



What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: VALUING, PRIZING, ESTEEMING, and HONORING.

In-quire' (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: DISCOVERY, SEARCH, and SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION, STUDY.

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.

The traditional approach to change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them. ...Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we **look for what works** in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been. Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) operates from the following assumptions:

- 1) In every organization, group or individual something works and can be valued
- 2) What we focus on becomes the reality we create
- 3) The language we use creates our reality
- 4) The act of asking a question begins the change
- 5) People have more confidence to journey to the future when they carry forward the best parts of the past

The 4 D cycle moves from what is to what will be:

Discovery – "What gives life?" (The best of what is; appreciating)

Dream – "What might be?" (Envisioning results)

Design – "What should be – the ideal?" (Co-constructing)

Destiny – "How to learn, actualize and improvise?" (Sustaining)