<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the tool</th>
<th>Appreciative Inquiry (AI)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
<td>Strategic Planning, Situation Analysis and Evaluation Methodologies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aim of the tool</strong></td>
<td>To identify the key success factors (including non-quantitative elements) for a given team, institution or intervention and to envision a new capacity for positive and sustainable change.</td>
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<td><strong>When to use it?</strong></td>
<td>This tool is useful at the beginning of an intervention but can also be used for evaluation purpose.</td>
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<td><strong>How difficult is it to use it?</strong></td>
<td>Easy – moderate – <em>for experienced users/facilitators</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tool for thought or tool for action?</strong></td>
<td>Tool for thought <em>and</em> for action</td>
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<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>AI makes system change processes remarkably pain-free compared to traditional processes. Innovation emerges by fostering both continuity and transition from the best of the past and present into the future. The vision sells itself because it emerges from the collective aspirations of the system’s members. The principle of self-organization allows individual members of the system to sign up for the things they care most about.</td>
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<td><strong>Issues to be aware of</strong></td>
<td>AI needs support and commitment from the leaders of the community, organization or team. Most importantly, leaders need to trust the process and support the ideas that emerge from it. They need to let go a certain amount of control. If they do not, the participants may feel that AI is being used to manipulate them towards the ulterior motives of the management. AI also needs support from the participants. If cynicism seems to prevail, it is better to start small and let the results convince people, before scaling up the initiative.</td>
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**Description of the tool**

The starting point of Appreciative Inquiry is discovering what is positive and what is already working in relationship with the mission and the objectives that are relevant for a given company or team. This “success core” is energizing and inspiring and can be leveraged to build cooperative capacity for new projects. Instead of audits, critical analyses and negative viewpoints, AI focuses on where energy comes from and on what gives an organization life, encouraging people to look for everything that works, everything that is positive, that generates energy, exploring as many avenues as possible.

Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question” often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. AI seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul– and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, AI...
deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this “positive change core”—and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized.

Examples

You are an internal evaluator within an organization. You want to evaluate your department's services and performance – you are hearing rumours that some clients are “dissatisfied.” You decide to use Appreciative Inquiry to conduct the evaluation. So the questions change from: “What problems are you having?” To: “What's working well around here?” And: “How can we do more of it?”

AI has also been applied in:

- community development and community assets mapping
- strategic planning
- collaborative (project) planning
- strengthening partnerships
- organizational change management
- promoting organizational learning across disciplines, functions and generations (i.e. ‘newcomers’ and ‘old-timers’ in the organization)
- improving staff morale
- conflict resolution
- program assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

See for more examples: [http://appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu/intro/bestcases.cfm](http://appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu/intro/bestcases.cfm)

Steps needed when using the tool

Appreciative Inquiry is often presented in terms of a 4 step process around an affirmative topic choice:


2. DREAM: What might be? What is the world calling for? Envisioning results, and how things might work well in the future.

3. DESIGN: What should be—the ideal? Co-constructing - planning and prioritizing processes that would work well.

4. DESTINY (or DELIVER): How to empower, learn and adjust/improvise? Sustaining the change

Using the Discover, Dream, and Design phases for evaluation purpose:

- Develop a program logic model
– Clarify the evaluation's purpose
– Identify the evaluation's stakeholders
– Determine the evaluation's key questions
– Develop measures/indicators
– Develop an evaluation plan

Possible useful questions:

Discover: Tell me a story, if you will, of a time when this team/organization/community has been at its best – when people were proud to be a part of it. What happened? What made it possible for this highpoint to occur? What was going on? Who were the significant people involved? What were the most important factors that helped to make it a high-point experience? (e.g., leadership qualities, rewards, structure, relationships, skills, etc.) What would the system look like if that example of excellence was the norm?

Values: What aspect of your work do you value most? Describe one outstanding or successful achievement or contribution of which you are particularly proud. What unique skills or qualities did you draw on to achieve this result? What organizational factors helped you to create or support your achievement?

Wishes: What are three things we do best that you would like to see the project keeps or continues doing – even as things change in the future? What three wishes would you make to heighten the quality of the project?

Imagine that you have been asleep for 3 years, and when you awake, you look around and see that the organization has developed a comprehensive, effective, and efficient evaluation system. This system provides timely and useful information for decision-making and action relative to the organization’s programs and services. The evaluation system has been so successful that the partnership has decided to give you an award. After hearing about your award, The Today Show invited your team onto the show to discuss the organization’s evaluation system. Fast forward one month – you are in New York and have just arrived at the NBC studios (driven by stretch limo from your hotel), and it’s now time for lights, cameras, action! The presenter begins the interview by asking you to describe what the evaluation system does, how it works, the kinds of information it collects, who uses the information, and how the information is used. What do you tell her (and the millions of viewers across the globe)?

Source or further readings

- [http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/](http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/)
- [http://www.betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry](http://www.betterevaluation.org/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry)