

Appreciative Inquiry



Introduction

Appreciative Inquiry is a new perspective of thinking, especially helpful for managers who need to motivate their team members regularly in order to extract their best output. If all the members in a team know what they are supposed to be doing, then there is no loss of motion due to confusion or uncertainty. Instead, a motivated individual will be in action, and a team full of motivated individuals will feed off of each other and help keep that motivation going.

The basic foundation of Appreciative Inquiry is to **ask positive questions**, rather than focusing on the negative aspects. It basically focuses on the possibilities instead of the problems.

Experts suggest that Appreciative Thinking is not actually **thinking out of the box**. Instead, it's more like **thinking from within a different box**. In case of Appreciative Thinking, various possibilities are explored, instead of solving the problems. Instead of asking "Why is this solution not working?" an Appreciative thinker would ask "What other solutions do we have?" You can easily see that the latter exudes enthusiasm.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is a positive approach which is very effective in inducing a feeling of positive experience within the organization. In fact, owing to its positive

nature, Appreciative Inquiry is the best possible way to utilize the positive energy of the people within the organization.

Appreciative Inquiry, at its core, involves the practice of asking pertinent questions that strengthen an organization's capacity to improve its efficiency.



Instead of thinking about the problems, an Appreciative Thinker would think about the various possibilities in which he can improve the organization. Moreover, every single employee is encouraged to become a part of the decision-making process and everyone plays their significant roles in determining the future of the organization.

Dealing with Change

Change is the only permanent thing in life and in business. Change is crucial for the development of individuals, groups and organizations. The points of departure between Appreciative Thinkers and regular managers in approaching a situation are usually based on their analysis of the reasons behind the issues.

While managers often want to give their observations about you as a way of sharing feedback, Appreciative Managers would ask you to answer questions that directly emphasize on the issues that an employee might be facing in his workplace. These questions might initially cause a **negative resistance** within people, rather than inducing a feeling of enthusiasm, however in the long run, it promotes transparency between the people and yields greater trust and mutual understanding. Some of these questions could be –

- What is the reason behind your lack of motivation?
- Why is there a lack of understanding within the organization?
- Why doesn't something work out?
- Why are they so much stressed?

The solution to these problems would probably be in finding out another approach that creates a positive vibe within the organization. And thus, the **Appreciative Approach** of problemsolving was developed.

Appreciative Approach - Basic Principles

Appreciative Inquiry involves a clear and transparent understanding of the working procedure of any organization. To achieve that understanding, it's very important for the person to be a good communicator. The basic foundations of Appreciative Approach are based on some scientific assumptions regarding human behaviour.

Speaking should lead to doing

Words are not simply a medium of conversation between two individuals. By talking together, we get an opportunity to we create a reality for us. What we say has an effect on our relationship with others. Hence, the influence that words have on others can't be ignored.

We cannot underestimate words by simply regarding them as tools for talking. We can construct a vision for the future by conversing together. The words that we speak inspire our thoughts and motivate us to do better in life.

To know is to change

We challenge the reality of a fact when we ask a question. As a conversation moves in the direction of a question, we realize that there can be nothing such as a neutral question. Most questions will end up being tough to answer, especially in a working environment where important discussions are made.



We create the new by looking ahead

Everything changes. We need to look forward to a change that has the ability to bend the future to our advantage. This is the key motivation behind people who make speculations about the future.

People get strongly motivated by positive images

A choice of positive sounding words and a positive performance always attract people. Thus, possibilities and capabilities are always an outcome of positive images. Positive actions, the core of sustainable change, are always led by positive conversations that paint a welcome image in the minds of listeners.

Choosing with creativity

Appreciative questioning encourages people to have an open future. If you focus your attention on your choices, you become creative. Questions on what makes you happy has a different effect on your psyche' than questions about what make you unhappy.

Coherent relationships can be created by stories

By sharing stories of real life events with our partners and coworkers, we become more and more committed towards them, and they towards us. A feeling of trust develops among the people by doing so. This also gives us the opportunity to learn.

Relationship between people

When people engage themselves in sharing something, they tend to get along. This bonding with one another determines the outcome of the partnership. Questioning in an appreciative manner enhances the chances of a good quality relationship.

Appreciative Approach - Methodologies

In the words of the author and award-winning consultant, Diana Whitney, "Appreciative Inquiry refers to the concept of the basic entity that makes human systems possible to operate in its best possible condition." This strategy of change has its foundation in the fact that the questions you ask and the conversation that ensues are responsible for bringing the change.

It's been observed that people get an increase in their mental strength after having a conversation on dreams, hopes, values, success and strength. For a better understanding, consider the following classic questions on the outcome of deficit thinking –

- How do the failures affect you? (non-appreciative)
- What went wrong and how do we make it right? (appreciative)

This first question looks for possibilities, opportunities and success stories. The approach in this question is to prepare a case study based on past failures of the person. The person won't feel inclined to participate in a healthy manner in this conversation.



In sharp contrast, the second question follows the basic principle of Appreciative Inquiry. It addresses the root of the issue and tries to find out solution. It visits the past to look for symptoms and corrective measures, instead of historical value.

Appreciative Research



When you appreciate something, you are well aware of its value. You search for what works well within the scheme of things, and find out more ways to implement good plans.

People are more likely to work within their strengths and attempt what they can do best. But, most importantly, you should learn to embrace change with an open heart. That includes the courage to be open enough to accept unexpected answers.

You should also develop a curiosity to learn new ways of functioning. In order to do so, you need to initiate conversation with someone who knows stuff you don't know, so that he can guide you on whether your plans are working, and keep you aware of the solutions you need to implement.

Such guides help you to assess yourself and your subordinates, and to find the right answers to your questions. In the long run, you will be able to become a guide yourself for your team, and manage to educate younger employees in the processes of running an organization.

Appreciative Inquiry - The 4D Cycle

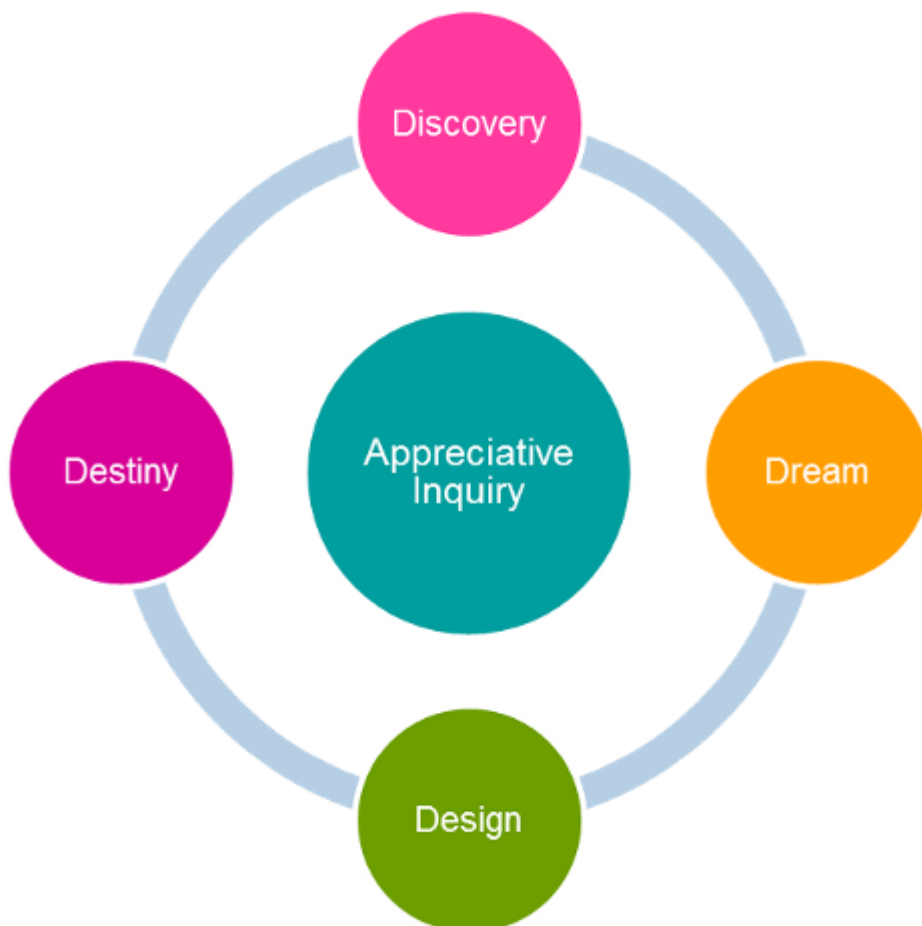
The very essence of Appreciative Inquiry can be captured in a 4D cycle. The foundation of this idea is that organizations tend to evolve in the direction they tend to study. An Appreciative Inquiry emphasises on an organization's positive aspects and its potentials, rather than weaknesses and loose points.

Choosing an affirmative theme

First, a theme is determined for the Appreciative Inquiry. This theme remains constant throughout the duration of the inquiry process. Then the Inquiry moves on to the following four phases –

- Discovery Phase
- Dream Phase
- Design Phase
- Destiny Phase

Theme detecting is the first step of Appreciative Inquiry and the reason it's important is that the theme should be of strategic value to the organization. In this step, we determine the entities, resources or attributes that the organization or the employee needs for better performance.



The Discovery Phase

This is the stage at which the direction of the change is determined. This theme may be an opportunity for the organization to grow, and thus, is translated into an affirmative that invites formulations.

During this phase of the inquiry, we emphasise on the best facilities that we can have at present, and pitch it against what was considered “the best” previously. Usually, this is done by conducting a one-on-one interview with every employee

being asked four to five questions. These interviews focus on method detection, while developing a positive feeling among all the participants.



The discovery phase would result in –

- A deeper understanding of the positive core of the organization
- A deeper insight into focus and a great built of collective wisdom
- Discussions and examples of best solutions and outstanding behaviours

Even before the execution of forthcoming stages of the 4D cycle, spontaneous and unplanned changes start taking effect. This is generally due to the questions that are asked of the resources. It helps them connect to the vision of the company and their mission in the organization.

The Dream Phase

In this stage of the 4D cycle, people are supposed to collectively assess their dreams versus their achievements in the fields of life, work, ambitions, and their relationship with the organization.

At this stage of their careers, people nurture dreams and ambitions, even beyond their current limits, so that they can have a brighter future for themselves and the organization. The positive core gets even more energized and people are even more motivated. They look forward to result-driven programs and are interested to check their performances.

The outcomes of this phase are –

- The organization gets innovative in its thoughts.

- The employees get a positive potential for building strategic opportunities.
- Sense of purpose is developed and the participants get even more committed.

The Design Phase

On the basis of the last two stages, various ideas and designs to implement the solutions are laid out. These designs may be in form of interventions, or other elements like industrial training. This step is designed to implement thoughts into practice, and includes all steps needed to make the dreams real.

Priorities of the organization are also determined at this stage, and all the important elements in a team's proposition that necessary to invoke strong thoughts are written down. This proposal is written on a positive note and in the past tense (as if all the goals within the proposal have already been completed) along with the quality of the organization they wish to deliver.



An elaborate picture is painted that describes the positive core of the organization and what the results of the ideas will yield after being implemented over the course of time. These presentations persuade the management to give a green signal to the proposals. These may include decisions, processes, collaborations, etc.

The Destiny Phase

This is the last stage of the 4D cycle. Working groups are formed and work is assigned to them at this stage. Various plans and goals are defined and work is delegated to different teams depending on their expertise. The participants are invited to take part in the work groups.



Various participants are asked to fulfill different commitments and tasks. This stage results in a great number of changes taking shape within the organization. The most important change is the collaborative effort it takes to function as one organization.

Appreciative Inquiry - The Discovery Phase

The first stage of the 4D cycle, i.e., the Discovery Phase starts with stories, examples, and depictions of strong visual moments from the past. It is crucial to have some people in this stage who could lead the audience with their past experiences, so that the audience can get into a “question generation” mode. During this phase, the audience gathers a few questions that helps the speaker deliver a comprehensive narration, and present all necessary facts from the experiences he has had in the past.

The questioner – in this case, the audience – asks questions with an open mind in order to get a detailed picture of the actual situation. Through these questions, the audience gets to understand the conditions in which certain decisions were taken by the management.



Through these powerful interactions, the listeners get educated on the steps that have already been taken in the past, and peg that in comparison to what steps they should take in the future. Gradually, the participants get familiar with the narrator's situation, get motivation and knowledge.

Here, these stories play a very important role, as they help experienced people to share knowledge based on their experiences. This knowledge is quite different from the knowledge gained based on facts and figures, because they add a personal angle to them. A story involving personal emotions is retained by listeners for a longer time.

Questions Asked during the Discovery Stage

The act of discovering is to make the hidden visible again. It is the quest in search of a spark and to turn it into a flame. In this step, participants are invited to make a summary of the discovery phase, and to reflect the best moments from the past experiences of the employees in the company. These stories of the past are rigorously examined for forces, underlying factors, and the conditions that were crucial for the happenings of these stories. These are called the **Key Factors**.



These key factors, when compiled and placed together, form the positive core for the building of cooperative capacity. Some of the appreciative questions might ask participants to share some of the dearest moments of their life, when they experienced a higher quality of care while getting older. After this theme has been set, questions will be asked that are related to this theme. For example,

- How did your family, friends, and other associates contribute to this feeling?
- What are the other services that were engaged during these moments?
- Why do you think these moments of experience to be dear to you?
- What key factors do you consider to be the most important?
- With who were you engaged during these moments?
- How did you contribute to these dear moments?

Appreciative Inquiry - The Dream Phase

Dreams motivate people to speculate about their wishes and future in the form of visions and sounds. A dream-related question that asks for the depiction of a desirable future experience is considered to be an **energetic dream**.

The kind of questions asked during Dream Stage make the narrator speak on –

- what the future looks like,
- what situations are desired,

- how the future environment looks like, etc

It inspires a positive and concrete vision of the future and boosts the expectations of positive possibilities and growth opportunities in the future. The questions asked in this page encourage the narrator to reveal his best capabilities, his interests, his beliefs, the importance of others in his life, and so on.

The purpose of this Dream Stage is to fuel the imagination of all participants. In the Dream Stage, realistic, experience-backed elements are combined to form the dream image of the future. The dreamers perceive the reality from a different point of view, and can depict the possibilities and opportunities for the future.

Questions Asked during the Dream Stage



Employees need to develop the desire for a glorious future, which their actions in the present will help them achieve. This goes against the conventional methods of setting targets, so naturally, old-timers might think of you as a bit delusional, but the truth is that we cannot encounter innovation without living a dream.

The following theme has been provided to conduct a Dream Appreciative Inquiry. The focus is on providing a neutral environment and a list of key factors that any of the instructors use in the conversation, when they feel that the narrator needs a lead.

Dream Appreciative Interview Theme

Let us dream something. Feel free to fall asleep. Start dreaming about the key factors (while naming them) that contribute to your life's quality. Some of these questions are related to the people in your life –

- Who is doing what?
- What is happening?
- What are you doing?

- How does your life look?
- How organized is your life?
- With whom are you engaged?
- Do you see any other engaged services?
- How do you see your days, weeks, months, and so on?

The second part of the dream

In this part of the dream interview, the instructors try to create a dream in which the person, they are talking to, does all the actions he wants to in his real life. The instructors motivate the participant saying that people only get one chance to dream so they should let it all out: all his desires, wishes, expectations, and speculations of the future. They paint a beautiful future on the canvas of dreams.

Setting the Theme

Let us fall asleep. Let us dream something in the present working scenario. Dream that you make active use of all the key factors and attributes important for you. Based on that, answer the following questions –

- How do you perceive your organization's ideal work environment to look like?
- What do your dreams say to you about your approach towards it?
- Do you find your dreams to be attractive and ambitious enough?
- Are these steps short term or long term with respect to time?
- Up to what extent has your environment changed?
- To what extent your environment needs change?
- Have all the perspectives been explored by you?
- What are the steps in which you need others?
- How do you organize your work

Enlarging the Dream

You all can help one another to carve the dream for a finer and a clearer picture. Just like a diamond needs to be cut to make it shine, a dream also needs certain polishing for it to shine like a diamond. Project such a clear picture of the dream on others, so that, they would be able to feel, taste, smell, touch and even see the dream right in front of them.

At this stage, the following questions may come in handy –

- What difference can we see in one year from now?
- Who is with me in this dream?

Appreciative Inquiry - The Design Phase

At the end of the Dream Stage, an employee's vision for his future gets laid out clearly. Having the essential elements, we can imagine various circumstances. We now know what we have, and how it can be used in the formation of the future. We therefore need to develop an action plan about the **how to** and the **what to**.

Still, a lot of attention needs to be given to the different attributes (vision, contacts, skill) and ability within the people. The tested method of Creative Thinking will come handy in this phase. We have to search for **actionable items** and determine our priorities. We should consider the future to be a travel destination, and the planning of the travel has already been made. Suitcases and bags are packed. And we are good to go now.



Conversion to concrete plans

This step may look as if it does not adhere to the Appreciative approach, however, it is as important as the factors that the stories give energy to. These factors are important to design an action plan. A method often implemented here at this stage is to make challenging claims that some stories have already been put in action.

Appreciative Inquiry - The Destiny Phase

This is the last stage of the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry. It comprises of the exercises, operations, experiment, agreements, and changes that have been designed or executed along with others. The central idea here is to experiment and to learn.

Usually, for an Appreciative approach, the future is built on successes of the past and sources of energy and motivation. The bulk of the work done after Appreciative Inquiry is by someone who is good at his job, and also enjoys while doing it, with a desire to learn. The implementation of an Action Plan begins with the first step, which is to realize the future and it signifies that it is already the beginning of the future.



At this stage of the process, it is crucial to have other people's support, especially that of your team. It is important for the stakeholders to rely on their partners. They may be someone of their own environment, a coworker, a superior, etc. It is important for the person to have a clear vision in his mind.

Appreciative Inquiry - Advising

One of the most significant and visible achievements of Appreciative Inquiry has been in the field of education. Appreciative Advising is a technique that is derived from Appreciative Inquiry that helps Educational Advisors, and Career Counsellors prepare themselves in suggesting a suitable career to the candidates who approach them for higher education.

Six Phases of Appreciative Advising

Appreciative Advising follows six distinct phases –

- **Disarm** – Focus on the first impression and know the importance of a safe and a welcoming scenario for students.

- **Discover** – Make use of questions that are positive and open-ended in nature. Try to find out what the students love to do, their passions and their strengths. Listen carefully to each and every answer before jumping into the next question.
- **Dream** – Help the students create a vision of what they wish to become and provide them assistance to portray a clearer picture of their career goals and their life.
- **Design** – Assist students in coming up with well-defined, incremental, and achievable goals.
- **Deliver** – The students need to follow their plans from the previous phases. The role of the advisor is to help the students when they come across a hurdle, to have faith in them at every step, and to refine and update their dreams.
- **Don't Settle** – Another significant role of the advisor is to challenge the students to improvise the students' internals and to increase their self-expectations.

The Disarm Phase of Appreciative Advising

In this phase, the focus is on creating and getting a first impression and knowing the importance of creating a safe and a welcoming scenario for students so that their trust can be gained.

Important Behaviors of an Advisor

- Suitably personalizing the office
- Seeing students at the door
- Welcoming the student
- Self-introduction

Immediacy Features

Immediacy is defined as the mental and physical bond between two or more communicators (to be specific, between a professor and his students). People get attracted towards the people they like, prefer and value. On the other hand, they tend to walk away from the people and things they don't prefer or evaluate negatively.

Non-Verbal Attributes of a Good Advisor

Eye contact	Relaxed body posture
Vocal Variety	Professional casual outfit

Gestures	Smiling at students
Removal of distractions	Listening Intently

Verbal Attributes of a Good Advisor

Addressing students	Giving Feedback to student
Use of own first name	Unrelated small talks
Asking for student feedback	Use of inclusive pronouns

The Discover Phase of Appreciative Advising

In this stage, the instructors should try and make use of questions that are positive and opened in nature. For example, they should try to find out what the students love to do, what their passions are and what their biggest strengths are. Carefully listen to each and every answer before jumping onto the next question.



Important Behaviors of an Advisor

- Ask open-ended, positive questions to identify the stories of the students.
- Pointing out when the students took initiatives and appreciating them
- Give affirmative and positive feedback to the students by saying phrases such as; "it's impressive", "you did well", etc.

Questions asked by a good Advisor

- Whom do you think to be the most important role models in your life? Why so?
- Mention a point in time when you positively impacted somebody else's life.
- Share some events from your life that have made you the person you are?

- What are the things you have accomplished in life that you are proud of?
- What are the qualities that you wish to inherit from your role models?
- What are your achievements that you are proud of, and why?

The Dream Phase of Appreciative Advising

In this phase, the counsellors and advisors help the students to create a vision of what they wish to become and provide them assistance to portray a clearer picture of their career goals and their lives.

Important Behaviors of a good Advisor

- Intently listen to each and every statement.
- Motivate students to be open to numerous possibilities and opportunities.
- Remind students that there can be many right answers to a certain question.
- Connect information formulated during Discovery phase and dreams shared.

Questions asked by a good Advisor

- What would be your ideal job if education, salary and time were irrelevant?
- When you used to be 10 years of age, what did you aim to become?
- What changed when you grew up? What is your objective now?

The Design Phase of Appreciative Advising

In this phase an advisor is needed to assist students in coming up with well-defined, incremental, and achievable goals. The advisor steps back here and lets the students decide the necessary steps for development of an Action Plan. The advisor works on setting goals and sub-goals together, set a realistic timeline to achieve these goals, and make responsibilities and deadlines clear to all.



Important Behaviors of a good Advisor

- Provide a clear understanding of the technical understandable language.
- Have faith on your guts: trust your subconscious experiences.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- Discuss all the consequences of each and every option.
- Make sure you do your homework on each option.
- Stay away from using confusing acronyms.
- Share various options with the students.
- Inform before making every decision.
- Let the students make the decision.

The Deliver Phase of Appreciative Advising

In this phase, the students need to follow their plans from the previous phases. The role of the advisor is to help the students when they come across a hurdle, to have faith in them at every step, and to refine and update their dreams.

Important Behaviors of a good Advisor

- Do thorough reviews of your students' responsibilities and liabilities.
- Review your achievements and accomplishments during the session.
- Make the students respect the deadlines that you have established together.
- Keep yourself available for the students during their problems and concerns.
- Rejuvenate your confidence so that the students stay motivated to set goals.

Questions asked by a good Advisor

- In what way and at what time will you report me about the progress?
- What measures will you take if you run out of roadblocks?

End of the Conversation

At the end of the conversation, the advisor may end the conversation by asking a few questions in the line of offering any last minute help, such as asking them if they have something to say, or some area that they should have been asked questions on. If no one asks any question, then conclude the conversation cordially but thanking them for the program and recurring your offer for help if they need any assistance.

The Don't Settle Phase of Appreciative Advising

Another significant role of the advisor is to challenge the students to improvise the students' internals and to increase their self-expectations. A good advisor always challenges the students to actively raise their levels of expectations from themselves. Hence, he should support the students at all times and expect high results from your students.

Questions asked by a good Advisor

- You have done well so far but in which area, you could have improvised?
- What would be raising the bars of you own internal expectations mean?
- What will you do if you were challenged to be the best?

Organizational Architecture

While constructing a provocative proposition, the main task is to evaluate how an organization would look like if we were to design and optimise evaluator-client relationships. We have to start with considering an organization's architecture, i.e., the technical and the social elements that constitute to form the organization.



The aim here is to ensure that the organization and its design have been looked at systematically. This is done to ensure that all the factors affecting the evaluator-client relation have been taken into consideration.

Purpose

- Whom do we consider as our customers?
- What kind of people will be our customers?
- What other businesses are we going to be in?
- How much value do we provide our customers?
- What is the nature of the business that we are in?
- What forces in environment affect us in the present and future?

Skills

- What skills are required by people to work within the organization?
- How to identify these skills within experienced employees?
- How to develop these skills within newer employees?

Social

- What are the behaviors and values that are rewarded, motivated and promoted within the organization?
- How do people behave with each other?
- To be more specific, how is the interaction between the leadership, management and employees carried out?

Rewards

- How do people get rewards and recognition for their efforts within the organization?
- What are the behaviours that get reinforcements in the form of rewards, compensations and recognition in technical areas?

Technical

In what way do you take care of the everyday needs, whether short-term or long-term needs of the organization?