Team pair up and conduct mini-interviews based on the same four questions (often the AI starting questions). The four AI foundational questions are:
   - What was the peak experience or "high point"?
   - What are the things valued most about…
     – Yourself?
     – The nature of your work?
     – Your organisation?
   - What are the core factors that "give life" to organising?
   - What are three wishes to heighten vitality and health? (Cooperrider et al., 2008, pp. 39-40)

2. The whole Topic Selection Team meets as a group and shares the stories and highlights which emerged from the mini-interviews. Time must be provided for adequate dialogue, sharing, relationship building, and reflection. The temptation must be resisted to identify common threads and themes before everyone has shared fully.

3. Once everyone has had the opportunity to share fully common threads and themes are identified the whole Topic Selection Team explore and discuss them until a theme is constantly and consistently identified as being most appropriate to be the focus of an Inquiry at that time.

It is important that the whole team is comfortable about the language used to phrase the identified threads and themes as well as the final Topics. A fundamental underpinning of AI is that "words create worlds" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 40) and therefore questions

over language is not simply semantics they are an essential part of the Inquiry. Topics can be as diverse as "technical processes, [human] systems and dynamics, customer relations, cultural themes, values, external trends, and market forces" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 41). However, "Topics must be positive affirmations of the organisation's strengths and the potential it seeks to discover, learn about, and become. Generally [in an Appreciative Inquiry of any size] between three to five topics should be identified" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 41). The criteria for 'good' Topics are:

- Topics are affirmative or stated in the positive.
- Topics are desirable. They identify the objectives people want.
- The group is genuinely curious about them and wants to learn more.
- The Topics move in the direction the group wants to go (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 41).

The topics selected set the stage for the 4-D process that follows. They get written into questions that are the basis for 'Discovery' interviews. They serve as seeds for the dreams phase and as arenas for crafting design propositions and taking action in the destiny phase (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 17).

Once the topics have been identified then it is time to move into the 4-D cycle proper.

## The 4-D cycle

It is important to remember:

> No two Appreciative Inquiry processes are alike. Each is designed to address a unique strategic challenge faced by the organisation…. Each is designed to optimize participation among stakeholders. This means that the four D's of AI—discovery, dream, design and destiny—can take many forms of expression (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 25).

### *Discovery*: *What gives life?*

During the 'Discovery' phase, we uncover, learn about, and appreciate the best of "what is" and "what has been" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 7) in the context we are inquiring into. This is done by focussing on the 'positive core' of the organisation, the so-called "highpoint experiences and successes" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 104).

Typically, the 'Discovery' phase comprises one-to-one 'Appreciative Interviews' with as many people as possible, although focus groups and/or meetings may also be used. According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003, p. 147):

> Appreciative interviews bring out the best in people and organisations. They provide opportunities for people to speak and be heard. They ignite curiosity and the spirit of learning, and in so doing they enhance organisational knowledge and wisdom. They enhance the organisation's positive core by surfacing stories that illuminate the distinctive strengths and potentials. And they bring positive possibilities for the future to life.

Essentially the 'Discovery' phase can be said to have eight steps, although this may depend to some degree on the scope and scale of the Inquiry. The eight steps are:

- Transforming the three to five Affirmative Topics (described above) into positive questions, which will be used for the Appreciative Interviews.
- Developing an interview guide
- Creating an interview plan
- Communicating the Inquiry strategy
- Training interviewers
- Conducting Appreciative interviews
- Disseminating stories and best practices
- Making meaning and mapping the positive core

Generally speaking, transforming the topics into positive questions is undertaken by the same people as were in the Topic Selection Team. Typically the questions used in an Appreciative Interview "are written to uncover who and what an organisation is when it is at its best" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 150). *The encyclopaedia of positive questions* suggests the following structure for the questions:

- The title of the Affirmative Topic
- A lead-in, that introduces the topic
- A set of sub questions (usually two to four) that explore different aspects of the topic (Whitney, Cooperrider, Trosten-Bloom, & Kaplin, 2001).

The questions are compiled into an 'Interview Guide'. The Guide is essentially a script for the Appreciative Interview process. A selection of resources related to 'Positive Questions and Interview Guides' on a range of Topics are available on the *Appreciative Inquiry Commons* website at http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/toolsQuestions.cfm. The purpose of the 'lead-in' is to 'set the tone' for the questions and the responses. They may

define the topic or they may help the interviewee consider the topic from different points of view. Appreciative Interview questions assume:

> …that the 'glass is half-full'—that the topic [of the Inquiry] or quality that we're exploring already exists in the person, the organisation, and the world. We see ourselves as detectives, trying to uncover and understand where the topic exists, why it exists, and how it can exist to a greater extent on a range of Topics (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 150).

The purpose of the 'lead-in' is to "plant that half-full assumption in the minds of the interviewee" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 152). A good lead in will make the interviewees want more of the Topic or quality. They will resonate with the "yearning of meaning" with the interviewee (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 152). Finally, the 'lead-ins' "help us build bridges between the business' needs and our emotional needs for things such as a sense of pride, ownership, belonging, connection, and personal growth" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 152).

The sub-questions tend to address the interviewees past, present, and future experiences of the Topic. The 'past' or 'backward' questions address 'peak experiences' or 'high points' associated with the Topic. These experiences do not always need to be within the same organisation as the interviewee is currently involved. Backward questions explore deeply the social, cultural, educational, vocational, and spiritual conditions that surround the interviewee's experience of the Topic. The 'present' or 'inward' questions ask the interviewee to make *meaning* out of the 'peak experiences' or 'high points' referred to above and to "extrapolate learnings about their root causes for success" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 153). The 'future' or 'forward' questions seek to encourage the interviewee to verbalise their hopes, dreams, and aspirations associated with the Topic and to imagine a future where the Topic is the best it can be. Forward questions are often accompanied by 'transition' questions that encourage the interview to explore the first steps toward that future (adapted from Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 153).

In large-scale Inquiry it is important to also create an 'Interview Plan'. The plan outlines the process for the Appreciative Interviews. Who will be interviewed? How? Where? In what manner, etc.? The plan outlines how the 'voices' of all the organisation's stakeholders will be heard.

Once the Interview Plan has been crafted, it is important that it is communicated to all the organisation's stakeholders. Communication of the Plan tends to be ongoing from this point on since there is always new information emerging which needs to be shared. Ongoing communication also helps with ongoing engagement and maintaining high-level energy. "Organisations can only create full-voice, knowledge-based, narrative-rich cultures through open, inclusive, and extensive interactive communication" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 159). In a larger scale Inquiry it may also be necessary to train a number of interviewers. Finally, when the interviewers are trained it is time to conduct the interviews. The Appreciative Interviews can be undertaken in any number of formats including small groups, staff meetings, focus groups, over the phone, or using a variety of 'new media' such as internet-based applications etc. However, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom say: "The one-on-one, face-to-face interview…seems to stimulate the most energy and enthusiasm among young and old, professional and front-line, cynical and inspired alike" (2003, p. 161).

Since Appreciative inquiry is focussed on what organisations do best, it is important to continually disseminate the stories that emerge from the Appreciative Interview process as widely as possible. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom again say:

> When inquiries take place over a period of months, it is critical to provide interim opportunities for people to hear stories, make meaning of what they are hearing, and initiate innovative action in response to what they have learned. Without this interim dissemination of stories and best practices, organisations pass up one of the key benefits of whole-system appreciative inquiry—self-organised, inspired, emergent change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 164).

Indeed meaning making is at the heart of Appreciative Inquiry. The final step of the 'Discovery' phase is 'making meaning and mapping the positive core'. "Meaning making provides opportunities for…the organisation as a whole to actively engage in deeper and deeper levels of dialogue, learning, and exploration of their desired future. It enhances organisational wisdom, and opens the doors to short- and long-term possibilities" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 165). Appreciative Inquiry is narrative-based. Narrative has been a major aspect of human life and human development for millennia. Narrative or stories are the cornerstones of social, cultural, vocational, educational, spiritual, and organisational transmission of our ways of knowing, ways of being, values system, use of language, and approaches to life. Narrative is how human beings make meaning. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom note that meaning-making in Appreciative Inquiry

can generally be shown to have four characteristics. They are: Appreciative Inquiry meaning-making:

- takes place over time (rather than at some arbitrarily designated end point),
- focuses on participant experiences (rather than consultant highlights),
- revolves around qualitative, narrative analysis (rather than quantitative analysis), and
- encourages attention to higher ground (rather than simply common ground) (2003, pp. 166-167).

As the organisational stakeholders make meaning of their stories and best practices, the organisation's 'positive core' core is emerging. The final powerful act of the 'Discovery' phase is to map the 'positive core' in whatever manner appears to be appropriate. This mapping can be undertaken by reading and sharing the stories which were gathered during the Appreciative Interview process; by undertaking a qualitative analysis of the root causes of the organisation's success; and by creating a physical 'map' of all the success factors rendered in such a way as to be meaningful for the organisation's stakeholders (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

> In the 'Discovery' phase, people share stories of exceptional accomplishments, discuss the core life-giving factors of their organisations, and deliberate on the aspects of their organisation's history that they most value and want to bring forward to their work in the future. In this phase, members come to know their organisation's history *as positive possibility* rather than static eulogized, romanticized, or forgotten set of events. Empowering and hopeful conceptions of organisations frequently, if not always, emerge from stories that are grounded in the realities of the organisation operating at its best. Appreciation is alive, and stakeholders throughout an organisation or a community are connected in a dialogue of discovery. Hope grows and organisational capacity is enriched (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 43).

The 'Discovery' phase results in:

- A rich description or mapping of the organisation's positive core.
- Organisation-wide sharing of stories of best practices and exemplary actions.
- Enhanced organisational knowledge and collective wisdom.
- The emergence of unplanned changes well before implementation of the remaining phases of the 4-D cycle (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 8).

### *Dream: What might be?*

During the 'Dream' phase:

> …all members of the organisation and its stakeholders engage in processes to envision the future of the organisation. They discuss what they learned in 'Discovery' and then go one step further—to imagine a more inspiring, positive, life-giving world and organisation. In the process they share rich personal dreams, describe and creatively enact collective dreams, and often write an organisational mission or purpose statement. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 179)

The 'Dream' phase "amplifies the 'positive core' of the organisation, and stimulates more valued and vital futures. In so doing it challenges the status quo and magnetically draws people toward the next phase of the 4-D cycle" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 179).

For Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros "The 'Dream' phase is practical in that it is grounded in the organisation's history. It is also generative in that it seeks to expand the organisation's potential, keeping in mind the voices and hopes of its stakeholders" (2008, p. 44). The 'Dream' phase utilises the *best* that the organisation has experienced to that point to shape its future. During this phase all the organisation's stakeholders share their narratives and:

> …engage in conversations about the organisation's potential and position in the world. Dialogue about the organisation's mission (present purpose) and the unique contribution it can make to global well-being catalyses furtherance images and stories of the organisation's future. (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 44)

If the 'Discovery' phase is about revealing and mapping the 'positive core' of the organisation through its stories and narratives, the 'Dream' phase is about projecting the essence of that 'positive core' into the future and describing the new stories and narratives which will emerge from it. However, the 'Dream' phase is not some kind of organisational narcissism. It is an opportunity to "think big and to imagine bold possibilities for their organisation" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 183). The 'Dream' phase is an example of 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' since:

> When asked to envision beyond the boundaries of their work, people find new meaning in their work. They come to see how what they do contributes to the whole; to a larger, more life-enhancing purpose for their organisation and beyond. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 183)

The key decisions of the 'Dream' phase are: Whom should we involve? What experiential activity will we use to reveal our images of the future? And what will be the outcome of our Dream? (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 183). As with the 'Discovery' phase the greater in number and more diverse the voices the richer the Dreaming will be. However, as has been alluded to already, voice is not the only form of expression for the Dreaming phase.

> AI dreaming can involve anything from guided imagery and silent reflections to playful, dramatic skits—talk shows, commercial, songs, poems, and so on. In any one of a variety of ways, people draw, paint, perform, and play the future they most prefer as if it already exists. 'Dream' activities are creative and fun. They take people into the realm of the unknown but imaginable, and open doorways to "right brain" intuitive ways of knowing. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 185)

Such intuitive ways of knowing can be described as *embodiment* that is, the "seamless…[integration of] thinking, being, doing and interacting" (Hocking, Haskell, & Linds, 2001, p. xviii). Embodiment (which can also be is a *Flow* experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)) ensures that we "view knowing and knowledge not as concrete things that reside in the body or mind but [as something] that emerge [s] through interactions with/in the world" (Hocking et al., 2001, p. xvii). As Einstein is famed to have said, "you cannot solve new problems with old thinking". To limit 'Dreaming' to simply talking or writing about the future we see for our organisations will limit the realisation of creative opportunities and challenging approaches based on the diverse strengths of a broad range of stakeholders.

Of course in the Western worldview the output tends to be more important than the process so there may be organisational stakeholders who are looking for something tangible to 'take away' from the 'Dreaming' process. On this point, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom say:

> The overarching goal of Appreciative Inquiry is to change the images told in the stories and inner dialogue of the organisation. To do this you may or may not need a document. Great experiences have a way of creating their own life—together with stories that can be spread like wildfire through an organisation. So, at a a minimum, the best 'Dream' take-away is a great story about a great experience (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 186).

However, this does not preclude the 'Dreaming' phase resulting in a business document of some type.

There are seven steps in the 'Dreaming' process. The steps are:

- Reflect on the focal question
- Engage in a 'Dream' Dialogue
- Clarify the collective 'Dream'
- Creatively enact the 'Dream'
- Determine common themes
- Create an organisational 'Dream' map
- (Optional) document the 'Dream'

The 'Dream' phase begins by asking the participants to engage with a 'focal question' and allowing them time to reflect on it. Following the reflection participants are engaged in what we have come to call in this course a 'collaborative conversation' where the dialogue stimulates more hopes, dreams, reflections, and images. Over time patterns and synergies will emerge – these are the collective 'Dream', emerging from the collective consciousness of the group (Bache, 2008). Once the collective 'Dream' starts to emerge it needs to be clarified through more questioning—"what does it look like? What do you hear? How will you know its there?" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 189). Once the 'Dream' has been clarified, the participants must break into small groups and 'enact' their interpretation of the 'Dream'. This enactment must include all participants in both the creation and the enactment. The enactment will embody the 'Dream' in the participants. Once all the enactments have been undertaken, another 'collaborative conversation' is initiated with the whole group of participants to identify the common themes and threads that run through all the enactments. These common themes and threads form the draft 'positive core' of the future vision of the organisation. The final powerful act of the 'Dream' phase is to map this future 'positive core' in whatever manner appears to be appropriate.

"For many organisation stakeholders, [the organisation phase of an Appreciative Inquiry] is the first time to think "great" thoughts about and create "great" possibilities for the organisation. The process is both personally and organizationally invigorating". (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 45)

### *Design: How can it be?*

The 'Design' phase:

>…engages large groups of people in conversations about the nature of organising and about the kind of organisation that will enable the realisation of their values and dreams. In

short, it involves sorting, sifting, and serious choices about what will be. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 197)

The 'Design' phase quite simply involves the:

> …creation of the organisation's social architecture. The new social architecture is embedded in the organisation by generating provocative propositions (also known as possibility statements or design principles) that embody the organisational dream in the ongoing activities. Everything about organising is reflected and responsive to the dream, the organisation's greatest potential (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 45).

Organisational design embodies the organisational worldview and encompasses everything from the "structures, systems, strategies, relationships, roles, policies, procedures, [to the organisation's] products and services" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 198) and embeds the organisation's values at every level and in every aspect of the whole organisational system.

As we know, Appreciative Inquiry (and holistic thinking), hold that we are all co-creating reality in every moment. We are "both the designers of the world and the product of our own designs" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 198). In Appreciative Inquiry organisational design is based on three key questions: What are we designing? Who needs to be involved? And how do we describe our ideal organisation? Organisational design begins with a 'Change Agenda'. Simply put "the 'Change Agenda' implies what will be designed. In essence, it creates a target for 'Design'" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 201). The 'Change Agenda' is symbiotically engaged with the 'Discovery' phase.

> The 'Change Agenda' suggests relevant Affirmative Topics, that in turn guide 'Discovery'. The stories and data collected in Discovery—combined with the hopes and dreams expressed in 'Dream'—provide the organisational knowledge upon which the 'Design' is crafted. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 202)

It is the 'Design' phase that most clearly connects the Change Agenda, Affirmative Topics, Interview data, and 'Dreams'(Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 202).

The 'Design' phase can be said to have four steps. They are:

- Identify a meaningful social architecture
- Select relevant and strategic 'Design' elements
- Identify organisational 'Design' preferences
- Craft provocative propositions (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 206)

The first step in the 'Design' phase is much more than simply creating a new organisational structure. It begins with identifying "the social architecture we plan to transform. This social architecture is a model for organising that implies a set of essential design elements" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 207). These elements are the things that must be "designed and operational in order for an organisation to exist" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 207). The social architecture includes but is not limited to: its "vision, purpose, strategy, structure, leadership, decision-making, communication, systems, relationships, roles, knowledge management, policies, procedures, products and services. Taken collectively design elements serve as a social architecture" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 207). What could also be described as an organisational holon. There are many well-defined models of social architecture or one can be created which is appropriate for the unique circumstances of any given organisation (Watkins & Mohr, 2001). Organisational 'Design' is usually a flowing and iterative process. For example, it is common for the completion of a transformation of one area, function, or design element to initiate a change in another and so on. The 'Discovery' phase highlights 'Design' elements that need to be addressed. "The most relevant and strategic design elements are those that both leverage your 'positive core' and lead to the realisation of your 'Dreams' (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 209). Selecting the 'most relevant and strategic 'Design' elements involves a process of identifying 'Design' preferences. As in all aspects of life at every phase of the 4-D cycle, there are many decisions to be made. And as with life if we make certain decisions over others we may end up in a position which is not optimal.

Identifying the organisational preferences is simply a matter of discovering "which of all the possibilities do the people involved consider to be ideal? Which do they prefer? (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 210)". In any given organisation, the organisational design will be unique, hopefully appropriate to the context within which that organisation is situated. However, this uniqueness means that 'Design' elements that are notionally similar across organisations, such as decision-making or leadership, may be completely different. Difference does not necessarily suggest that one or other 'Design' element is better than the other, simply that "different preferences suggest very different images of the ideal organisation" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 211). Identifying your organisational 'Design' preferences requires that you revisit the 'data' you have collected to date—your stories, your maps of the 'positive' and 'future positive core' etc. "Go back

to your data and see what it's taught you about your organisation at its best. Reflect on your dreams and discuss the kind of organisation that would be alive with your best and highest aspirations" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 211). The answers to the questions you asked in the 'Discovery' phase will give you direction regarding which 'Design' elements are, not only, most valued but also the version of those elements which is most appropriate to your collective vision of the future of your organisation.

The final step in the 'Design' process is to write your 'Provocative Propositions'. Writing 'Provocative Propositions' simply entails turning the organisational preferences that you have just described into 'Affirmative Statements'. This can be done in small or large groups however people must work on the statements "about which they care most" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 212). It is important at this stage to be 'brave'. It is typical when we work in organisational design for us to compromise, to fall back on old habits and think about problems, or to go for the 'easy option'.

> We can all think about ideal organisations. It takes a great deal of courage, however, to truly say what we most desire. And it takes a equal amount of creativity to find innovative ways of designing our ideals into the fabric of our organisations. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 212)

'Provocative Propositions' address, in a reasonable amount of detail, one or more key organisational 'Design' elements.

> It states, at some level of detail, how the preferences of the people involved will manifest in the organisation. It describes the ideal organisation—the one that lives the best of the past, and at the same time enables the most hoped-for future. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 212)

Writing 'Provocative Propositions' is an iterative process particularly if the whole group is not involved in the drafting of every proposition.

> Propositions should be: stated in the present tense (they express the future ideals as if they already exist); grounded in what works based upon best practice stories that surfaced through Discovery); provocative (they stretch the organisation beyond the familiar); desirable (take the organisation where people want to go) (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, pp. 212-213).

"The 'Design' phase involves the collective construction of positive images of the organisation's future in terms of provocative propositions based on a chosen social architecture. These designs help move the system to positive action and intended results" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 46).

### *Destiny: What will be?*

Essentially:

> The 'Destiny' phase delivers on then new images of the future and is sustained by nurturing a collective sense of purpose and movement. It is a time of continuous learning, adjustment, and improvisation—all in the service of shared ideals. The momentum and potential for innovation and implementation are extremely high. By this stage in the process, because of the shared positive image of the future, everyone is invited to align his or her interactions in co-creating the future. (Cooperrider et al., 2008, pp. 46-47)

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom describe the 'Destiny' phase as being three-dimensional. They say:

> The first dimension has to do with recognition and celebration of what has been learned and transformed in the process to date…The second dimension is the initiation of cross-functional, cross-level projects and Innovation teams…which launch a wide-range of goal-driven, action-oriented changes….The third dimension involves the systemic application of Appreciative Inquiry to programmes, processes, and systems throughout the entire organisation. This enhances the organisation's capacity for ongoing positive change (2003, p. 217).

The key decisions in the 'Destiny' phase are: "How will we learn about the gains we've already made? How will we celebrate? What are our parameters for self-organised action? How shall we self-organise? How will we support success?" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 218).

Essentially, there are five steps in the 'Destiny' phase. They are:

- Review, communicate, and celebrate accomplishments
- Generate a list of potential actions
- Self-organise for inspired action projects
- Support the success of self-organised projects
- Systemic application of Appreciative Inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 219)

In many organisations projects have a tendency to die a slow death on their way to obscurity or simply to be overtaken by the next 'critical project' to come along. In Appreciative Inquiry "identifying, communicating, and celebrating positive changes, innovations, and results" is as important as the change itself (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, pp. 219-220). The 'Destiny' phase is a time where organisational stakeholders reflect on the process they have been part of and share stories of the 'high-points' and

positive changes. This is a great time to build on those changes by engaging in consideration of "all the creative ways your ideal organisation [previously articulate in the 'Dream' phase] might be actualised" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 220). The power of Appreciative Inquiry is its ability to encourage self-organised teams to undertake innovative approaches to organisational change throughout the AI process. The 'Destiny' phase is the perfect time to form, what Whitney and Trosten-Bloom call "Innovation Teams" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 219). Innovation teams are groups of volunteers who will offer to undertake a project to "move the organisation toward its newly articulated 'Dream' and 'Design' (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 219). These people volunteer to take on such projects because of their personal interest in and enthusiasm for the project. Such innovation and improvisation requires some form of infrastructure without weighing such projects down with unnecessary administration. Generally speaking, such infrastructure is centred on some form of mentoring or coaching as well as cross-team networking and communication. Finally, through the application of Appreciative Inquiry the application of the 4-D cycle and the cycle itself are continuously in the process of redesign since each application of it is unique.

The 'Destiny' phase is ongoing and brings the organisation back full circle to the 'Discovery' phase. In a systemic fashion, continued AI may result in new affirmative topic choices, continuous dialogues, and continued learning (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 47).

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