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CREATING REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE BY
FACILITATING PROGRESSIVE TRANSFORMATION
by
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B.A. University of Colorado 2007
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THIS SUBMITTION IS FOR THE REQUIREMENT FOR CERTIFICATION BY THE
CENTER OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

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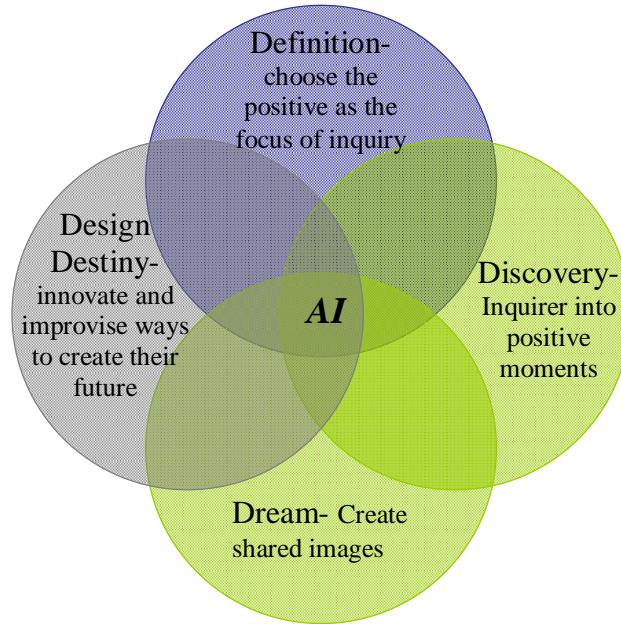
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the meaning and value of 'Creating Revolutionary change through the process of Appreciative Inquiry'. In this study the term 'Revolutionary Change' is a metaphor for the sharing peak experiences that happen when facilitating within a collaborative group of individuals within an organization. At the Business Development and Coaching Center the overall goal for working with an AI Facilitator was to re-organize and set future goals for Business Growth. During this inquiry I facilitated in ten sessions and we did all 4 stages within each session. The process consisted of following the AI process for multiple different inquiries.

This practicum will show the steps executed by Maria Schnell in the pursuit of Organizational Development through the following steps of AI.
1. Definition (Strength)
2. Discovery (Opportunity)
3. Dream (Aspiration)
4. Design/Destiny (Results)

This process is outline and results discussed within the following practicum. This experience was carried out in small bursts and has allowed the organization to see substantial changes in their culture and experiences both internal and external.

AI Process of Execution

Definition-
choose the
positive as the
focus of inquiry

Design
Destiny-
innovate and
improvise ways
to create their
future

AI

Discovery-
Inquirer into
positive
moments

Dream- Create
shared images

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Practicum

Client: The Business Development and Coaching Center (BDCC)

Personal Coaching is designed to develop the individual's life skills to bring focus; energy to empowerment so you will receive the most life has to offer you. Business Coaching is designed to work with individuals & large groups. For companies in today's economy to grow, you will need a vision for the future and an action plan to get there. You will need a team of people who are skilled in professional problem solving, who can identify critical issues that are affecting the company and who have strong teamwork abilities, helping you move your team from management to leadership to insure that growth. The Business Development & Coaching Center will help develop you and your team, enabling your company to reach its goals for success and take it into the future.

The Business Development and Coaching Center has authorized the summation of this Appreciative Inquiry process. This process has been executed as a Practicum for the certification of "Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator" by The Company of Experts and for review by Kathy Becker (and any others needed).

The Methods Executed by 4Word Motion and Maria C. Schnell M.A.

The Business Development and Coaching Center (BDCC), through the leadership of Mike Grebes, is using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology to increase BDCC's positive start to their new way of personal and business coaching. This basically means that the company wants to continue to increase their profit, while ensuring their employees to build the infrastructure of the organization. Mike Grebes stated "AI is the key to ensuring that we are always moving in a positive growth pattern as a company."

The plan that 4WordMotion created for The Business Development and Coaching Center was formatted to create change and pursuit of increases in revenue. The AI process

1. Definition (Strength)-
    a. Define Affirmative topic
    b. Conducted paired interviews
2. Discovery (Opportunity)
    a. Facilitated Large Group Discussion
    b. Brainstormed High Point Themes
3. Dream (Aspiration)
    a. Mapping the positive core of the organization
    b. Create shared images of a preferred future
    c. Create Diagrams and visuals
    d. Translate back to words from the images
4. Design/Destiny (Results)
    a. Create Provocative Proposition Statements

   b. Create a clear picture of future goals for the organization
   c. Innovate and improvise ways to create that future
      i. As individuals
      ii. As a group
   d. Create goals through deliberate action
      i. Create a detailed map of change
      ii. Detailed descriptor of the process for implementation of this change

This was the process that we followed for each individualized inquiry. The following inquiry format was executed in 4 hour sessions for one month at a session a week. This inquiry allowed for all of the individuals to have a voice, and the outcomes are substantial.

The Inquiry

The first step in the Appreciative Inquiry process is to create your focus. This is done through the development of an affirmative topic or topics. The affirmative topics that the BDCC had decided upon were as follows. The head of the organization and the group of 12 got together and conducted paired interviews with the following format:

Interview Guide:

1. **Best Experience:** Tell me a story about the best times that you have had with your organization. Looking at your entire experience, recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement. What made it an exciting experience? Who was involved? Describe the event in detail.
   a. Without being **Humble,** what do you value most about yourself, as a person and member of this organization?
   b. When you are feeling best at work, what about the task itself do you value?
   c. What do you value about the organization?
   d. What is the single most important thing that your organization has contributed to your life? To the world?

2. **Values:** Let's talk for a moment about some things you value deeply; specifically, the things you value about yourself; about the nature of your work and about your organization?

3. **Core Values:** What do you understand to be the core value of your organization? Give some examples of how you experienced those values?

4. **Ideal Future:** What 3 wishes would you make to heighten the strength and fitness of this organization?

Upon Completion of the interview the larger group re-convened and decided on the following "problem statements" which I reframed for the group as "areas for growth". This exercise was explained as the only time that they could have as much negativity that they could jam into the session. This was the only time I would allow them to dwell on all the negative aspects of the organization.

The following areas of growth were defined:
- We need more clients
- We need more structure
- We don't have enough time off.
- Why can't we get bigger clients?
- When will we have paid vacation?
- We need a file system that works.
- We are not good at any of the administrative items.
- We are a little overwhelming; our tactics are not working for all of our clients.
- We need new space and need it fast.
- Where are we going?
- We need to get bigger and have someone to answer the phones.

Upon completion of the "areas for growth list" the group again came together as a larger group and decided to focus themselves on the following topics.

The following areas of growth were defined:
- We need more clients
- We need more structure
- We are not good at any of the administrative items.
- We are a little overwhelming; our tactics are not working for all of our clients.
- We need new space and need it fast.

Once the areas for improvement were executed I facilitated a re-framing exercise, where the individuals would look at the "areas for growth" and would decide how they would individually re-frame them. Once each individual had their ideas for re-framing, I facilitated the re-frame with the larger group. This was done through smaller Groups Re-framing built upon the individual ideas in groups of 4. Then those groups all came together as a full group of 12 and they decided on the following re-framed items for inquiry.

The re-framed areas for growth:
- How can we be more present in the community, region, and nationally to increase our client and database?
- How can we delegate responsibility to insure we are all executing the same principles?

- How can we find balance between coaching and follow-up?
- How can we ensure we are being effective, but also challenging our clients to push the envelope with respect?
- Where would be our ideal place to have an office?

Once the opportunities for growth had been re-framed, we continued on to the Dream stage. This is the area where as a facilitator I explained how important it is to dream outside of the box. To look at their futures not as an either/or, but as a both/and view. This is important because at this stage is when I focus on changing the group from a negative to a positive way of thinking. The dream aspect was re-worded in this example as Aspirations to allow for the group to think of what they aspirer to do and were that opportunity would come from. During this aspect we had a large group discussion about the common themes that came out of the paired interviews. These themes were written on large sheets of paper and placed on the walls of the room.

Next we mapped the Positive Core of the organization. This process was executed through a group discussion which was lengthy and in depth as to which themes that were created were the focus of what the group saw as their positive core. These are items that reflect the values and themes within the organization. I posed the following question to start the positive core conversation, "What do you all want most to create more of as it relates to your topic of inquiry?" As we were talking the recorders of the group were writing themes down that were decided upon by the group as a whole, the posters were placed around the room. After the discussion the group was given 3 stickers, and they were asked to choose items that were of interest to them. At this time I stressed that this was not a vote. This was a decision of what we were thinking was the area of greatest interest. This is where the positive core would emerge and that all the items that were not as "selected" would not be thrown away or ignored, but would be respected and appreciated. There were a few generative processes that happened during this exercise. The group decided unanimously on 2 themes; 1) New clients, 2) Treatment of current and future clients.

The next step was to create a visual image of the themes that they decided were important. This was a short project, and the group created simple yet colorful drawings. Next I facilitated the creation of the word images on their flipcharts.

The group decided that they all liked one theme, which ended up encompassing all of what they wanted. The group agreed on a few word changes and settled on the provocative proposition statement as follows:
- Create more presence in the community, region, and nation to ensure we are effective, and also challenging our clients, while being aware of our respect and honor of them.

After the Provocative Proposition was created, the question was asked; "How are you going to make it happen?" this was a moment where the group seemed overwhelmed with such a large task. We took a break and when we came back there was a new employee who was fairly quiet, however this individual spoke up and said; "we need to construct a client relation handbook that allows for us to have consistent positive interaction with our new and future clients." This individual really jumpstarted the group and the ball was rolling. There were many ideas that came out, and I urged them to take a min as individuals and see what you are willing to commit to as an individual and brainstorm ideas as a group after your individual time. This was not as effective as a full on Results Brainstorm that I saw happening as a group. So the group re-convened and we decided on a list of immediate goals, commitments, and results, both individually and organizationally.

The Results: The goals

The Goals:
1. Client Relation Handbook
   a. This Handbook was to be designed with the client and customers in mind to ensure that there was consistency within the organization of how BDCC was executing every interaction with their customers. This handbook would be the topic of another Inquiry a few weeks later.
   b. Individual Commitment to the treatment and service of clients
   c. Creation of Follow Up e-mail system so inquiry about their services was met quickly and efficiently

2. Create an atmosphere where people are coming back to work with BDCC
   a. New workspace, one that was more open, bright, welcoming, and comfortable. This ended up being very important to the way that their clients were feeling when they were experiencing the BDCC's products and services. This became part of their Mission Statement.

Closing:
The Business Development and Coaching Center is adopting the principles of AI and creating an atmosphere for their employees, customer, and stakeholders to see progress. By focusing on the Human Element they see how their clients needs are being met on a greater level. During the month or April the BDCC have seen a 20% increase in their client retention, and this is a great improvement.

The BDCC see AI always being a part of their company and I will be there to assist them in their growth, however, they will grow and be able to execute this strengths based process on their own. The Human Element will never be ignored within the Business Development and Coaching Center.

My experiences from this Inquiry with BDCC

My initial feeling about this client was that they had strong leadership, and needed a strong impact on the cohesiveness of the group. I was correct, but had no idea how hungry the group was for the AI Process.

My Personal Best Experience:

My initial feeling was reinforced; there was a disconnection between all of the employees. My personal best was in the re-framing exercise. As issues "problems" started to arise, I noticed that there was a tension mounting, and that some individuals were becoming outspoken, where others were becoming closed off. At the first sign of this I made a statement; "This is the time where we see what needs our attention, not for placing blame, use this time for collaboration in the areas that need positive attention and growth." After this statement and a brief discussion about the rules that had been set forth initially, the problem statements were still as provocative, but also had an undertone of overall respect for the group and organization as a whole. This is where I felt like a strong facilitator that could guide, but allow for independence collectively in this process.

The Greatest Learning Experience:

Time keepers are pivotal to the success of an AI Inquiry. Within this example there are so many different topics flying around, and the passion and excitement invoked is wonderful and strong; however there really is a need for a time keeper. I had decided to allow for the group to self regulate, and it was un-successful. I had the group assign the time keeper role half way through the first Inquiry, and the change in structure was undeniable. The importance of the Time Keeper was extremely important and I will continue to utilize this technique.