AI Practitioner

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Positive and Appreciative Leadership

Guest Editors: **Sarah Lewis and Lesley Moore**

Inside:

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside:

International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

Inside continued:

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Positive and Appreciative Leadership

ABSTRACT

This issue focuses on engaging, stimulating, challenging, unexpected, surprising, oblique, inspiring and quirky accounts of Positive and Appreciative Leadership. Collectively the articles illuminate an emerging new idea of leadership: one that offers some answers to leadership challenges in a fast paced world where the future is unfolding in previously unimagined ways.

Leadership as relational

The stories from Davy and Weiss, Kimball, Gastaldi and Verma make it clear that leadership is not just about directing in a disconnected way from the front; it is about being in relationship – specifically a reciprocal relationship – with others. All these leaders recognize leadership as a social act. Their leadership is underpinned by a new sort of humility that recognises that leadership isn't about having all the answers; it's about creating ways for new answers to emerge.

Leadership as a balance between control and direction

In Whitney and Trosten-Bloom's article a new balance between direction and control is described. With a little less emphasis on control, and more on creating clear direction, an environment is created in which people are invited to step up and share leadership. This can be seen clearly in Verma's account of Oswal's approach to regenerating a cotton industry, and in Worthing's reflections to Schiller when she talks about 'letting things evolve'.

Leadership as belief in the value of everyone's voice and experience

Such relational leadership seems to begin with a firmly held belief about, or sense of the value of, the equality of people. As Worthing says 'attitude is a choice', and these leaders choose to take an inclusive and valuing attitude.

This shows up in the way different perspectives are cared about and respected: they are actively and purposefully sought. These varied perspectives can come from all parts of the organisation, from top to bottom, and from anyone with a known, potential or possible stake. This is well demonstrated in Polly and McCarthy's account of recognising the contribution of individual hotel staff actions to the overall culture.

Leadership as recognising the importance of shared information

Shared knowledge is seen as an essential component for great decisions and collective ways forward. Kimball's and Verma's accounts demonstrate the great

When you enable folks to explore their own ideas and even make their own mistakes, then new ideas and possibilities turn up.

'Everyday heros' in Mario Gastaldi's article on Appreciative Leadership in Italy

efforts made to ensure that everyone has the information they need to initiate change in their part of the system.

Leadership as integrity
The articles by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom and by de Jong both emphasise the need for integrity in the leadership. This is illuminated in Davy and Weiss's account of a leader's open conversational style creating an environment where people feel safe. Kimball also talks about inspiring trust, describing it as a reciprocal process. When you enable folks to explore their own ideas and even make their own mistakes, new ideas and possibilities turn up.

Leadership as inclusion
Whitney and Trosten-Bloom also talk about the genius of inclusion. All these stories and accounts describe a series of unique ways in which leaders took the time to ensure that everyone with a stake or information was invited to contribute. And then the leaders really listened; we mean really listened.

Leadership as searching for what works
Everyone's knowledge and perspectives are actively sought through a systematic, appreciative search for what works well, commonly in the face of adversity. This initial process is followed by a pro-active and public process of 're-telling' inspiring stories that pass quickly round organisations, providing new information about what to do more off, while simultaneously imparting secondary messages about how good news is getting noticed; how low level contributions are important, valued and indeed rather crucial; and how we're all in this together, and that what we say counts. Again Polly and McCathy's vivid stories describe this perfectly.

Leadership as celebrating everyday miracles
People are encouraged to recall and celebrate their calling. To be reminded of, or to reaffirm a calling is such a powerful motivator. People with a strong calling to their work perform minor miracles everyday, often unnoticed by others. In these accounts leaders take the time to notice the everyday miracles of bravery, courage, commitment or compassion.

Leadership as finding and celebrating everyday heroes
A related theme is, as Verma says, that of 'finding the hero and celebrating'. In these accounts the leader moves away from centre stage, stepping aside and inviting others to step up. They applaud the role of others in achieving success. In addition they make sure that credit is shared with all who contribute to success.

Leadership as getting out of the way
We also notice appreciative leaders getting right out of the way, enabling and supporting new initiatives to emerge and develop rather than blocking momentum by a fear of taking risks. Instead they just let things go ahead, thereby giving others the opportunity to find out if things don't work, achieving ownership and commitment in new and very powerful ways. Polly describes it perfectly: 'From one leader emerges many ... a sea of leaders'. Gastaldi's story highlights an enviable outcome: one in which people from across the organisation began competing to provide solutions. We used to talk about harnessing momentum; this feels more like watching a space ship launch, and simply popping champagne corks when it goes right.

> The reality is that when you create an environment where everyone's voice is heard and valued, yours, the voice of the leader, will be too; perhaps more clearly than ever before.

Leadership as being bold and taking risks

Within these accounts leaders act boldly and take risks. This resonates with numerous conversations we have had with leaders 'trying out' AI in a world where the traditional approach is one where certainties prevail, providing just about sufficient comfort that things are, and will be, as the leader dictates. These articles talk about how developing a new sort of trust involves a massive amount of 'letting go'. This can feel like riding a runaway horse: very scary. The reality is that when you create an environment where everyone's voice is heard and valued, yours, the voice of the leader, will be too; perhaps more clearly than ever before.

Leadership as creating connections and synchronism

There's also a theme in these accounts of a leader's role being about connecting and creating synchronism: the ability of people across organisations and networks of organisations to act in harmony and concert without detailed centralised direction. This develops from involving all the stakeholders and then spreading the connections outward, taking concepts about 'whole system' beyond the system you're in to lots of new stakeholders. This is achieved in different ways, but seems to go beyond our common understanding of the 'dreaming' process. When you convene, or usher in, a process in which previously unimagined stakeholders are swept in together, when everyone gets the new connections, and they begin acting collaboratively, then there is, as Verma describes, 'a leap' into shared glory and responsibility that extends far beyond one individual leader's original intentions or aspirations.

Leadership as an emergent, iterative, learning process

And within all this is Worthing's point: 'It is what it is. So just deal with it.' The message is about seeing what is, that is, that one leader couldn't possibly control a whole organisation just though forcing things to happen. Accepting this seems to be a core component of Appreciative Leadership. De Jong talks about this in a different way, introducing the idea of conscious 'practices' of courage and reflection and standing aside, noticing what's happening with an appreciative eye, and considering another leadership move to create the next part of the unfolding organisational dance.

Almost all the articles in this edition are accounts of practice. While they clearly embody appreciative and positive principles, not all make direct reference to the theoretical or research underpinnings. However our AI Resources (see page 47) give guidance on this. Cameron's book *Positive Leadership* is a very practical guide to using positive organisational behaviour to promote a positive organisational culture. While *Appreciative Leaders* by Schiller et al (2001) reveals the characteristics of appreciative leaders, based on interview research, *Appreciative Leadership* by Whitney et al (2010) blends experience based stories with principles, ideas, suggestions and tools. Lewis's chapter 'Positive Leadership and Change' from her forthcoming text *Positive Psychology at Work* presents Avolio's research on authentic leadership and ties it in with Higgs and Rowland's research on effective organisational change. Lewis identifies Stavros's SOAR and Cameron's Competing Values Framework as new approaches to strategy development that support positive and authentic leadership, and emergent change processes.

Sarah Lewis and Lesley Moore
Guest Editors, February 2011

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Appreciative Leadership in the Face of Tragedy

ABSTRACT

The story of how one senior public sector leader, facing tragic agency failures and a grim organizational environment, grabbed on to a strength-based approach consistent with his values and style. He personally brought engaging and appreciative communication to employees throughout the system. When workers remembered their calling, they re-inspired themselves and their colleagues. This leader used AI to infuse elements of an appreciative culture into a large, complex and challenged system.

The stories were stunning and truly tragic. In 2003, a child living in the city of Newark was found dead and stuffed in a trunk in a locked room in the basement of his aunt's home. In the same locked room, under a cot, his brother was found, severely malnourished, traumatized and just barely alive. The incident sparked a national and state uproar when it surfaced that both boys were supposedly under the supervision of the NJ Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS), a unit of the New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJDHS).

As the story unfolded it was learned that the case had been opened and closed by DYFS without the children being seen by a state case worker. This incident exposed significant and profound systemic problems and flaws with the way DYFS did its work. Later that same year the spotlight was again on the deficiencies of the child welfare system, when five brothers from Collingswood, NJ were found in a severely emaciated state. The investigation revealed that the brothers were being systematically starved by their foster parents. The boys' case workers had visited over a number of years and never once observed that they were malnourished and not growing.

As a result of these scandals and others, the barrage of criticism leveled on the department and its employees was relentless. There were even 'ripped from the headlines' Law and Order TV episodes modeled after the DYFS scandals. Not surprisingly, a protect-and-survive organizational culture emerged within the department. Most prominent were signs of organizational stress, profound defensiveness and finger pointing, low morale and uncompromising 'turfism'. The free flow of information and communication was impeded by people intent on surviving, and believing that if you don't share information, 'they' cannot find you.

Jim instinctively knew that to enact the comprehensive change needed to transform the department, he could not simply impose it from on high.

Everyone in the organization needed to be engaged in the conversation about change, transformation and reform.

The commissioner's challenge

In early 2004 when the Governor of the State of New Jersey asked Jim Davy to become the commissioner of NJDHS, Jim hesitated. His apprehension was not about assuming leadership of one of the country's largest human services agencies with 25,000 employees, a $9 billion dollar budget, and 13 separate divisions. It was not about the responsibility of serving millions of people a year: people living in poverty; people with physical and intellectual disabilities, mental illness and addictions; children being abused or neglected. Jim was more concerned about the negative impact the recent scandalous events were having on how people within the department performed their work, and perceptions of the department and its employees as just plain inept and uncaring. Not one to shy away from a challenge, Jim did accept the appointment.

As Jim stepped into the role of commissioner, he knew he had a big charge. The governor wanted a complete overhaul of the NJDHS, the state legislature was calling for the department to be 'turned upside down,' the outside advocacy groups and major statewide news media were calling for change 'now.' Jim instinctively knew that to enact the comprehensive change needed to transform the department, he could not simply impose it from on high. Instead, he would need to engage people in the process of reform by creating an environment of cooperation and collaboration. Jim had concluded that everyone at all levels of this mammoth agency needed to be engaged in the conversation about change, transformation and reform if it were to be successful and sustainable.

With over twenty-five years experience leading public sector organizations, Jim had always worked with people in a very participative, cooperative and collaborative way. This was the hallmark of his style. In preparation for this new position, Jim stumbled upon the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology. Believing it was congruent with his leadership style, he decided to use AI as a way to engage people in a process to transform the department through appreciative conversation and communication. He wanted to use AI to change the way people in the department communicated with one another and to break down the barriers to the free flow of information.

Infusing an appreciative approach

Jim launched and oversaw multiple initiatives to overhaul the systemic problems in the child welfare division and throughout NJDHS. He also brought in a team of AI consultants led by Lonnie Weiss to quickly infuse an appreciative sense through the agency. They trained and supported a cadre of sixty-five internal AI 'ambassadors' who practiced applying an appreciative perspective and led projects that brought asset-based improvements to many divisions.

In addition, Jim put himself on the line. He committed himself to connecting with and supporting the thousands of employees who were doing their work well in a highly stressful situation. He visited every DHS local office and residential facility in the first several months of his term. Modeling the open communication he meant to introduce into the department, he met with staff and listened with sincere warmth to their stories. Every Friday he sent an email to the department's 25,000 staff and a vast network of provider agencies, retelling stories that demonstrated the vital, significant and noble work of DHS workers, the everyday heroes in the field. Such positive and consistent communication from an executive leader was new, noted and tremendously appreciated by the workforce.

It was a brutal meeting – the director magnified every weakness, gap, problem and deficit in the five cases.

An insight and a change

Shortly after assuming leadership of the department, Jim attended a meeting the director of DYFS had called with forty of his district office managers. The director's purpose was to conduct an in-depth review of five cases identified as the most egregious examples of 'horrendous' case work, including the Newark and Collingswood cases. For nearly two hours the director stood before the forty managers, who were seated in classroom-style rows, and 'picked apart' each case. He exposed what the case workers, case work supervisors and district office managers had done wrong. It was a brutal meeting – the director magnified every weakness, gap, problem and deficit in the five cases.

Jim sat and observed for the full two hours and felt drained just listening to the all of the negativity. At the end of his two hour case review, the director looked up at his audience and asked for suggestions about how to 'fix things.' No one offered any suggestions. They, too, were drained from all the negativity. As Jim reflected on this meeting he realized that everyone learned about the deficits and problems, but there was nothing about the kind of case work that should be.

Changing energy in meetings

No topic was off limits. Jim stayed for as long as it took to answer all their questions.

Jim decided that a more appreciative approach might produce better results. He began visiting all of the local DYFS offices around the state. At each office he met with all of the DYFS workers and answered their questions about the child welfare reform planning effort which was underway. No topic was off limits. Jim stayed for as long as it took to answer all their questions. In addition to the Q&A, Jim asked the people in the room to share with him a story about a time when they provided 'WOW'-type case work – a time when they served a child and/or family in a significant, meaningful and perhaps life-changing way. The stories began to flow like the bursting of a dam. Incredible stories emerged about unbelievable and courageous case work.

them, died unexpectedly. Evelyn found them with a cousin who was living in a crack house in a crime-ridden part of the city. Without thinking about the danger to herself, and amid taunts and threats from the people inside, Evelyn went into

Using appreciative language and conversation, Jim permitted the workers to do something they had never had the opportunity to do: celebrate their calling.

'Jim's inclusive style created an environment in which people felt safe doing their job.'

the house, scooped up the two boys and left. Jim turned to her upon hearing the story and said 'You must have been frightened out of your mind.' Evelyn responded: 'Commissioner, I wasn't frightened; I was just doing my job.' Then she paused a moment and said: 'No, it was not my job. It's my calling.'

What Jim realized then and there was that these child welfare workers, who had been demonized by politicians, the press and child welfare advocates, were really people who cared deeply about the noble work they performed on behalf of children and families. What Appreciative Inquiry enabled him to do was create a safe environment for the case workers to speak freely and openly about the incredibly demanding work they perform and to celebrate their success stories. Using appreciative language and conversation, Jim permitted the workers to do something they had never had the opportunity to do: celebrate their calling.

Institutional and individual impacts

There were direct impacts from the appreciative leadership Jim demonstrated in DYFS. From the child welfare meetings he convened and the stories he heard about highly successful case work, Jim began to note patterns in key elements that contributed to the successes. He used those ideas in the system reform process to inform the development of a new case practice model based on best practices and success.

Later, DYFS insisted that their new supervisory training include Appreciative Inquiry concepts and methods. Connie Mercer, the founder and CEO of a major not-for-profit social services agency which serves the poor, makes this observation: 'When Jim assumed leadership of the department it was very dysfunctional because of the pain the workers were feeling. Jim's open, inclusive and conversational style created an environment in which people felt safe doing their job and celebrating their success stories. This positive approach, I believe, contributed to the widespread acceptance of the major human service system reforms which were implemented.'

Other targeted systems changes were made in NJDHS divisions as a result of the department-wide AI training and project implementation, and Jim's inspiring leadership. One organization, responsible for certifying service delivery programs for people with developmental disabilities, altered their deficit-based evaluation process to become an asset-based valuation. The department's Human Resources team embraced AI as a foundational strategy in their internal training and consulting, with lasting impact in the design and content of the curriculum. The Medicaid division engaged over 95% of their staff in two-day AI workshops and used the dreams and designs generated there, along with AI principles, to negotiate some of their sticking-point labor issues. Interestingly, several years later at the bargaining table, the state employees' union raised a demand that the State of New Jersey follow what had been done at NJDHS and replicate Appreciative Inquiry throughout state government.

The impacts on the individuals trained as AI ambassadors were profound. People began to practice Appreciative Leadership in their own realms of influence. Personal impacts were as unique as the individuals themselves, but the common thread is people discovering ways to meet challenges, upsets and opportunities with an appreciative eye. The direct experience of sharing what is good and working well, and celebrating their calling and their successes together, made powerful shifts in how people at NJDHS conduct themselves and their work.

 Back to Table of Contents

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Appreciative Leadership for Sustainable Development in India

ABSTRACT

The 5-phase was developed 'VALUE Leadership' model was developed as a practical approach towards 'Appreciative Leadership for Sustainable Development'. This model is designed to inspire business leaders to integrate social issues into business agendas by innovating to create 'sustainable collective value'. It is grounded in AI principles and inspired by S.P. Oswal, chairman of Vardhman Textiles, and his transformational leadership of the 'Village Cluster Adoption Programme' (VCAP).

'In business as in art, what distinguishes leaders from laggards and greatness from mediocrity is the ability to uniquely imagine what could be'. [1]

The word 'leadership' evokes familiarity, curiosity, mystery all at once. The fluid, complex and ever-on-the-brink world of today has made the 'leadership' articulation and practice even more daunting. Business leaders today are called to go beyond their organizational context and attend to social and environmental concerns. Many are ably supported in this quest by the strengths based and possibility driven "Appreciative Inquiry" approach.

This paper begins with the story of VCAP (Village Cluster Adoption Programme) – a unique socio-economic-ecological innovation, conceived and led by S. P. Oswal, the Chairman of Vardhman Textiles Ltd.[2] Oswal is a transformational leader, both on the ground and in the board room.

This unique appreciative leadership endeavour impacted 'people', 'profit' and 'planet' by harmonizing their respective concerns into a collective agenda for 'sustainable value'. The thrust, functioning and impact of VCAP echoes the inspiring BAWB (Business as an Agent for World Benefit) motto of 'doing well by doing good', which itself echoes 'Every single social and global issue of our day is a business opportunity in disguise'.

The paper progresses further to describe VALUE – a practical model for 'Appreciative Leadership for Sustainable Development' that I have developed, inspired by the transformational impact of VCAP. The phenomenon at the heart of this model is the creative and purposeful integration of social issues into the business agenda. VALUE is grounded in the lessons from VCAP innovation

1 Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahlad. (1996) *Competing for the Future*. Harvard Business School Press.
2 Vardhman Textiles Ltd. is a successful Indian business group with turnover of US$750 million.

His search uncovered a few success stories even in the midst of such widespread misery.

and the principles of Appreciative Iinquiry. It brings together a substantive combination of ground experience and academic validity. It is intended to inspire business leaders to innovate and create 'sustainable collective value' on the socio-economic front.

VCAP: A Socio-Economic-Ecological Innovation
Background
VCAP emerged from the growing concern about
• Consistent cotton crop failure in the MALWA belt of Punjab (otherwise known as the 'White Bowl'). The cotton yield was abysmally low at 303 kg/hectare in the state before VCAP began in 2003.

• Farmers' misery: there was a noticeable trend of farmers' suicide, driven by debt and despair.[3]

• Dwindling local cotton supply, driving small and medium textile enterprises to import, thereby making business unviable.

• Environmental sustainability concerns were growing, with cotton farmers' favour shifting towards rice paddies, which further depleted ground water in this arid zone

• Growing cancer incidence in the region due to heavily contaminated soil and water (a result of panic-driven, uninformed pesticide application).

• Growing social disharmony due to high debts, falling income and challenges in the traditional farmer-moneylender relationship.

Disturbed by this, various governmental and non-governmental agencies came forward to help correct the situation. While everyone else was busy investigating the problem, Oswal asked about any farmers, who in the midst of mass crop failure, were still reporting decent yields. Initially, his positivity was misunderstood. But, maintaining his 'appreciative perspective' and 'possibility orientation'[4], he insisted on locating intelligent and successful farmers who could become role models. His search uncovered a few success stories even in the midst of such widespread misery. An inspired and resolute Oswal thus decided to reframe the 'problem' into 'possibility' and 'promise'; the result was VCAP, which was indelibly imprinted in the history of the cotton economy of the Punjab.

Protocol
VCAP functioning is captured as follows:
• A village would be adopted for the period of one crop season (no village was adopted twice – the premise being that 'a light once lit should ignite other lamps').

• A Farmers' Field School would be opened in the village to impart the training of end-to-end scientific crop management (from sowing to selling) with particular emphasis on pesticide management (the most pressing problem at the time) and seed selection. A combination of thoughtfully illustrated leaflets was created to help even the illiterate farmers.

3 In this article, the farmers referred to are cotton farmers in the state of Punjab, India.
4 Oswal was not aware of Appreciative Inquiry before I shared a brief with him, yet his life and business philosophy seem to be guided by heliotropic principles, as is evident from his constant search for opportunities in the face of adversities. Driven by abundant curiosity and possibility thinking, his perennial question is – 'So what are we doing right and what can be done better'!

'We became aware, we awoke and we empowered ourselves.'

• Agricultural graduates were appointed, trained and placed in villages as 'Cluster Incharge'. Local village youth were inducted as scouts to mobilize and influence the farmers to participate in the sensitization and training sessions.

• The farmers' training and education was anchored by 'Punjab Agriculture University', which graciously came forward to partner with VCAP team.

• Community elders, local Gurudwara (worship place) committees and school children were included in sensitization campaigns because of their emotional appeal among local people.

• Banks were encouraged to facilitate soft borrowing for farmers local to them, thereby saving the farmers from money lenders.

Impact

Started in 2003 with just one village and 121 farmers, by 2008-9 VCAP had impacted 251 villages and 23,930 farmers. VCAP ushered in economic and social stability and growth in the state of Punjab at a time when the farmers were drowning in debt and despair, and the textile industry was facing viability threats.

The impact happened at many levels:

People

• An award-winning farmer (who later graduated in management) quipped in Punjabi, 'jag aayi, jag gaye haur jam paye' (we became aware, we awoke and we empowered ourselves).

• 'Punjab Agricultural University' was involved in training farmers in scientific techniques including crop management, pesticide administration, seed selection, soil and water testing, etc. A snapshot of farmers' knowledge assessment before and after VCAP training is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge scores before and after the VCAP programme

Knowledge Score	Before VCAP	After VCAP
Low (13-31)	140 (74%)	36 (19%)
Medium (31-49)	50 (26%)	123 (65%)
High (49-67)	0	31 (16%)
Mean Score	25.67	38.68

Equipped with business management training, farmers are now better able to negotiate, maintain basic accounts and liaise with banks, thus enhancing their financial security, confidence and social esteem.

Profit

Table 2: Produce comparisons 2002-03 versus 2008-09

Year	2002 -03	2008 - 09
VCAP villages' yield (kg per hectare)	303	915
Punjab Textile Yield Spun: Lakh Spindles Produced: Lakh Bales	16.61 10.4	21.99 17.5

'The task of leadership is to align strengths in such a way that weaknesses are irrelevant.' Peter Drucker

Bloom in Gloom

Planet
• VCAP was instrumental in reviving the dying cotton crop in the region which was geo-climatically best suited for this arid zone. A local farming community claims that 'cotton is to MALWA (the specific Punjab cotton belt) what Heer is to Ranjha. VCAP united them back.'

• Restoration of environmental was well-being begun by stopping the mindless use of pesticides which were contaminating the soil and water at alarming rate.

Nation
• Farmers' perceptions of business people became healthier with this unique Industry-Farmer-Scientist collaborative partnering.

• Other business organizations began to choose to commit more concretely to corporate social responsibility. Winsome Textiles, Abhishek Industries, JCT etc. are just a few of the many examples.

• Many governmental (such as Markfed) and non-governmental organizations (like the Tata Foundation) came forward to start similar social enterprise projects.

Post-VCAP
VCAP villages became role models across rest of Punjab and even other states, self-sustaining their good work and mentoring others. Since 2008-09, Oswal and his team has systematically disengaged, because other organizations have come forward to adopt and continue this good work. Oswal has built on the success of this social enterprise to promote another one – 'Employability Skill Training' for underprivileged local youth. Apart from empowering such youngsters, this endeavour is also generating a pool of trained workers for local industry, an enormous WIN-WIN-WIN.

VALUE: A Model of 'Appreciative Leadership for Sustainable Development'
'The task of leadership is to align strengths in such a way that weaknesses are irrelevant.'[5]

Peter Drucker's words capture the underlying metaphor for the VALUE model of 'Appreciative Leadership for Sustainable Development', developed from my study of Oswal's leadership through:

• Appreciative interviews with stakeholders

• Observation of VCAP functioning and impact at a grass-roots level

• Survey of contributing textile enterprises, agricultural stakeholders and independent economist-observers

The VALUE model is grounded in following principles of 'Appreciative Inquiry':
• *Heliotropic principle* – in every organic being/system/situation, something works. Oswal believed in the possibility of some farmers still succeeding with high yields even when the overall scenario looked abysmal and doomed.

5 For more information on David Coooperider's interview with Peter Drucker, visit AI Commons http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/

Successful farmers inspired others to follow.

Oswal, in the foreground wearing spectacles, with agricultural scientist, farmers and VCAP team

• *Simultaneity principle* – the questions we ask shape our quest and destiny. Oswal sought to find out what the few successful farmers were doing differently and presented them as role-models for others.

• *Anticipatory principle* – images inspire action. Oswal influenced the stakeholders' psyche with the images of economic buoyancy and social vibrancy.

• *Poetic principle* – like poetry, every human, social and business situation is capable of multiple interpretations. Oswal chose to focus on the farmers' resilience and strength, when their despair and misery had become dominant.
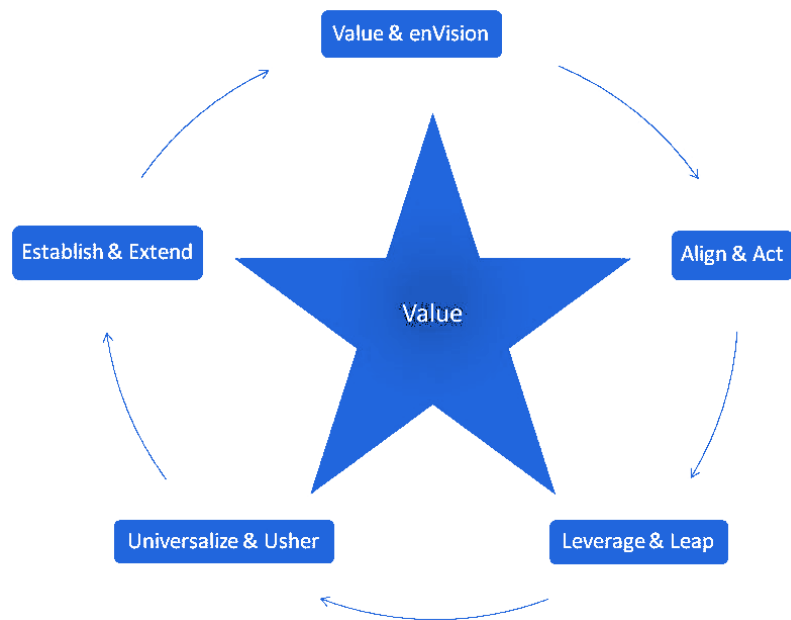
Figure 3: The VALUE model

Value & enVision
• Value and affirm what is working well – find heros to celebrate: Oswal did this by searching for and rewarding successful farmers. This encouraged successful farmers to peer-mentor and inspired others to follow suit.

• enVision a better, bigger and bolder reality: Oswal inspired and facilitated a shared social dreaming by all stakeholders about an economically buoyant and socially vibrant Punjab.

Align & Act
• Align stakeholders into a co-constructed and co-owned agenda: Oswal unified diverse and competing stakeholders with a shared mission and action agenda to restore cotton crops and the local textile industry, as well as supporting environmental and socio-economic well-being.

• Act with purposefulness and concrete measurability: Human psyche is just as easily enthused by visible results, as it is affected by arm-chair critiquing. Staying aware of this, and by virtue of being a natural 'Karmayogi' (one who practices 'action by contemplation'), Oswal led tangible work on the ground by joining shoulders with the farmers right in the fields.
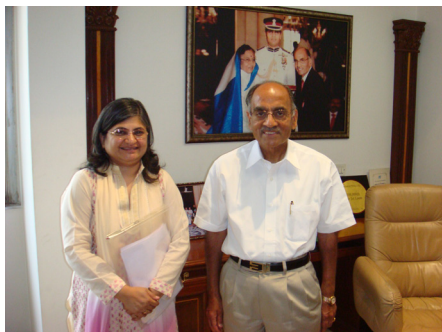
Neena Verma and Oswal (receiving the 'Padma Bhushan' from the President of India in the frame behind)

Leverage & Leap

• Leverage a larger agenda and participation from emerging results: Oswal mindfully watched for and capitalized on every emerging success. He invited and persuaded favourably-inclined industry co-players, agricultural researchers, banking institutions and government representatives to pursue their agenda for Punjab in alignment with VCAP. Becoming a collective mission, VCAP was thus executed with much better pace and higher quality.

• Leap to the highest possible level: As the farmers' trust, interest and participation grew, Oswal widened the scope of VCAP to include business-orientation training, education, healthcare sensitization and social development issues.

Universalize & Usher

• Universalize the best practices of the success model: Oswal rapidly spread the farmers' training prototype model across the state of Punjab so as to universalize its practice and benefits.

• Usher in the new era by mindful and systematic institutionalization of the positive business and social change: Oswal shared glory and thus responsibility with industry co-players, governmental agencies and other stakeholders; heralding a new era of institutionalized 'collaborative development'.

Establish & Extend

• Establish the new system quickly enough to infuse self-sustainability: Oswal helped the farming community believe in and own their empowerment agenda with conviction and commitment, thereby embedding VCAP philosophy and practice deeper into their functioning. A farmer, who had served as village scout, said: 'VCAP has transformed my life. From being a poor farmer and bad parent, I have become a successful businessman and good parent'.

• Extend the success of one socio-economic innovation to create another:Oswal built on VCAP's success lessons to initiate another socio-economic innovation – 'Employability Skill Training'. This is a mindful move to the next loop in the spiral of 'Collective Value Creation'.

Walter Lippmann said that 'the final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on'. Oswal is doing this through his VALUE Leadership: facilitating 'inclusive sustainable development' and self-empowerment through exemplified action leadership on the ground. And in the true spirit of collective good and value, he is making it possible for others to come forward, contribute and bask in glory while he quietly moves on to his next calling.

Back to Table of Contents

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is an international organizational consultant and lecturer in the public and private sectors who specializes in helping make people and organizations more productive. She co-authored Appreciative Leaders: in the Eye of the Beholder, and is founding president of Positive Change Core, which supports strength-focused approaches for schools and youth.
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Marcia L. Worthing
After spending 27 years at Avon Products, where her last assignment was Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs. In 2007 Marcia obtained a Masters Degree in Social Work from Columbia University. She was executive vice president of MullinAssociates / Lincolnshire International from 1999 to 2007.
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AI Practitioner

A Decade of Appreciative Leadership: Thoughts and Reflections

ABSTRACT

Meet Marcia Worthing, an appreciative leader. Read her thoughts and feelings on what Appreciative Leadership is all about. Marge Schiller, author and co editor of *Appreciative Leaders: in the Eye of the Beholder*, and Marcia enjoyed a significant conversation about core values, strategy and living a balanced life in a world of warp-speed changes.

10 years ago, I co-edited a book called "Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder"[1] The book was written to address the question 'What is an Appreciative Leader?'

Since Appreciative Inquiry was a relatively new field of study in 2000, the definition of an appreciative leader was an emergent one.

I decided to take an anthropological approach. AI practitioners were invited to select and interview an appreciative leader. Working with co editors, Bea Mah Holland and Deanna Riley, we selected 28 interviews for a book and another 20 for electronic publication. Each person used the same interview protocol. This was the model that emerged from those interviews.

Talking about leadership in the abstract had been interesting but difficult to translate into applicable philosophies and strategies. The Appreciative Leaders book provided experiences, stories and sufficient data to construct a model.

While we were struggling to define Appreciative Leadership, I realized that I was already working with an Appreciative Leader. Marcia Worthing of New York City is a pioneering corporate leader. She is one of the early leaders in promoting women into senior management positions around the world. She is an appreciative leader in the eye of this beholder, and in the eyes of her colleagues.

Her current reflections are the foundation of this new conversation which took place in November 2010.

I asked Marcia three questions; ones that she helped shape and that she answers in her reflections from over thirty years in senior leadership positions.

1 Marge Schiller, Deanna Riley and Bea Mah Holland (2001) *Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder*. Taos, NM: Taos Institute Publication

People are intrinsically good and want to do the right thing. However, that's not enough. They also need opportunity and they need hope.

Marge: Since we worked together in 1994 at Avon International, you have gone on to nine years in consulting and then back to school to obtain a masters degree in social work.

As you reflect on your experiences of the last decade and what you see as the core of Appreciative Leadership – what stands out?

Marcia: There are three topics that were and stay as foundational to how I see myself as a leader and specifically as an appreciative leader.

The first is *values*.

Values provide us with a 'true north'. They point us in a direction. We all have some non-negotiable values; those things we will not do or say 'no matter what'. They are the values that define our core.

Marge: What are three values or beliefs that define you and govern your behavior? Tell me about times in your life that each one of these three values gave you guidance.

Marcia: The underlying basic belief that has defined my life and career is that all people are equally valuable. Just by being alive and being on this earth, human beings have value and deserve to be valued. The uniqueness of each individual should be appreciated and the concept that all people are created equal should be celebrated. In reality, some people get more breaks than others or are in the right place at the right time, but in no way does that make them more valuable.

Having this as a core value has resulted in my emphasis throughout my career on trying to create equality in the workplace. At Avon, I was primarily concerned with getting more women into management positions around the world. As a consultant, I worked with older workers who were facing age discrimination in the workplace. As a social worker, my emphasis was on low income people.

My core belief in the value of each individual that gave me the courage to put myself on the line for this controversial and potentially explosive training program.

Coupled with this value is a basic belief that people are intrinsically good and want to do the right thing. However, that's not enough. They also need opportunity and they need hope. It is the responsibility of the people who have had the breaks – being born into the right family, being born white, perhaps even being born in the United States – to provide this opportunity, which, in turn, creates a sense of hope.

There is much discussion in the workplace of the importance of inclusion, of valuing diversity. It starts with valuing human beings. One of the biggest barriers we face is stereotyping: 'All white men are…'; 'all blacks are…'; 'all Asians are…'

I remember a training program we did at Avon that exposed these stereotypes. We created lists about groups of people. The lists got longer and longer the greater the difference. There was one page for white men and most of the attributes were positive in a business setting: 'aggressive,' 'arrogant,' 'too decisive.' The pages for African-American men went on and on, and included attributes such as 'carries guns,' 'likes white women,' 'doesn't care about families.' We then exposed all of these stereotypes as being myths.

People were appalled at the lists they had created. The session we conducted for senior leaders forever changed the company. It was my core belief in the value of each individual that gave me the courage to put myself on the line for this controversial and potentially explosive training program.

A key to deepening the appreciation of people is understanding where they are coming from, which leads to a second core belief and value: the importance of caring about what is important to the other person. Without this understanding it is almost impossible to lead – or at least to lead effectively. If a person cares about work / life balance and you are asking him or her to work long hours, there will eventually be a problem. If someone is motivated by money and you are offering job enhancement, there will be a problem. Even if it turns out you are unable to meet the needs of an employee, at the very least you will be able to acknowledge what's important to the person and get the subject on the table.

Through inquiry, one can learn what's important. It's a critical component of any relationship or interaction. Marketers need to care; life partners need to care; countries around the world need to care about other countries. We were a non-union company at Avon. How did we remain that way? By caring about what was important to the employees. We recognized that if we were able to identify and meet their needs, they wouldn't feel the need for a union. In leading people and teams over the years, this has been an important aspect of my management style.

Having a positive attitude is another important value in my life. Positive thinking opens the mind, makes things possible, creates energy. I hold the image that whatever is happening – to me personally, in a relationship, in the world – it could be worse. I also use (probably overuse) the expression 'it is what it is, so just deal with it.'

When I went back to school in my sixties, I realized there were issues with the older students in the program. They were struggling with technology, intimidated by the rigor of the academic program and the ease with which the younger students seemed to be adapting, and having trouble balancing school with

Attitude is a choice. A hundred times a day we can look at things one way or the other.

home life after so many years away from a classroom. It was possible to become negative and discouraged (some older students did; one dropped out). Instead, another woman and I formed an older student network. The school loved it; the older students had a support group; the community began to recognize our value.

Attitude is a choice. A hundred times a day we can look at things one way or the other. The only thing I know for sure is that there will be no opening, no chance for change or growth through a negative mindset.

Strategy

Marge: Strategy can be defined as the management of our leadership priorities. Strategy is the place where dreaming and execution come together to produce demonstrable results.

What is one of your own successful experiences in strategic leadership?

Marcia: Being strategic has changed for me. I have now become a proponent of letting things evolve while still maintaining strategic direction. When you create a mindset for yourself that is open and exploratory and pay close attention to what's happening around you, paths will evolve. When I retired I thought I had to do volunteer work. I tried three things that didn't work out. I then slowed it down and began to put out the word that I was interested in volunteering. A new nonprofit board opened up. A friend asked me to work on a project. I became aware that there were people in my life who needed my support. Sometimes you need to slow things down in order to speed them up.

As a leader, my primary focus was on diversity. I was successful in this area because I approached it like any other strategy. We had a plan; we had measurable goals, we linked developing a diverse workforce to compensation. As I move forward, I am sure I will develop more plans and more measurement, but I am also committed to taking things in life as they come rather than thinking there is one right way to do things. Everything about life after years of structure and hierarchy is about creating openness.

Change

Marge: The rate of change has accelerated and never been faster. Since the late 1970s, authors like Alvin Toffler, Daniel Bell and John Naisbitt have advanced theories of postindustrial societies and written about the complexity of multiple options and choices in a speeded up world.

How do you stay on top of change, be current and still feel in control of your life?

Marcia: Again, it goes back to attitude. The changing world can only be viewed with excitement and as an adventure. It's going to change whether I embrace it or fight it, so I have a choice: to go with the flow or to be miserable in the fight. The global economy and new technology are changing everything. Elders no longer enjoy the power of experience. Young people communicate without talking. Communication is instantaneous. It all must be approached with humor and a sense of exploration.

The funniest one for me is communicating with my children. No more telephone; only text. If they are interested in something I say, they get back to me in

It is hopeful to know that we can keep going and growing while using and refining the appreciative approaches we developed over the years.

minutes. If there is no interest, I hear nothing. At first it was driving me crazy. Now I kind of like it. I always know where they stand on issues and if I don't like the silence I can always send another text. On change and technology, there really is no choice – got to go with it. However, I do have concern about how people get valued and how we figure out what's really important to them in this new world.

So we wonder, how does one continue to evolve as an appreciative leader ? Appreciative Leadership is almost a calling. It is hopeful to know that we can keep going and growing while using and refining the appreciative approaches we developed over the years.

We need Appreciative Leadership now more than ever. Appreciative leaders are well positioned to reinvent themselves and the future.

Appreciative Leadership is not a way of leading as much as it is a way of living.

Because appreciative leading is so natural to Marcia, she was an enthusiastic early adaptor of AI in an international corporation. When I was approached by Avon to help 'solve the problem' of too few women in senior positions, we turned the issue from attacking the problem to exploring a desired topic: men and women working together in teams. Harvard Business School has written up the Avon case and it is available on line.2

Talking with Marcia has lead to considering an updated version of the Appreciative Leaders book. While leadership has many constants, there are new thoughts and processes to be explored.

After all, teaching is foundational to leadership and there is much more to learn and to teach.

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2 'A Case Story of Avon Mexico' by Marge Schiller in *Focus of the Appreciative Inquiry: Gender plus More*. The abstract for the article can be found at http:/ /appreciativeinquiry. case.edu/practice/bibAiStoriesDetail.cfm?coid=13570

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The Daily Disciplines and Practices of an Appreciative Leader

ABSTRACT
Leading in today's world asks a lot more than just knowing traditional business elements of finance, marketing, and quality. In order to lead the organization of the 21st century we need more. The practices described in the following article may provide some food-for-thought as a set of disciplines for the man or woman at the top.

In today's world it takes a lot more to succeed than knowing how to manage the financials or having a specific knowledge about the business area you are working in. Of course leaders need to know 'their stuff' – their markets, the financials – on top of which they are expected to master other elements as well. I am listing these elements, which I believe are important for today's appreciative leaders, as a set of disciplines, or practices.

They are in no specific order; in my daily practice they are equally important. I have found that being aware of these practices – and practising them – has helped me greatly in coping with today's hectic society. They also provide me with anchors that help me see the role of leaders in today's organizations, which is changing from the man or woman at the top who knows it all – or at least knows a lot – to the man or woman who is facilitating the organization to become its best, realizing its full potential!

The practice of appreciating
From a perspective that I know that I don't hold the absolute truth, I look at what is present and what is being presented by others. This includes the perspectives as offered by the larger stakeholder community, including suppliers, customers and the community we live and work in. Truly appreciating what is, and what is being offered by others, often asks me to put my own ego aside, especially when I'm presented with a perspective that is different from the one I normally have.

The practice of courage
With the practice of courage I consciously try to explore new ways of working, learning and cooperating with others. This way I enter the space of co-creation and expose myself to potentially strange, completely new ideas. As long as I embark on these co-creation efforts from my own sense of purpose, I often find these efforts stimulating and rewarding.

It requires a very conscious mind to focus on what is really important to you.

Building in moments of reflection has helped me greatly to understand situations better.

The practice of humility

Knowing that you don't know. In today's complex, rapidly changing society I'm aware that there is so much I don't know. Whenever I engage in a conversation with employees, customers, suppliers or others I realize that I bring my part to the table, but what others bring to the table is of equal importance. I find the moments where I'm aware of the fact that we are leaving behind the adage 'Knowledge is Power' and are moving into the space of 'Shared Knowledge provides Strength' provide me with energy.

The practice of discipline

Of the five practices mentioned here, I find this practice probably the most challenging, the reason being that it requires a very conscious mind to focus on what is really important to you – your dream – and then follow that dream, taking into account the other practices. For me this practice also means the challenge of realizing what is important to me, and what is not. And in order to stay clear I've developed a daily – weekdays, that is – discipline to do a series of activities (workout, yoga and meditation) that will help me 'empty' my mind. That way I manage to keep room to practise the other disciplines and to keep my purpose – my dream – in focus.

The practice of reflecting

Over the last couple of years I've come to realize that key to leading – today I talk about facilitating rather than leading – an organization is my ability to reflect on what is happening in our organization and the world around us. High demands are placed on us, when it comes to keeping up with the developments in the world around us. I find it easy to get caught up with the operational issues I face daily. I also find that building in moments of reflection has helped me greatly to understand situations better and to really live the disciplines described above.

If you reflect a moment on each of these disciplines, you will realize that it is no simple task to live them. I can, however, assure you that if you spend some time every day to grow your skill in mastering each of them you'll see two things happening. Firstly, the community you work with will greatly appreciate the openness and space that you provide; and secondly, you will start to feel a greater balance in your own life.

Back to Table of Contents

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New Leaders

How Conflict Transforms Into Distributed Leadership, Producing Organizational Fitness

ABSTRACT

A solid AI process supports extraordinary people. They discover a new idea of distributed leadership and make it theirs. Engagement grows, and builds a burning desire among the employees to support the group as a whole. As an outcome the organization becomes fit, improves its processes design with the contribution of diverse stakeholders and boosts its business indicators.

Starting at the end

Massimo stood up and asked for the microphone. While looking intensely at his colleagues (sales people), his boss and everyone else, he said: 'we must realize that our friends in the warehouse, and the others who drive our trucks every day, 70 people … have some damn hard problems and we have been ignoring them! It is about time we do something with them!'

Massimo's public comment triggered a deep change in the organization. That day we met a new leader: one who can listen, who can bring forward difficult issues, who calls himself accountable; who supports those who are in need; who connects people with reality and with other people. One who takes personal risks.

This is the story of the process that allowed awareness such as Massimo's to emerge, which set the tone for new ways of understanding the deep meaning of 'leadership'. Massimo lit a spark of understanding about how people could all work together.

Pineda Carni S.p.A is an Italian organization working in the high quality meat and related food products industry.

Does our customer trust us?

During my first meeting with the CEO, Mr. Pineda, we developed this shared understanding: that the organization was healthy and profitable, but growing at such a pace that relationships and collaboration were being put under a strain. The strain was showing in increasing internal conflict, mostly between sales people on one side, and truck drivers and warehouse workers on the other. The organization's customers were starting to lose their trust because service had been deteriorating.

'The employees asked questions, and manifested doubts'.

That day we met a new leader: Massimo lit a spark of understanding about how people could all work together.

I explained the basis of Appreciative Inquiry, the process I had in mind (see the figure below) and the typical outcomes. These people had no previous experience of participatory processes or collective conversation with the 'whole system in the room'. But they trusted our ideas and stories of past achievements.

Working against suspicion
We held an introductory meeting with all 140 people belonging to the organization, who were curious and ready to start. Yet the majority of them had no trust in external support (us), because everyone was aware of a previous, negative experience with consultants at a firm they were connected with. Everybody knows everything in a small town. This was an interesting challenge for us.

We and the CEO explained that we were going to work with them, and for them, in a participatory process. Everyone was encouraged to offer the most genuine perspective, be it agreeable or not. We wanted the truth. The employees asked questions, and manifested doubts, but they sincerely promised to trust the process and support it.

In the following days we had informal individual conversations with 25 people, belonging to every department and every hierarchical level. These conversations sparked a wider, informal organizational conversation about our work and ourselves. The most important outcome at this point was that we managed to grow trust in the process and in us, and their leaders. During those days employees kept sharing with us, consistently, more and more positive comments: 'we like your approach', ' I think this is going to do good for all of us; people are appreciating your work here'.

Conversation with the bosses
A 'conversation with the bosses' during the first of two days included the CEO and his seven top managers – a well functioning team of tough, action-oriented guys capable of open difficult conversations – in a supportive atmosphere.

The inclusion of employees in the conversation was going to engage them, with passion, in the development of sustainable solutions.

During the session we co-designed the process that was to come. In the meantime, as we wanted, they went through a few aha moments. The learning was:

• It was much better for them to encourage open comments and contributions from the employees, (however disagreeable they could be);
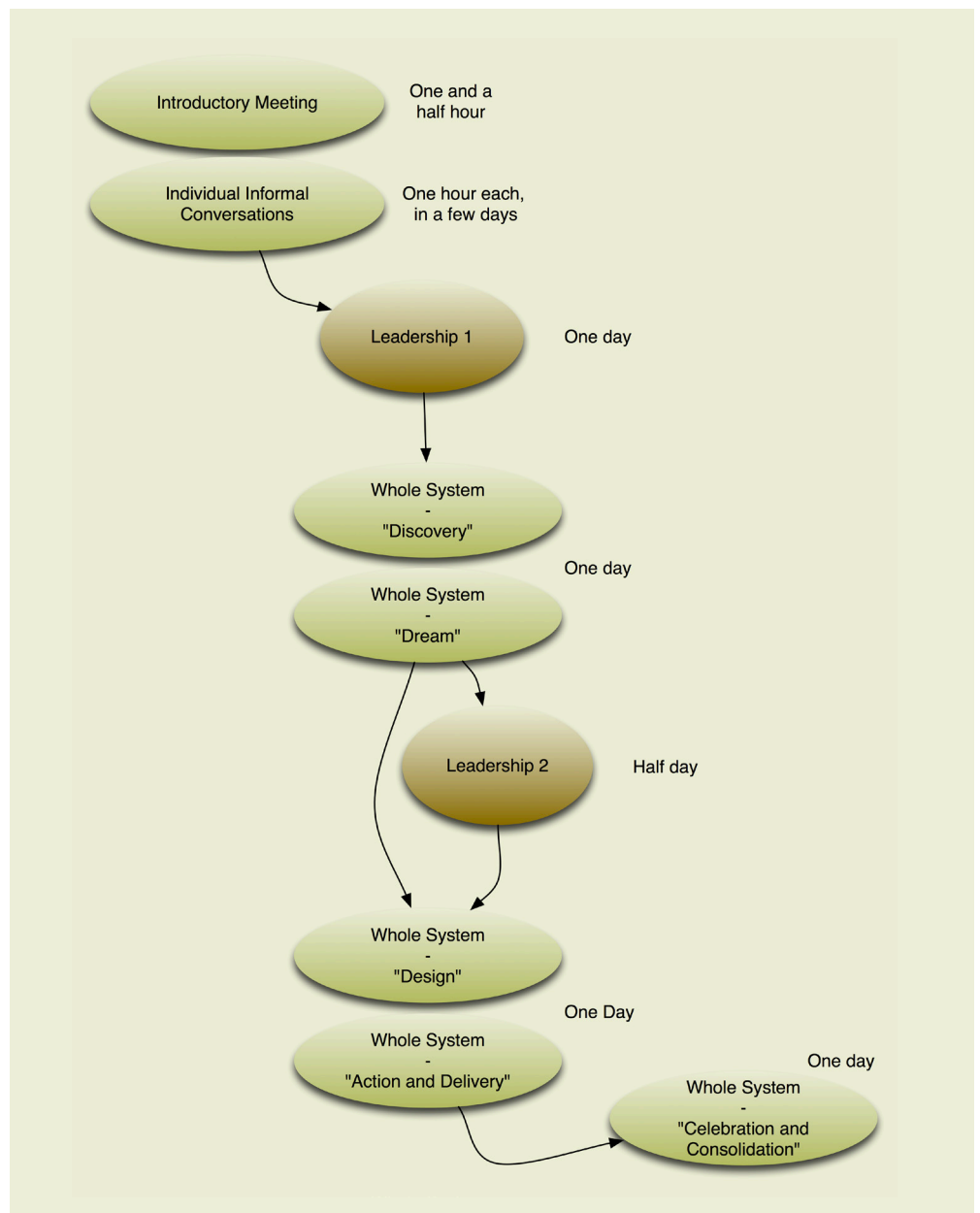
• The inclusion of employees in the conversation was going to engage them, with passion, in the development of sustainable solutions.

• They were up to the challenge.

Their comments were: 'this is going to be a good habit for ourselves … you know … when we meet we could speak more frankly … '.

Figure 1: The whole process
www.mariogastaldi.com

Everyone engaged in long, deep conversations.

They learned they could work and coordinate together successfully, regardless of previous conflict.

Whole system: stories of success and visions of the future
Employees' new experiences in relating to each other

We facilitated the event as the first part of an AI Summit, with 55 people representing the whole system. We launched appreciative interviews around the usual questions related to individual and team qualities and achievements. Everyone quickly engaged in long, deep conversations.

Afterwards, the whole group enjoyed the narration of the most positive experiences in the organization. It was clear that people were starting feeling part of the same whole in ways unexperienced before. The pride, engagement, energy, the looks of understanding people were exchanging, the clear sense of gratification they showed, the enjoyment, were all proofs of new shared feelings and connections.

In the afternoon, groups made up of people who belonged to different departments reflected on the following scenario: 'We are in 2018. Our business is awarded "The most successful business of the year" prize by the *Sole 24 Ore* (most important economic newspaper in Italy). Tell the story.'
We asked them to create and perform sketches. The task, we knew, could be somewhat challenging. Still the dominant mood was extraordinary, and every group managed to create amusing sketches.

People in groups achieved two outcomes:

• They learned they could work and coordinate together successfully, even under some pressure, regardless of possible previous conflict. Conceiving and playing a sketch that had to be entertaining for the others is difficult. We spent the afternoon laughing like kids, while the focus of every sketch and conversation was totally on the organization.

The social paradigm was shifting. There was a deep transformation taking place.

The group articulated the Provocative Statement

• People started looking at each other showing new deep connections. All this became apparent in the way people celebrated, together, while getting applauded for their acting performance. Also, at a coffee break, one of them, euphoric, joked: 'Hey it's good I played with them … now I know they actually are nice people!' He meant it.

At the end of the day, the whole group designed the following provocative statement:

'We are united and determined. We learn every day, as individuals and as a group, how to support each other and the business. We are excited with our work and strive to improve it, make it profitable and sustainable. We thrive with our customers, and they deeply trust us'.

The most meaningful outcome of the day was in the process and the renewed bonds it created. The social paradigm was shifting. Most of them were in a state of collective connection, well-being, and high spirits. There was a deep transformation taking place. Nevertheless it was clear we were not done yet.

How do we go about working on the difficult issues?
One week later we had the second part of the summit: one day. People were extraordinarily happy to meet again; the atmosphere was rich with energy, expectations and renovation. The group articulated the Provocative Statement in 'Strategic and Organizational Goals'.

Some eight tracks took shape: ranging from 'organizational process', to 'sales development' ('customer happiness' as they coined it), 'internal communication', and 'how do we work together'. Our work for the day was to start innovating the design of the organization in the light of those perspectives, and to embark on the path to implementation.

This is the day when Massimo spoke as the debate had been becoming a bit heated. People working in the warehouse, still happy to engage in a genuine conversation, were asking attention for their work and some critical issues that had not ever been taken into consideration. After Massimo seized the microphone and offered his call for the whole organization to attend to these issues, people stared at him for a moment. Then it started.

In the past the competition had been conflict, manifest or hidden. Now the competition became about putting oneself in somebody else's shoes. People wanted to be as understanding as he had proved to be. People wanted to give back to him and others, and contribute solutions, giving something for the overall good.

Whole system: where is the party?
A Celebration and Consolidation Event was to be held 45 days after the second day of the summit. It was no surprise that everyone felt accountable as to achievements of some kind. What would the celebration have been about otherwise? We worked using a World Café format. We celebrated!

Outcome of the whole process
The outcomes belong to three intertwined areas:

Massimo, holding no leadership role, activated an awareness that everyone can 'speak' meaningful words.

Every single employee a great leader

Organizational Intelligence: new ways of interacting were learned, and became embedded in the culture and the system.
Some things were informal. People shared stories regarding coffee meetings and a growing easiness to meet and talk with anyone regardless of role, and indeed most of the organizational problem-solving, they said, was taking place 'on the fly'.

Others were formal and specific. They started a new habit: the monthly 'Interdepartmental Meeting', with managers plus one employee per department. Employees who took part in the first one shared with everyone that they 'had to' offer their views, and managers and CEO would listen genuinely. As a matter of fact that first meeting lead to some new organizational changes.

Many employees said they were starting to feel in more and more charge: 'We are becoming a little bit managers ourselves too,' one of them said, with clear happiness in his voice.

What was happening was that accountability was becoming more and more distributed, and peer-based. Massimo, holding no leadership role, activated an awareness that everyone can 'speak' meaningful words, and everyone can become accountable for supporting others in their effort.

The idea of leadership became more connected with the genuine engagement of those who do useful things for the group. These people started growing this mind-set, where a couple of months earlier they had been about finger pointing.

Engagement grew rapidly and it kept growing.

Organizational Design
One of the decisions that had been taken was to redesign the workflow through which orders where processed. A 'committee' was formed with twelve people: top and middle managers and employees, in charge of redesigning the process. So they did.

A new collaboration platform was implemented. Information about new orders became available promptly. Logistics improved and people working in the warehouse and truck-drivers experienced great relief.

Business Data
During the twelve months that followed:

• Revenue increased by 12%;

• Waste (perishable products) diminished by 14%.

• As a combination, gross margin increased by 17%.

• The complaints/deliveries ratio improved by 45%. Customers were happy.

Conclusion and Reflections
Some months later, we were having dinner at Mr. Pineda's house. In front of the fireplace, Costantino, one of the managers, said: 'We had antibodies to our

Mr. Pineda said 'I see the organization becoming more intelligent. People know what matters, people feel accountable to everyone else.'

troubles already, but could not see them. You helped all of us, as a group, in becoming able to see them, and put them to work.'

Mr. Pineda said 'I see the organization becoming more intelligent as a whole. People know what matters, people feel accountable to everyone else. People act and do. I am now thinking and working for the future; I feel I can rely on each single employee, each as a great leader, to create the present and build the premises for the future too.'

Insights and Learning
It is crucial that new collective habits become embedded in the organizational routines as outcomes of AI interventions. In order to make this happen, new habits have to be designed by the people, according to the principles and the learning that unfolds during the intervention. New ways of meeting with diverse participants are the example in this case.

Executives are to be involved at a deep level. They have to sponsor the process and participate, of course, but most of all they must be supported in order to develop their own awareness and self-confidence, to enable them to feel and behave in ways conducive to collective improvement within an AI process.

Consultants facilitate, engage and perform well when they are driven by a strong, heartfelt determination to help. When the determination is there, people perceive it and the impact of the intervention is significant. It matters as much as design and facilitation experience.

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Back to Table of Contents

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Applying Strengths and AI to Westin Hotels

ABSTRACT

A team of hotel employees took a break from the problem-solving approach to focus on their strengths and develop innovations. They developed a positive lens to view their business. An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit was followed by Design exercises to create new ways of interacting as a team and servicing their guests. Today, Delivering on the new ideas, The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa is experiencing improved leadership, engagement and guest satisfaction.

Strength-based Appreciative Inquiry for hospitality

When was the last time you wrote a thank you note to a hotel employee for a kindness they performed? And when was the last time you complained about the service you received? If you answered those questions like most people, you can understand why the hospitality industry practices a relentless focus on the negative. Hospitality professionals expect guests to love their hotels and be wowed by fabulous service, but when they don't, they launch into action. They do not normally waste too much time patting themselves on the back for all of the happy customers. But when a customer is less than satisfied, they want to know what mistakes were made, how to repair the damage done to rebuild guest loyalty, and how to learn from mistakes to ensure that future guests have a better experience.

This 'problem-solving' approach to business is the cornerstone of many successful hotels and resorts and pushes them to continually improve their facilities, services, and guest interactions.

The downside comes when an organization spends so much time focusing on the mistakes that have been made, that they forget to also consider the things that they are doing extremely well.

Under the leadership and vision of General Manager Mark Spadoni, the team at The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa decided to change the way that the hospitality industry works. Over two days 100 front-of-house associates spent time focusing on their individual and collective strengths, and moving through the Discover, Dream and Design stages of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). (The first day focused on Discover and Dream, and a followup session a number of weeks later took them through the Design phase. Today they are working on Delivery.) As a result of these discussions, they discovered the core values that

When an organization spends so much time focusing on the mistakes that have been made, they forget to also consider the things they are doing extremely well.

Room attendant Andrea Page shares a story of kindness and gratitude.

make The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa one of the top resorts in the world and how they could build on them to create something even better.

Discovering character strengths

In order to prepare participants for this unique day of training, all the front-of-house associates took the VIA Character Strengths Survey to get a rank order of their individual strengths. Facilitators felt that preparation for the AI session with a strengths orientation would help create a unified dialog among employees, many of whom had never met or worked with each other before. Mark Spadoni reported that just taking the test changed the way associates interacted with each other and thought about the work that they do. By introducing a vocabulary of strengths and encouraging dialogue around strengths, a foundation was established for the AI process that followed.

Collective strengths as a precursor to AI

Before we began the Discover phase, we had employees post their individual strengths around the room, so they could see the collective strengths of the group:

As the chart below indicates, gratitude, honesty, fairness, humor, hope (optimism), and a capacity to love and be loved were the top strengths of the team at The Westin Savannah Harbor.

These strengths indicate an outward focus (a concern for the wellbeing of others) and are more heart-oriented (tied to emotion) as opposed to head-oriented strengths (tied to logic and rationality.) In other words, this was a very loving and compassionate group of associates. These strengths were evident throughout the day's discussion.

### Stories of the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa at its best

Associates shared stories with each other describing The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa at its best. Two particularly poignant stories of leadership came out of the day. Room attendant Andrea Page told the story of how she noticed there were children in the room she was cleaning. Having children at home of about the same age, Andrea decided to leave notes for the children even though she had never met them in person. In return, they would leave her notes as well. As the family was departing, Andrea finally met the children and told of the warm reception she received: 'The guest told me how important it was and how special it made them feel for me to do this (leaving notes for her children).'

In another powerful story, one woman told of how she waited on one couple a number of days in a row. One day, the woman was dining alone and she took the time to ask if her husband was alright. As it turned out, he was very sick and Caroline decided to send soup up to his room. The couple was very touched and conveyed their deep gratitude for her thoughtfulness.

The best possible future of The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa

The ideas that came from the Dream portion of the Summit ranged from technology improvements such as computerized guest rooms and remote check-in capabilities, to additional services such as an annual carnival and water sports activities, to an extended experience that taps into the unique location on nearby Hutchinson Island including an arrival port for cruise ships, local nature tours and an expanded golf course.

Figure 1: Collective Strengths: Results based on associates of The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa.
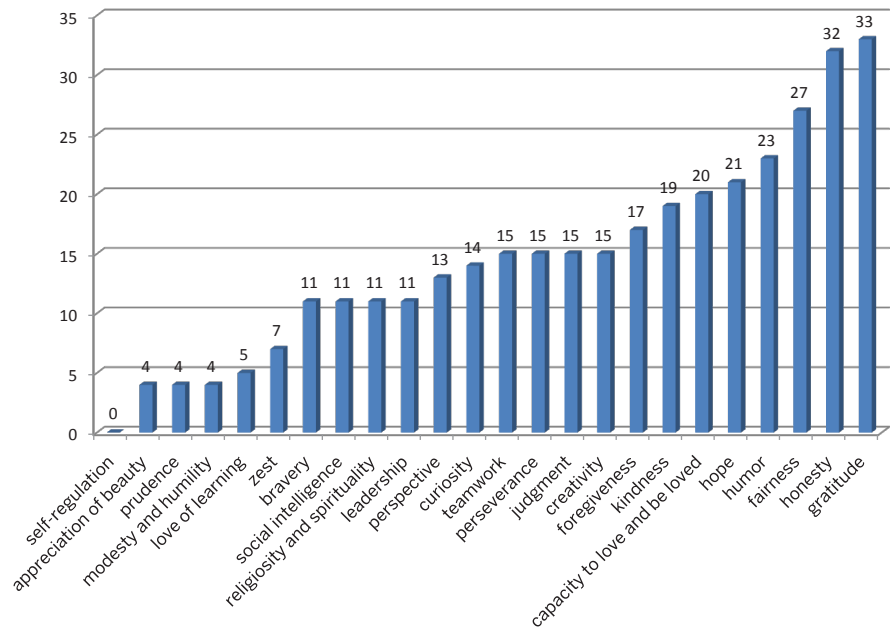
Leaders emerged when associates were challenged to express their vision of the future in a creative way. The most compelling moment was when the hotel limo driver created an original rap song which projected that the next score on Starwood's employee engagement survey (the 'Star-wizzle,' as it was referred to in the song) would be a perfect 10! The positive emotion created was palpable, but it was the fact that the leadership was coming from someone who did not have the 'seniority' or 'rank' in the organization that was most surprising.

Caroline noticed one day that the guest's husband wasn't there to join her

Designing the future: high touch over high tech

Although many ideas that came from the first day were technologically oriented, it was important for this group to also think about innovation that gets at the core of the business: hospitality, the art of taking care of people. The hospitality business is based on a great deal of person to person interaction, so a second day was scheduled for innovations that are not only high tech, but high touch.

At the second meeting, which occurred a few weeks after the first, the management team at The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa came together again to brainstorm specific ways to build on the dreams from the first session, to enhance the experience for both guests and associates in Westin Hotels and Resorts. Jeremy McCarthy from Starwood's corporate headquarters, who facilitated the second session, divided the group into five Design teams, each focusing on a different aspect of positive psychology and how employees could positively change the hotel. Those topic areas were:

1. The power of positive questions

2. Strengths and virtues

3. Paradox of choice

4. Peak end theory

5. Gratitude

People enjoyed the diversity of the group allowing managers, supervisors and line associates to all work and interact together.

Ryan Mello from the golf team shares a story of curiosity and compassion.

It is evident by the ideas that emerged that thought leaders in the organization were emerging as well.

All of the groups came up with innovative ideas to transform the business. The strengths and virtues group, for example, suggested an 'experience engineer' to begin getting to know guests prior to arrival to help craft their experience around their interests. As another example, the gratitude group developed an intervention for employees: for the associate-of-the-month nominations, the nominators would write a letter to the nominee. During the ceremony, they would read the letter directly to their colleague expressing their admiration. The benefit of having some time between the two AI sessions gave even more space for designing a compelling future for the hotel.

From one leader emerges many

In addition to the ideas mentioned above, there was an empowerment created from the very first part of the AI process that clearly continued to the second session. At the beginning of this process, it was clear that Mark Spadoni, the general manager, was leading the charge and guiding the employees along with the facilitators. What emerged after the first day was the empowerment of a sea of leaders. While some of the suggestions for what one thing people would change were small but impactful (i.e. 'Tell my team how much I appreciate them each day.' And 'I can start putting a special mint on every room service tray when delivering an order') other larger outcomes emerged. Inspired by the AI session, the spa team took it upon themselves to organize a charity event for women with breast cancer. They were doing something they were interested in and using their strengths in a positive way for the community.

Because, collectively, gratitude was one of their top strengths, another group of employees created a gratitude board. They put it in an employee area of the hotel where associates could post notes for other team members whom they wanted to express gratitude towards. This initiative began with the employees and the AI process gave them the inspiration and the autonomy to do it.

Outcomes

The associates' comments after the event were extremely positive. Participants appreciated learning about their strengths and discussing them both individually as a team. Imagining the best possible future of The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa was both fun and inspiring for them to do as a group. One participant wrote: 'I was not sure how much longer I would be here. But all the ideas of the Westin's future made me very excited.' People enjoyed the diversity of the group allowing managers, supervisors and line associates to all work and interact together.

The spa team had significant outcomes as well. The spa manager, Cindi Moreno, developed processes to implement positive psychology. This evolved into the spa team spending more time together and now they recognize the positive, rather than focusing on the negative, in each other.

'Our Guest Satisfaction scores are increasing. Spa associates are focused on the guests' experience and we spend more time surprising and delighting our customers on a regular basis. The spa Starvoice scores have improved from the high 80s into the 90s. There is a level of communication now that was not in the spa before.' On a more subjective level, she says the energy has changed

'We just seem to be better focused when we orient to the positive.' Mark Spadoni, General Manager, The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa

in the spa from a year ago. Associates are more upbeat and this enhances their interactions with the guest. 'What started out as required has become part of our spa culture.'

The hard data from the hotel at large seems to support the anecdotal evidence as well. This hotel is already operating at an elite level with associate engagement scores of 87 out of 100 and a guest satisfaction index of 8.58 out of 10 (OSAT). Amazingly, since the first day of AI, the associate engagement scores and the guest satisfaction scores both showed signs of increasing.
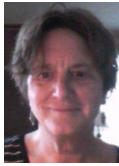
Taking it to the next level
The ideas generated in the design session also have the potential to greatly improve both employee engagement and guest interactions. Interestingly, most of these 'innovations' are zero cost to implement and yet could provide a competitive advantage. The two keys to the success of the session were the focus on strengths and giving ownership to all of the emerging leaders in the hotel.

First, giving employees a language around strengths and a focus on what their individual strengths were helped to orient them to the AI process. And second, there is a great deal of value in the fact that these ideas came from the team on the property, which has the passion and the energy to bring many of these ideas into reality.

The team is now focused on implementing the ideas that were created and they are excited about the possibilities. Nancy London, the senior vice president of the Westin Brand, is interested in what has been taking place and is planning a visit in a couple of months to see what progress has been made as they begin to deliver on their new vision. There is a chance that some of the AI process or some of the ideas that were generated by this group could become new brand differentiators for Westin Hotels and Resorts in the future.

'From me, this is an evolution in progress. We just seem to be better focused when we orient to the positive and when we are grateful for what we have versus what we do not have or what we are doing wrong. This was so true following 9/11[1] and the genesis of our...give backs to the community over the past nine years. Team building has been more oriented to strengths than consensus as well.' Mark Spadoni, General Manager, The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa

1 The aeroplane disasters perpetrated by terrorists that took place in the United States in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC on September 11, 2001.

Lisa Kimball

is president of Plexus Institute and designs strategies to engage stakeholders in organizational, cultural and behavioral change processes. Plexus, a nonprofit social enterprise applying ideas from complexity science, has been working with hospitals to apply Positive Deviance methodology to the elimination of hospital-acquired 'superbug' infections.
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The Leadership 'Sweet Spot'

ABSTRACT

How can a leader contribute their energy and vision without dominating a project? Hospital leaders faced this wicked question in a patient safety initiative designed for high engagement of front line staff. While some leaders had difficulty letting go, others failed to provide essential elements of support. Coaches identified seven strategies in that 'sweet spot' where leaders create space for distributed ownership while, at the same time, use their status to contribute in positive ways.

Where can a leader contribute energy and vision to an initiative without dominating it?

What's the right balance between providing direction and leaving room for others to define it?

How can a leader step back to invite others to take the lead without becoming disengaged?

These are the wicked questions we faced when coaching appreciative leaders as part of an ongoing multi-year initiative using high engagement processes to involve everyone from front line hospital staff to top executives in preventing transmission of superbug infections in more than a dozen hospitals in the US, Canada and Latin America. It is estimated that nearly 100,000 people develop invasive, medication-resistant infections in the US each year, resulting in approximately 19,000 deaths. Of these infections, about 86 percent are healthcare-associated. Typically, hospitals attack this problem with educational campaigns aimed at making sure everyone knows what 'best practices' they should be doing to avoid transmissions, with very little progress.

In 2006, Plexus Institute received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to explore an alternative change-methodology based on the insight that knowledge alone doesn't change behavior. We observed that the typical top-down approaches don't work. Although some problems can be solved with new technology or breakthroughs in medical practice, many problems turn out to be simple, in the sense that changes in how caregivers do basic things – like hand washing – turn out to make the critical difference. Everyone 'knows' which practices keep that from happening but few hospitals have figured out how to get everyone to comply with these practices consistently.

A diversity of people need to be engaged to solve the problem.

Where do you find MRSA in Hospitals?

Everywhere!

Plexu Institute

Positive deviance

One of the core elements of our initiative was *positive deviance*, an appreciative process that starts by going to the front lines and learning what is already working in key areas. For example, at Albert Einstein Medical Center, a patient escort developed a unique method of disposing of his soiled gloves and gown. The escort figured out that by quickly sliding out of the gown, inverting it, folding it tightly and stuffing it into a glove, he was able to compress the potential biohazard into a wad the size of a baseball prior to proper disposal, thereby eliminating it as a transmission threat. The technique has since been adopted by others throughout the facility. In the past, this 'unusual suspect' wasn't included as part of the infection control team.

We needed to find ways to elicit ideas about how to reduce barriers and make it easier for the people doing the work to take initiative to experiment with new strategies.

To do that, we needed appreciative leaders who would listen to staff and be open to learning from them about what works. First, we talked to leaders about stepping back to make space for others to generate ideas and take leadership for implementing them. A few leaders had difficulty letting go of their familiar role of telling people what to do. To our surprise, a bigger problem was leaders who 'got' the idea that they needed to create a more bottom-up process but thought that meant staying away from the initiative all together.

It's not about ...	It's all about ...
Telling everyone what to do	Inspiring people to act
Providing instructions about how to do things	Listening to people's ideas
Designating who will be responsible	Inviting volunteers to get involved

Showing up can be the most important thing a leader does.

The coaches on the project identified seven strategies that are in that 'sweet spot' where leaders focus on creating space for maximum engagement while, at the same time, manifesting the positive power of leadership energy:

Show up
Showing up might be the most important thing you can do. It's great when an executive opens a meeting by welcoming participants and saying something positive about the effort. But it makes a stronger point when they actually stay after their speaking part is over and participate in the whole meeting.

Demonstrate that you value and respect what other people are doing by simply being there. Making a little time in your schedule shows that what they're doing matters enough for you to make time. That's probably your most valuable asset. Leaders send a powerful message by being there to listen. During one volunteer meeting, a hospital CEO actually took the magic marker and captured ideas being generated by staff on the chart paper himself. Participants reported this made them feel that he valued what they were saying enough to document it. There could be no better thousand words than that image, letting people know that there was a leader who really valued what they were doing and saying and saw his role as allowing and actively supporting them to work on the problem.

Let people know of your interest and reward and support others who do the right thing.

Say yes
Word travels fast in most organizations. When a leader can approve an idea generated by staff early on in the project – even a relatively small one – it creates buzz. Have your antennae out to notice simple ideas that emerge early in an initiative and find ways you can use your resources to support them.

For example, van drivers who drove patients from the long term care facility to the hospital for tests and appointments were included in discussions about stopping infection transmissions. Now that they were aware of the importance of regular hand-washing they realized that they didn't have a convenient way to do it and asked if they could have some gel dispensers in the vans. This relatively cheap and easy idea was approved by the CFO and the dispensers were installed in a matter of weeks.

Word got around that it was now worth contributing ideas because leaders were ready to take action. Suddenly the story that was getting told around the organization was not one about 'why nothing ever happens around here'. Instead,

Someone on the staff had the guts to tell the CEO to put a gown and gloves on. That is significant change in a culture where people don't dare do that if they think someone is more powerful than they are.

it was a story about someone who had an idea, made a suggestion – and saw it implemented.

Spend your social capital

Leaders have relationships with all kinds of key stakeholders: the board, the management team, their peers, various community leaders. You can do things to help get others on board to contribute positively, or at least get out of the way of the momentum building around a new idea. Let people know of your interest and reward and support others who do the right thing. This might mean asking them to make it possible for their team members to spend time participating in an initiative; or reaching out so that others feel included. Engage with your leadership team to figure out how to make room for new approaches within competing priorities.

Dr. Michael Gardam, a medical director at University Health Network in Toronto, Canada points to one of the CEOs he is working with as a good example. This CEO acknowledges that he is not an expert in patient care, so he trusts his frontline staff to be the experts. He sees his job as helping them bring about improvement; he helps makes connections with needed resources for them and backs them up when solutions they generate need his support.

Share stories

Make sure you have channels of communication set up so that you hear the juicy success stories, big and small, that emerge from the community and can tell them yourself – to spread the essence of what is happening. One great example happened when a hospital CEO began telling what he thought was a negative story. He had gone after hours to visit a patient in an isolation room where everyone who entered was supposed to wear gloves and gowns to prevent infection transmission.

He started to go in without doing that because he was in a hurry, not noticing the sign indicating that precautions were needed. A nurse stopped him saying, 'Wait! You can't go in there without wearing your gown and gloves!' He thanked the nurse for reminding him and let her help him put the gown on. When he first told the story he felt terrible because he had started to do the wrong thing.

On reflection, it was clear that this was a fantastically positive story. Someone on the staff had the guts to tell the CEO to put a gown and gloves on. That is significant change in a culture where people don't dare do that if they think someone is more powerful than they are. So he was encouraged to tell that story often and widely, sending the message, 'here, we are going to remind each other no matter where we are in the hierarchy'.

Synch-up scattered programs

There are all kinds of things going on at any given time in an organization: different initiatives, programs and technologies. People in leadership roles usually have a meta-level view of what is going on, while many people in the trenches feel that each new thing is an unrelated add-on. One of the things leaders can do is to help people appreciate the relationships between multiple initiatives so they develop a more integrated view. Leaders can ask people appreciative questions helping them make connections, such as 'How does your program complement what people in the other department are doing?' or 'How could you leverage the synergies between what you and others are doing?' It is

Share stories

important for leaders to avoid creating a dynamic where people feel that they have to compete to be the leader's current favorite. Instead, appreciative leaders add value by creating the space for people to make connections.

Sweat the small stuff

We know that many small actions can result in the big change effect desired. When leaders step aside from the role of leading by making large pronouncements from center stage, they sometimes find they have even greater impact through finding small ways to express their interest. At one hospital, the Resource Team wrote personal notes that the CEO signed and mailed to the homes to let staff members know that their work was appreciated. It didn't take much time but the fact that they were noticed and acknowledged made a big impression on staff and their families.

Suspend judgement

You've probably tried a broad range of options and activities in your organization. When you engage a more diverse group in conversation about a problem you will probably hear some old ideas and your first response may be: 'We've already thought of that and it didn't work.' But when you allow people to explore and develop ideas (unharmful ones), it will either emerge that fresh thinking opens up a workable possibility, or people will develop their own understanding of why something won't work, without losing energy for finding the solution. You will end up in a very different situation because people now have ownership of the strategy.

Pam Johnson, who led a large engineering group at a major computer company recommends: 'Give a broad remit and don't hedge with too many constraints. Then allow people to rise to the challenge.' Before he retired, Henri Lipmanowicz was on Merck's executive team and responsible for the corporation's operations on three continents. He reflects, 'I tried to avoid manipulating people. I worked hard to create safe spaces for sharing ideas, and to practice what I call "active honesty". It sounds obvious and simple but it really isn't, which is why so many leaders don't inspire trust. I believed that people would not trust me if I didn't first demonstrate by my actions that I trusted them. So I took risks by trusting the ideas of people around me.'

The leaders in these stories found people willing to take leadership roles everywhere at every level of the organization as part of a 'bottoms up' approach. But that didn't mean there was no role for people with 'position power' in the organization. Actually it was just the opposite! There is a large and important role for these organizational leaders. It's just a bit different from the one they have been used to, and the one for which they were trained.

Dr. Larry McEvoy, CEO of Memorial Health System in Colorado, believes it's critical for leaders to create opportunities for as many interactions as possible because the process of finding the sweet spot is a continuous one. 'I think we lurch daily from too much control to too little direction. It's an iterative process where we are constantly finding our center.'

 Back to Table of Contents

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is best known for her innovative applications of AI to organization culture change, strategic planning, merger integration, and large-scale transformation. In 1997 the American Society of Training and Development recognized her work with David Cooperrider with its International Award for Best Organization Culture Change of the year.
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Five Strategies of Appreciative Leadership

ABSTRACT

Appreciative Leadership is a relational and positive process; it is about turning human potential into positive power. The five core strategies discussed in this essay illustrate how to bring the best out of people, elevate performance and make a positive difference in organizations, communities and the world.

We have worked with dozens of leadership teams to help them introduce Appreciative Inquiry to their organizations and communities and to successfully use AI for significant transformation. In doing so, we have noticed that the leaders who chose AI as their vehicle for positive change have four things in common:
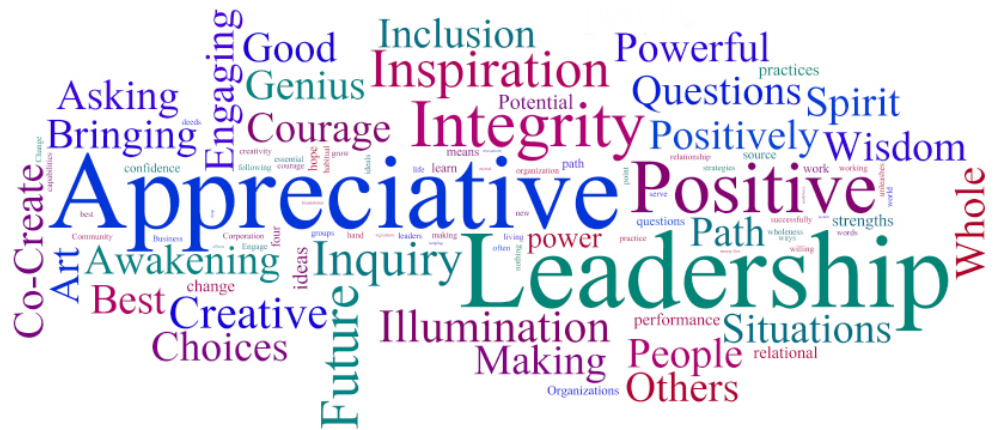
1. They are willing to engage with other members of their organization or community to create a better way of doing business or living.

2. They are willing to learn and to change.

3. They truly believe in the power of the positive.

4. They care about people, often describing the work of their organization or business in terms of helping people learn, grow and develop.

Appreciative Leadership: Five areas of relational practice

As a result of our work with these exemplary leaders, we became convinced that people and organizations could learn, grow and change through purposefully affirmative leadership processes. This led to our research and writing, and to the creation of our Appreciative Leadership Development Program, based on the following understanding of Appreciative Leadership.

Appreciative Leadership defined

'The relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world.'

Embedded in this definition are four formative ideas about Appreciative Leadership:

(1) It is relational;
(2) It is positive;
(3) It is about turning potential into positive power; and
(4) It has rippling effects.

Each of these four ideas represents a paradigm shift: a clear movement away from the habitual, traditional and individualistic command and control practices of leadership toward a new normal: the positive, socially generative principles, strategies and practices of Appreciative Leadership.

Five Strategies of Appreciative Leadership

The five core strategies of Appreciative Leadership point to key areas of relational practice. Each is a means by which Appreciative Leadership successfully unleashes potential and elevates positive performance.

1. The wisdom of inquiry – asking positively powerful questions. Appreciative questions are a ready source of positive power. All you have to do is ask and a wealth of information, ideas and knowledge unfolds. Positive questions are keys to treasure troves of best practices, success stories and creativity. They unlock positive emotions essential to high performance such as acceptance, validation, job satisfaction, confidence and courage. Positive questions are Appreciative Leadership's most powerful tools. They are compelling vehicles for empowerment, for fostering risk taking and for guiding value-based performance. They are the means to all learning, change and innovation.

2. The art of illumination – bringing out the best of people and situations. People's strengths, capabilities, hopes and dreams are a readily abundant yet frequently overlooked source of positive power. Unrecognized and very often underutilized, strengths are a deep well of potential waiting to be tapped. Appreciative Leadership puts strengths to work, transforming them from raw potential into positive results through the art of illumination.

3. The genius of inclusion – engaging with others to co-create the future. Inclusion – consciously inviting people to engage in co-authoring their future – is a foundational strategy for Appreciative Leadership, and an indispensable practice for unleashing the positive power of today's multicultural, multigenerational and multitalented workforce. Realities are crafted in relationship, through conversations and collaborations. In order for decisions and plans for the future to satisfy and serve diverse groups of people, all the

Figure 1: Getting Positive Results with Appreciative Leadership from "Appreciative Leadership" by Whitney et al.
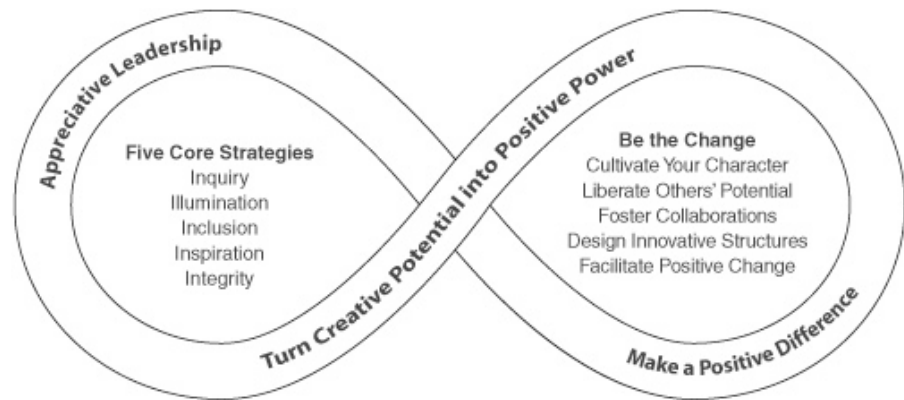
people whose future it is must be invited into relationship and included in dialogue and decision-making.

4. The courage of inspiration – awakening the creative spirit. Appreciative Leadership unleashes otherwise latent potential – great ideas, strengths, capabilities and skills – by inspiring creativity, confidence and hope for the future. Even when all the necessary resources are available, nothing changes and nothing of merit happens without inspiration. Inspiration opens people to the source of life that moves through and among us all. It gives people hope and courage to shed habitual ways of living and working and move in new, innovative and more life-affirming directions. Inspiration, hope and creativity – three essential ingredients for personal and collective transformation – go hand in hand.

5. The path of integrity – making choices for the good of the whole. Appreciative Leadership begins and ends with integrity. When you are on the path of integrity, people know it. They follow your ideas and ideals. They model their ways of working after yours. And they contribute their best to the ideals you put forth.

Integrity refers to a myriad of relational practices: honesty, transparency, moral and ethical conduct, speaking truth to power, making and keeping commitments, open communication, congruity of words and deeds, reconciliation, forgiveness and authenticity. All these notions point to the idea that integrity means wholeness. Appreciative Leadership stays on the path of integrity by making choices that serve the whole. Anytime your thoughts, words and deeds bring greater wholeness to people, groups, communities and organizations you are on the path of integrity.

Conclusion – Appreciative Leadership now
The world has changed. Approaches to leadership that served in the past do not address the needs of the 21st century. Appreciative Leadership does.

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Back to Table of Contents

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Jan Reed
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AI Research Notes
edited by Lena Holmberg and Jan Reed

AI Research Notes carries news of AI research developments. We'd like to make it as collaborative and appreciative as we can – we know that many of you are working and thinking about the relationship between academic research and AI, and that you have news, comments and questions which we'd like you to contribute.

In this section

• 'A comparative case study of appreciative inquiries in one organization: Implications for practice' by Gervase R. Bushe

• 'Impact of organization development interventions on human capital: a case study of Thailand Appreciative Inquiry Network' by Pinyo Rattanaphan

• 'Assessment of generative strategies in self-support groups in people affected by the Colombian armed political conflict' by Nelsy Johana Higuera-Pedraza, Jeimmy Aleider Orozco-Celis and Nelson Molina-Valencia

• 'An asset-based approach to the Romanian research-development and innovation system' by Steliana Sandu and Irina Anghel

• 'Appreciative supervision in social work: New opportunities for changing social work practice' by Stefan Cojocaru

• 'The NGOs, social constructors in the domain of occupying the labour force: The case of 'Ruhama' Foundation' by Floare Chipea, Florica Stefanescu, Simona Bodogai and Claudia Osvat

• 'Appreciative semiotic and hermeneutic practices in the analysis of ethnic minorities' by Antonio Sandu

In the next issue
In May 2011, we will be presenting more AI research developments. Would you like to comment? Or have ideas for coming issues? Please send suggestions and material to jreedhexham@gmail.com or lmholmberg@gmail.com!

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This month, AI Practitioner Research Notes contains a list of papers published in the journal *Revista de Cercetare Si Interventie Sociala* (http://www.rcis.ro/ro/section1/39-volumul-292010iunie.html) edited by Stefan Cojocaru from Alexandru Ioan Cuz University in Iasi, Romania. The papers show how AI can inform research in a number of ways, from deciding questions to choosing methodology. To download the papers, click on the links provided.

A comparative case study of Appreciative Inquiries in one organization: implications for practice

Gervase R. Bushe
Professor, Leadership and Organization Development, Segal Graduate School of Business, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada

Eight sites in a school district engaged in an Appreciative Inquiry into 'what do we know about learning?' This paper describes the AI intervention in detail and explores differences in each site which may explain differences in the level of change. The level of change did appear to be related to how generative the inquiries were, how well the Discovery phase was managed and the quality of Design statements that came out of the summits. Recommendations for AI practice are given.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_01.pdf

Impact of organization development interventions on human capital: a case study of Thailand Appreciative Inquiry Network

Pinyo Rattanaphan
Lecturer, Khon Kaen University, president, Thailand Appreciative Inquiry Network

AI Thailand (established 2007) aims to spread Appreciative Inquiry throughout Thailand. In the beginning, AI Thailand had 32 founding members from diverse backgrounds. They lacked, however, understanding of human capital in Appreciative Inquiry. The researcher employed action research for eight cycles during eight months in order to develop AI Thailand members' human capital. Organization Development Interventions implemented included: Appreciative Inquiry, appreciative coaching and knowledge management, and participants' human capital was developed.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_02.pdf

Assessment of generative strategies in self-support groups in people affected by the Colombian armed political conflict

Nelsy Johana Higuera-Pedraza
Jeimmy Aleider Orozco-Celis
Nelson Molina-Valencia
Psychologists, Pontificia Bolivariana University, Bucaramanga, Colombia

The paper presents research that aimed to assess the use of generative strategies in self-support groups in a population affected by the armed political conflict in Colombia. The results indicate that the intervention generated the observation and identification of resources, action planning, the search for new experiences, reflexivity and recognition of the novelty to transform conflict affectation. It concludes that through self-support groups, people transform the meaning of their experience by sharing stories and action resources for the future, which verifies the purposes of the generative approach.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_03.pdf

An asset-based approach to the Romanian research-development and innovation system

Steliana Sandu
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Romanian Academy, Institute of National
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Development and Innovation Department,
Bucharest, Romania

The authors outline many of the strengths and achievements of the Romanian Research Development and Innovation (RDI) system, depicting its positive trends, structures and mechanisms. Building upon ideas, opinions, studies and interviews of different representatives of the research, this approach was intended to encompass the appreciative contributions of the main stakeholders: universities, public and private research institutions, the business sector and public policy-makers. In this complex and rather rigid RDI system effective change can be brought about by individuals who possess the necessary power to transform their mind and attitudes, and to initiate and diffuse change. This might be a viable way to improve the RDI system's efficiency.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_04.pdf

Appreciative supervision in social work: New opportunities for changing social work practice

Stefan Cojocaru
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www.rcis.ro

The practice of social work focuses mainly on solving problems and reducing dysfunctions. This initiative consists in experimenting with appreciative supervision and identifying the potential differences between approaches. The results obtained in the practice of social work through the application of appreciative supervision underscore the advantages of this approach, which is capable of producing profound changes in the practice of social work. Two cases, similar in terms of the child's risk of abandonment, were chosen and managed differently, according to opposing views on supervision. The results showed that the desired changes could be brought about more easily using appreciative supervision.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_05.pdf

The NGOs, social constructors in the domain of occupying the labour force: The case of the Ruhama Foundation

Floare Chipea
Florica Stefanescu
Simona Bodogai
Claudia Osvat
Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University
of Oradea, Oradea, Romania

The Ruhama Foundation is a success story. This research study captures the main determinants of its success: the quality of the human resources, the strategic management performance and motivation of the organization's members. This gave rise to the centre 'Careers' which offers programs in self-knowledge and career guidance, as well as professional training or retraining. Our research, conducted in several stages and using various research methods and tools in the context of Appreciative Inquiry, decrypts the process by which the organization is discovered and rediscovers itself.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_06.pdf

Appreciative semiotic and hermeneutic practices in the analysis of ethnic minorities

Antonio Sandu
Mihail Kogalniceanu University, Iasi, Romania

This action research study presents the discursive strategy of socio-cultural action. Community is the space where the meaning of social reality is constantly renegotiated. Social pragmatics can be used to transform the social rhetoric of ethnic and multi-ethnic communities. Appreciative Inquiry's transformative method harnesses resources within the community by exploring the discourse level of positive experiences.

These papers cover a wide range of topics and issues and present AI research methodology in a number of situations. An interesting feature of these papers is the discussion about changes in practice, and the processes involved. These papers could be useful for researchers and practitioners regarding methods and strategies – even if the area under discussion is not their area of expertise.

http://www.rcis.ro/images/documente/rcis29_07.pdf

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August 2011

Appreciative Governance: The Principles and Practice
November 2011

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Back to Table of Contents

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AI Resources
edited by Jackie Stavros and Dawn Dole

AI Resources features a rediscovery of classic and new resources for your use. Resources will include list-serves, books, journal articles, book chapters, DVDs, websites, blogs, podcasts, etc. ... all in one place useful for learning more about AI to help with your consulting practice, internal work, teaching, training and extending your knowledge base and resources.
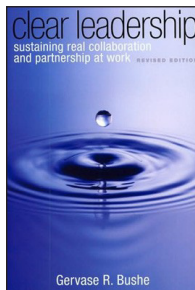
Editors' Note
The February 2011 issue of AI Resources focuses on appreciative and positive leadership. This month's resource column features seven books, two 'project packs' and a few articles from the AI Commons, and a book chapter by one of the editors directly related to this leadership topic. We are fortunate to have several published resources by this issue's contributors.

In the May 2011 issue, we will present scholarly books and resources available on the subject of Appreciative Inquiry. Please send any books or other resources dealing with the scholarship of Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Change to jstavros@comcast.net and info@taosinstitute.net.

Books on Appreciative Leadership
Clear Leadership: Sustaining Real Collaboration and Partnership at Work
Bushe, Gervase. (2010) Boston, MA: Davis-Black Publishers.
ISBN: 978-0-89106-382-7

This book takes a constructivist approach to leadership and looks at the skills required to help people learn from their collective experiences. The process of learning from collective experiences requires something quite different from conventional images of it. One of the four skill sets Clear Leadership identifies for building and sustaining high levels of collaboration is called the Appreciative Self. The Appreciative Self focuses on the best in people and systems to get more of that which is the foundation of Appreciative Inquiry. The Appreciative Self sees the potential in people and in systems, and by paying attention to that potential helps manifest it. In addition to the Appreciative Self, the book brings together detailed explanations of the skills of the Aware Self, Descriptive Self, and Curious Self to offer a practical path to organizational learning and collaboration at work.

Gervase Bushe's organization, Clear Leadership, has been offering courses in Appreciative Leadership and Change in North America, Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia for over 30 years. We encourage you to visit his website at http://www.clearleadership.com which has several articles on both Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership.
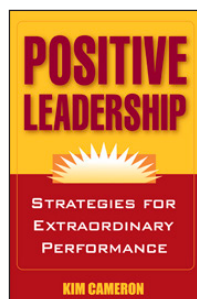
Positive Leadership: Strategies for Extraordinary Performance
Cameron, Kim. (2010) San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-57675-602-7

This book on positive leadership is unique in at least two ways. First, it explains strategies that can help leaders reach beyond ordinary success to achieve extraordinary effectiveness, spectacular results and positively-deviant performance. Helping leaders achieve outcomes that are remarkable is the objective. Second, it relies on validated findings from empirical sources. The leadership prescriptions it offers have been validated and proven successful across a variety of organizations and circumstances. This book helps leaders succeed by providing scientifically validated evidence in a simple and straightforward way.

In this book, Kim draws on what he and his colleagues have discovered about positively deviant performance. He describes examples of extraordinarily performing organizations in order to identify four interrelated leadership strategies that reach beyond the ordinary and achieve off-the-charts success. These strategies include creating positive climate, relationships, communication, and meaning. Kim lays out a proven process for implementing these leadership strategies and includes a self-assessment instrument and a guide to assist leaders in achieving remarkable success.

Kim Cameron is one of the founders of the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). The Center is a community of scholars devoted to energizing and transforming organizations through research on theory and practice of positive organizing and leadership. For more information visit http://www.bus.umich.edu/Positive/.
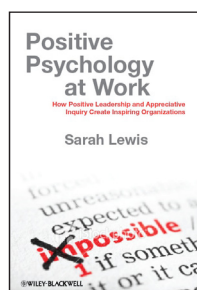
Positive Psychology at Work: How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations
Lewis, Sarah. (2011) Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 978-0470683200

This newest book brings the fields of positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry together for leaders and change agents with approaches to achieving organizational excellence and creating positive workplaces. The material is presented on specific organizational challenges to help readers find ideas relevant to their situation. This includes: engagement, performance, communication, decision-making, relationships and transformation. Case studies are included from across the globe. This book will be published 1 April 2011.

Appreciative Leadership: Building Sustainable Organizations
Ricchiuto, Jack, (2004) Designing Life Books. ISBN: 978-0966170351

Appreciative Leadership is an invitation to make a profound shift from a deficiency-based leadership model to an appreciative one. It is a wake-up call for leaders committed to creating organizations that inspire passions and engage strengths. Based on a Manifesto of 60 imperatives, the author suggests how organizations can transform their communities of work into sustainable cultures of authentic appreciation. It is a translation of asset and strength-based approaches, inspired by Appreciative Inquiry.
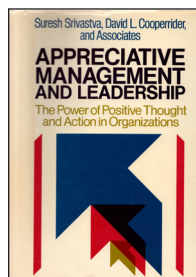
Appreciative Management and Leadership: The Power of Positive Thoughts and Action in Organizations
Srivastva, Suresh, Cooperrider, David, L. and Associates. (revised 1999) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, ISBN: 978-1-57675-602-7

This classic book offers a perspective on organizational management that will enable executives to unlock an organization's potential for creativity, innovation and collaboration. The authors of the fourteen essays demonstrate how appreciation – the act of recognizing and valuing all kinds of diversity – is the key to forging unity and purpose in an organization. They identify the special personal and leadership skills needed to cultivate an environment where managers work with and build on differences rather than denying their existence. This book was originally published in 1990.
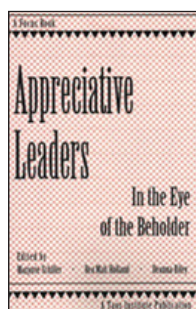
Appreciative Leaders: In the Eye of the Beholder
Schiller, Marge, Holland, Bea Mah, and Riley, Deanna. (2001) Taos Institute Publications. ISBN: 978-0-9712312-0-7

This 200-page volume presents a model of Appreciative Leadership based on twenty-eight interviews. These stories reveal the outstanding characteristics of appreciative leaders and their predominant behavioral attributes. The ways appreciative leaders engage in their daily practices are outlined in detail.

This book was written and supported by the Taos Institute to answer the question, 'What is an Appreciative Leader?' This month's issue of AI Practitioner has continued to fuel a conversation on an updated version of Appreciative Leaders. Why? While the development of leaders and the field of leadership has a long legacy or research and practice, in today's changing world, there are new leaders with new thoughts about leading in an appreciative and positive way. Marge Schiller believes 'teaching is foundational to leadership and there is much more to learn and to teach!'

The Taos Institute is a community of scholars and practitioners concerned with the social processes essential for the construction of reason, knowledge and human value. To learn more about social construction and Appreciative Inquiry, visit the Taos Institute web site: http://www.taosinstitute.net.

Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization
Whitney, Diana, Trosten-Bloom, Amanda, and Rader, Kae. (2010) New York: McGraw-Hill, ISBN: 0071714065
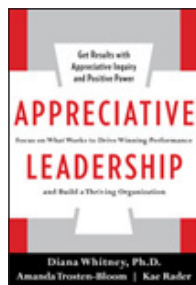
This book provides clear concepts, practical tools and five strategies that turn potential into positive power for extraordinary performance: Inquiry, Illumination, Inclusion, Inspiration and Integrity. Appreciative Leadership shows you how to fully engage your team through positive inquiry and open dialogue, so that everyone feels included, valued, inspired and motivated … and ready to work together to win. You'll learn simple tips on how to keep your team on track with a 'can-do' attitude.

This book was created based on more than a decade of research and training by Diana Whitney, Amanda Trosten-Bloom and Kae Rader who partnered with and studied people leading large-scale, long-term change initiatives using Appreciative Inquiry. They tracked patterns, which they subsequently validated and refined through qualitative research with participants in their Appreciative Leadership Development Program (ALDP), interviews and focus groups. One hundred interviews were conducted as part of the ALDP between 2003 and 2009. These interviews helped shape the five strategies in the book. Now, the book – along with the workshop from which it sprung – offers theory, stories and practical tools that enable leaders to unleash positive change and create a world that works for all.

For more information on ALDP workshop go to: http://www.positivechange.org/appreciative-inquiry-workshops/workshop-leader.html.

Online Resources related to Appreciative Leadership

The AI Commons has several resources which you may find helpful as you explore Appreciative Leadership. They have developed a 'Project Pack'. This consists of everything related to a large, ongoing project utilizing AI to explore a topic. Two such Project Packs available focus on 'Leadership at All Levels'. We hope you take some time to explore these.

Igniting Leadership at All Levels: Working Together To Ensure The Earth's Vitality – A Leadership Summit with the US EPA's Office of Research and Development

This Leadership initiative was dreamed, designed and executed by the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Research and Development, under the auspices of the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Management. The purpose of ORD's Leadership Initiative is to revitalize the workforce of over 2,000 scientists, engineers and administrative staff at a time in history which demands that we do more to protect human health and the environment. The urgency of our mission requires that ORD advance the science to better support environmental policy and regulatory safeguards. ORD began looking for innovative ways to enrich and enliven the organizational culture.

Visit: http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppEPAORD.cfm

Bold and Enlightened Naval Leaders at Every Level: Forging an Empowered Culture of Excellence

The Leadership Summit was held at the Naval Postgraduate School in December, 2001. The first of its kind, the Summit assembled over 260 people ranging from seaman to admiral and represented all backgrounds in the US Navy. The Leadership Summit was an application of a way to view and lead large-scale

change called a Large Group Intervention (LGI). Combining LGIs with the positive change approach of Appreciative Inquiry yielded a dynamic summit process for rapid, collaborative change. Hence, the Leadership Summit was aimed at leadership improvement and the United States Navy's system of leadership development, utilizing an LGI with Appreciative Inquiry to quickly get to decision points with input from all stakeholders. Visit: http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppNavy.cfm

Other articles and case studies available on the AI Commons related to Appreciative Leaders:

Leadership within the Forest Service – a Brief Case Story
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/toolsCasesDetail.cfm?coid=3520

A Conversation about Appreciative Leadership
Publisher: Performance Improvement Journal, Copyright 2010, Volume: 49, Issue: 3, Pages: 5-10
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/research/bibPublishedDetail.cfm?coid=13339

Appreciative Leadership, An Insider's Perspective on Changing Reality
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/AIPNov09intro.pdf

Please feel free to add your own articles, cases and stories from the field to the AI Commons website.
Visit: http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/join/easySubmit.cfm

Back to Table of Contents

Sallie Lee

For fifteen years, Sallie Lee, working through her consulting practice, Shared Sun Studio, has offered creative, practical processes for whole systems, serving as thinking partner, facilitator and strategist for client groups, training over 1000 people in AI. She has worked in Australia annually for ten years. Sallie lives in Asheville, NC.
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Dayle O'Brien

is an Australian OD practitioner introduced to AI whilst working with the ANZ Bank on their Breakout Team. Her success and affinity with AI inspired her to begin a consulting practice,
paint group, which is dedicated to bringing a fresh approach to Change and OD in Australia.
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About the May 2011 Issue

AI++: Innovations in AI through the Australasian Lens

The idea for the issue grew from a conversation with Anne Radford about Sallie's experience of working with Australian and New Zealand consultants and organizations over the past ten years. Sallie has found the professionals she has worked with to be some of the most innovative she has encountered anywhere.

When we saw the publisher of AI Practitioner, Anne Radford, in 2009 at the AI Conference in Nepal, she asked us to guest edit a 2011 issue of the AIP on AI evolution and innovation in Australia and New Zealand.

Anne was curious about our observations on the way many Australian practitioners combine AI with other methodologies and approaches, to form what we began calling AI ++ (Plus-Plus). One of Sallie's theories is that these Southern Hemisphere countries have developed cultures of continuous learners who continually invite the new. They bring together different approaches in new and exciting ways.

Dayle's additional theory is that the Antipodes have 'benefited' from being later adopters of AI when the worlds of Positive Psychology, Strengths and AI (and others) are in conversation, exploring the next frontier and continually inviting new ways of learning and doing. Our curiousities have been sparked and the possibilities keep unfolding.

In this issue, practitioners describe where they are experimenting with AI itself, with new thinking about the principles and practice of AI, and with how AI combines with other OD applications and thinking to make a real difference in organizations in Australia and New Zealand.

While we already have very good submissions, if you think your experience just has to be read by a wider audience, please contact us now. We are looking for:

1. Actual cases of innovating AI applications: how and why they were chosen

2. Research being conducting about AI and other strength-based methods

3. Reflections on the field and practitioner's experiences in Australasia

Back to Table of Contents

IAPG Contacts and AI Practitioner Subscription Information

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Purpose of AI Practitioner
This publication is for people interested in making the world a better place using positive relational approaches to change such as Appreciative Inquiry.

The publication is distributed quarterly: February, May, August and November.

AI Practitioner Editor/Publisher
The editor/publisher is Anne Radford. She is based in London and can be reached at editor@aipractitioner.com