Appreciative Inquiry – Asking Powerful Questions

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About us

Mind Squad

Mind Squad is a boutique consulting firm that solves complex business problems utilizing a unique combination of legal and corporate expertise.

About Sheri

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Executive/Attorney/NFP Board Leader

Mom/Dog Mom

Proud Dual Citizen & Resident of WNY

Learning Objectives

Appreciative Inquiry

Back to school for a quick overview of this organizational development model for change and how it can assist you in your learning & development role.

Powerful Questions

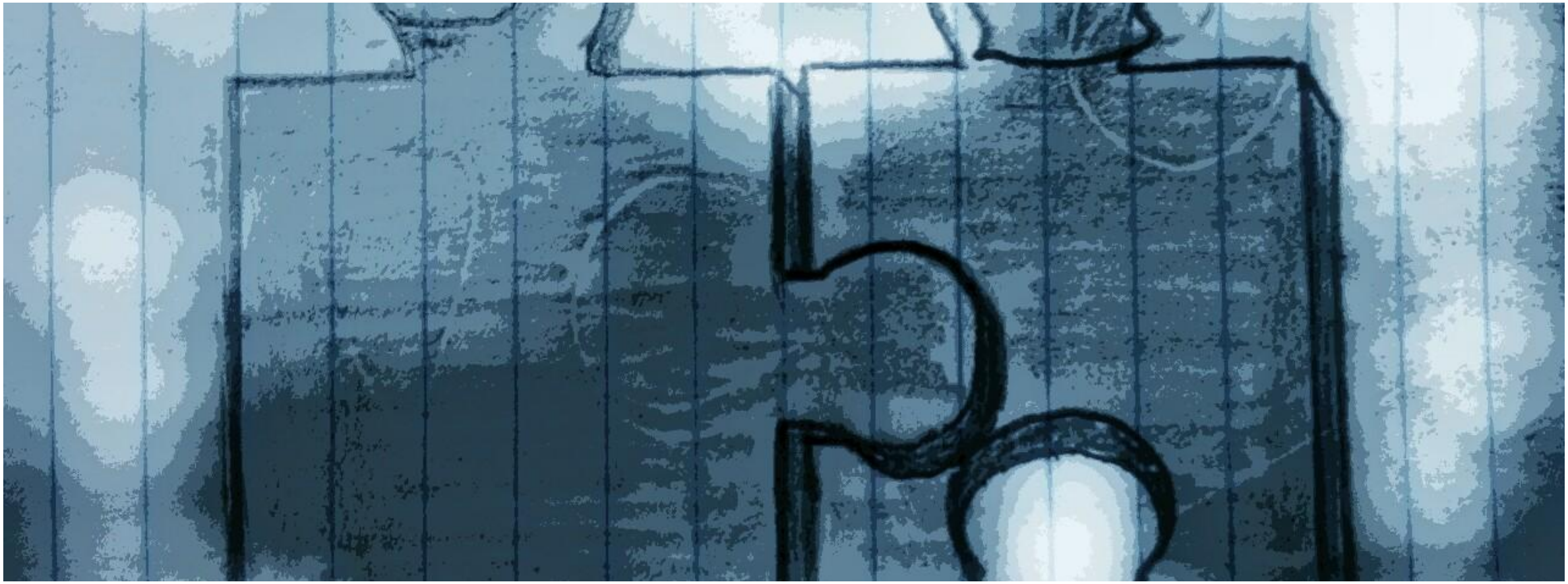
Learn how to obtain better results by strengthening your questions.

Applications

Dig into applications for Appreciative Inquiry and using a framework for asking powerful questions.

Take Home

Resources for you to start your own journey into Appreciative Inquiry and designing your own powerful questions.



My Journey with Appreciative Inquiry

Tales from the Reluctant Entrepreneur
aka “Rookie Central”

LESSONS
LEARNED

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Definition

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a way to engage groups of people in self-determined change. It focuses on what's working, rather than what's not working, and leads to people co-designing their future.

PositivePsychology.com

Appreciative Inquiry for Learning & Development Professionals

A way of bringing about change that shares leadership and learning, fully engaging EVERYONE in the organization.

How did it start?

FOUNDATIONS OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

David Cooperrider, PhD

Diana Whitney, PhD

Origins

Cooperrider conducts an organizational study.

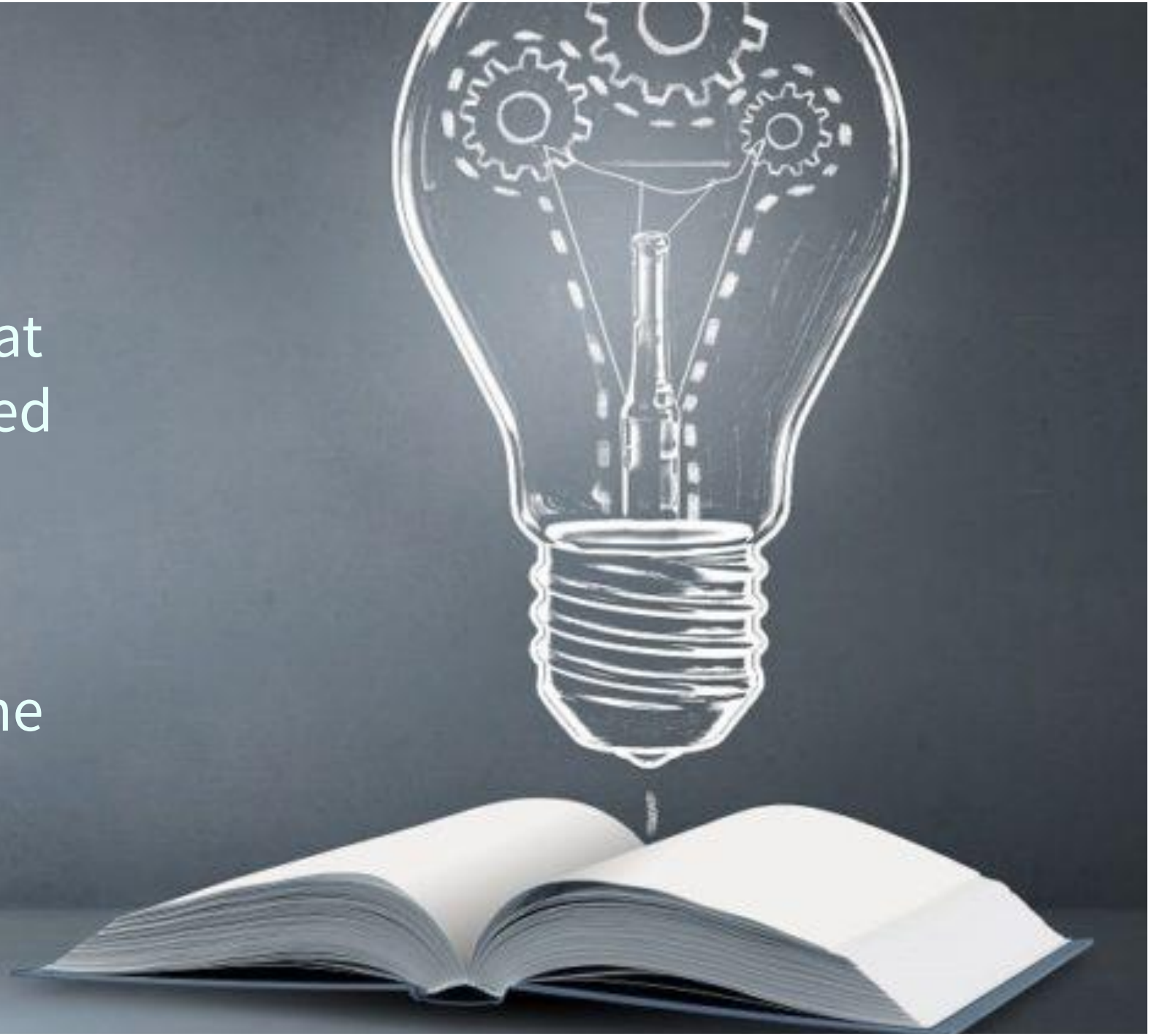
Employees become hostile during the study.

No one could figure out why the study was not going well…

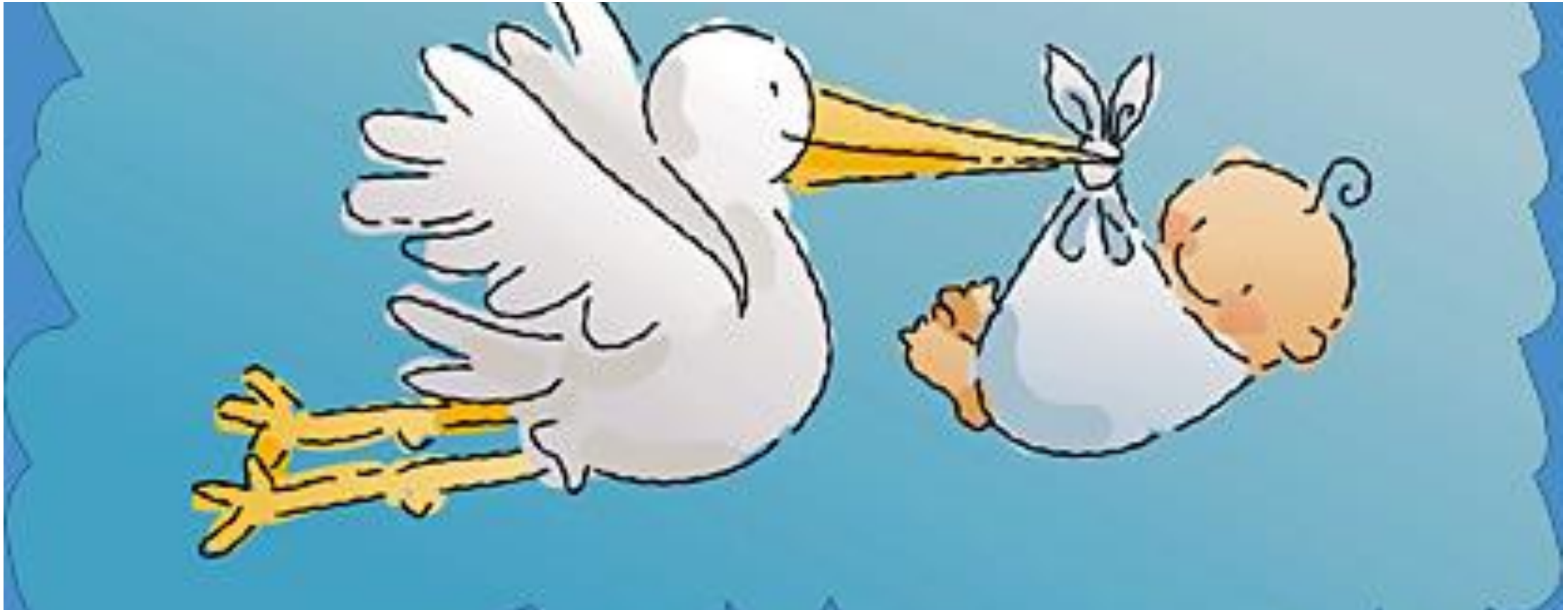
Cooperrider's Boss remarks …

“Maybe the questions are upsetting the employees?”

Copperrider & his colleagues started creating questions that were positively focused and not only did employee attitudes change, making improvements became much simpler.



The Birth of Appreciative Inquiry



A question is only as good as the answer it evokes, and questions thus contribute to success or failure across different contexts.

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Key Concept of AI

STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Organization Needs to Change/Grow?

1

Determine Problem

2

Solve Problem

3

Fix What is Wrong

BLINDSPOT

Focus on Deficits = Missed Opportunities

AI ASSUMPTIONS

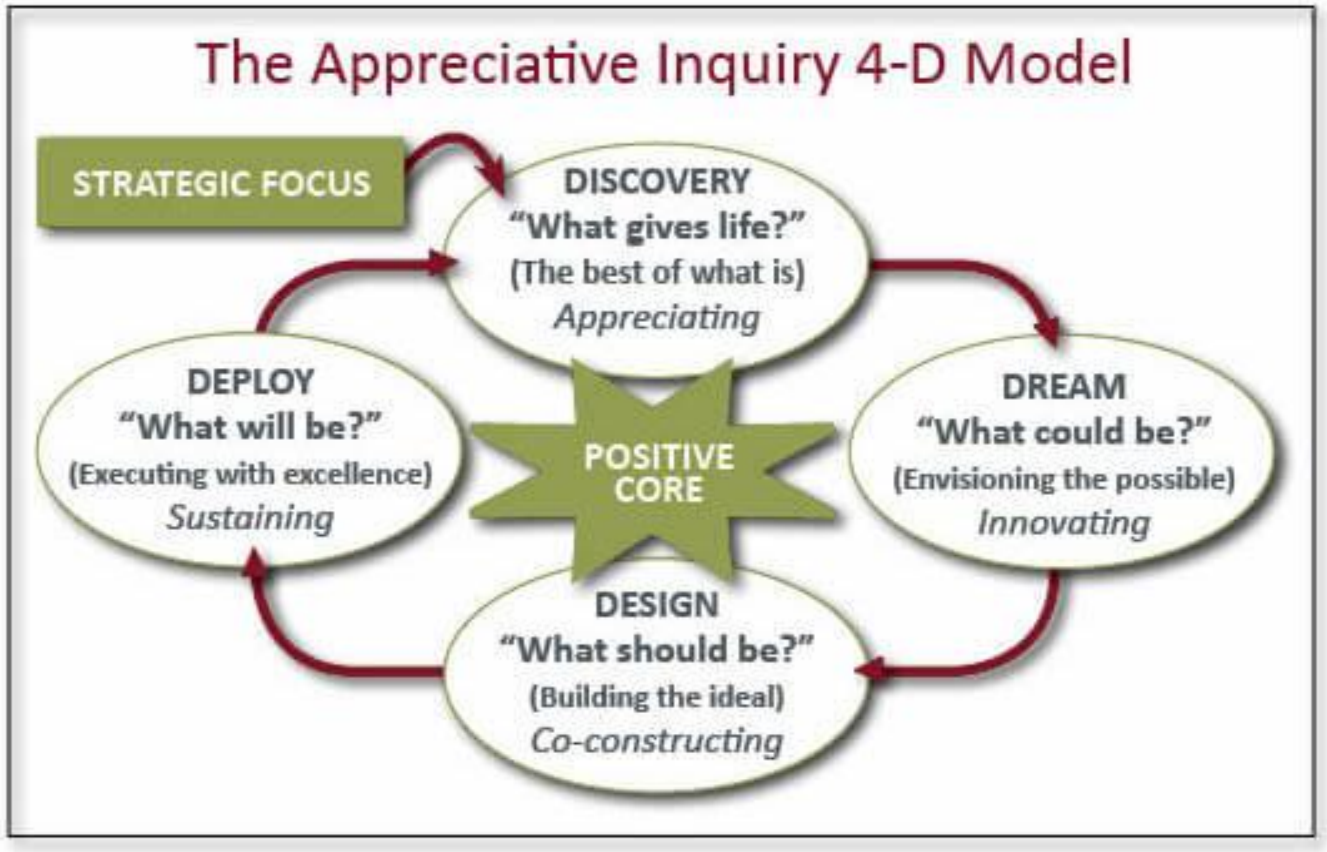
Organizations benefit from a strengths-based or affirmative approach

Assess values, beliefs, and capabilities of the organization 'at its best'

Develop collective understandings around what makes up the best of everyone

Acknowledge that each human system has a positive core of strengths

The 5 Ds


The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model
STRATEGIC FOCUS
DISCOVERY
"What gives life?"
(The best of what is)
Appreciating
DREAM
"What could be?"
(Envisioning the possible)
Innovating
DESIGN
"What should be?"
(Building the ideal)
Co-constructing
DEPLOY
"What will be?"
(Executing with excellence)
Sustaining
POSITIVE CORE

What is the 5th?

- Select An Affirmative Topic – What is the Focus of Your Intervention?
- Can be multiple foci.

PROS OF AI

- Focus On Strengths Provides Organizations & Employees With Energy For Positive Change
- Employees Enhance Their Proficiency – Use Skills To Discover For Themselves
- Collective Inquiry Results In Building A Learning Culture That Is Inclusive & Encourages Sustainable Change
- Facilitates Organizational Adaptability – Increases Competitive Advantage
- Encourages Stakeholder Participation Which Increases Employee Engagement And Commitment Rather Than Resistance

Don't Problem Solve? WHAT?!!!

Sometimes it is important to recognize and directly address problems.

It is foolish to pretend problems do not exist.

The Problem with Problem Solving

YOU: What's Wrong Mia?

MIA: We are not meeting our sales goals for the quarter. Not even close!

YOU: What's the problem? How can we fix it?

MIA: This new add-on from Salesforce is just taking way too much time from my day.

Let's Reframe the "Problem"

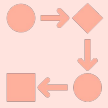
"When have our sales have been at their best, what made it possible?"

"What would it look like for us to be the world's best high-volume sales team in the future?"

"What is the best opportunity we had to increase sales over the past four years?"

But I Love Problem Solving…

When we try to figure out what went wrong, we spend time focusing only on what is broken.



The “fix it” approach does not help us clarify what is working well; it does not point us toward a solution.

We miss OPPORTUNITES!

Theoretical Framework

AI Theoretical Framework

Appreciation

Recognize the best in people, or the world around us.

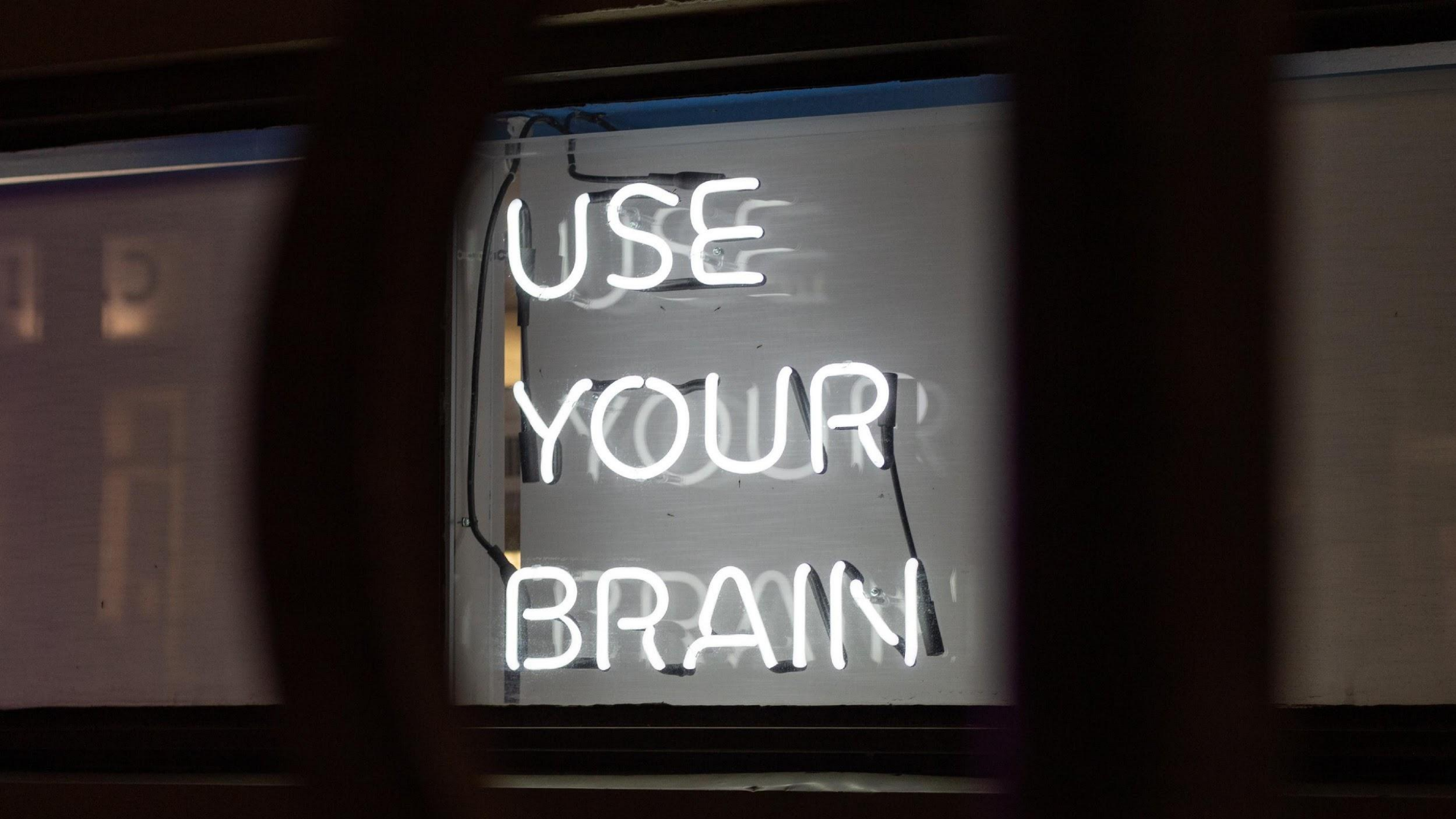
Inquiry

Ask Powerful Questions.

Wholeness

Encourage participation from ALL levels of an organization knowing the best ideas emerge from unexpected places.

Use outside sources too!


USE
YOUR
BRAIN

NEED SOME VOLUNTEERS – for TWO EASY Q?s

Question #1

Question #2

AM I FEELING TIRED TODAY?

Our mind turns towards the feeling of being tired.

We become aware of our sense of tiredness we feel.

Moments ago, it had not even crossed our minds.

What makes me feel energized today?

Pausing to answer this question can reset our energy levels.

Helps us tune into what we really appreciate and value.

Questions shape our answers and our attitudes.

Our minds move in the direction of the question asked!

Powerful Questions

THROUGH THE FRAMEWORK OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Your Resources

How to Ask the Right Questions?

1. Understand What It is I Want?
2. Stretch My Brain – What are MY Boldest Hopes & Highest Aspirations
3. Ask Myself Again – "What is it I really want?" ULTIMATE GOAL
4. Be Positive – "Appreciative"
5. Use Questions That Seek To Uncover and Bring Out The Best In A Person, A Situation Or An Organization.

TOUGH EXAMPLE

Training & Development Assistant

UNDERSTAND - What is it I want? – “Hire a good one” “Shows up on time” “Does good work” “friendly”.

BRAIN STRETCH – Want someone engaging; follows emerging trends; understands the needs of our business; professional but not uptight.

ULTIMATE GOAL – Knowledgeable, professional, engaging and reliable person who stays current with L&D trends and the needs of our business partners.

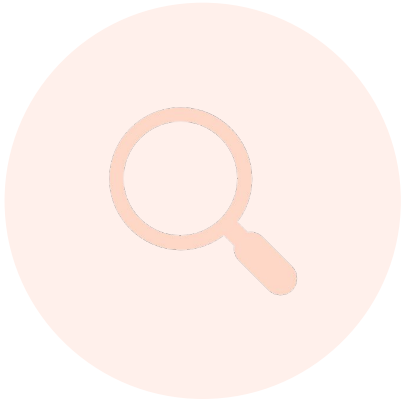
Lead In – Be Compelling

Frame	Frame the question to create a conducive atmosphere for the discussion
Explore	Explore from a human and emotional perspective
Draw Out	Draw out intrinsic reasons why people act the way they do, think the way they do, feel the way they do

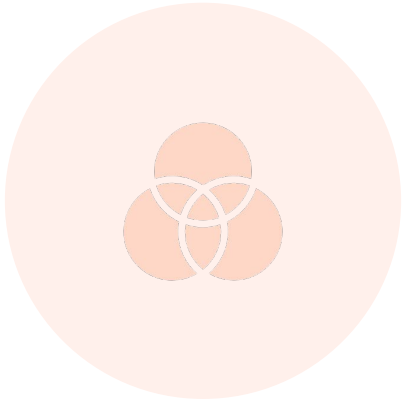
Lead-In Questions – What Works?

- Tell me why you are here.
- What do you value most in a job?
- Why did you leave your other job?
- What was tough for you when you worked for Starbucks?
- What do you like most about yourself?
- In which job environments do you thrive? Tell me an example of one.
- What is the best day you ever had at work? Describe it for me.
- Are you punctual? What about in your last job?

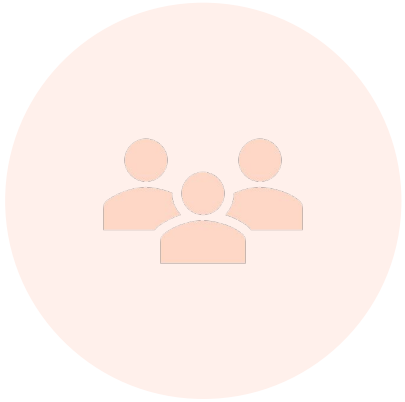
Sub-Questions



INVESTIGATE THE TOPIC FROM VARIOUS ANGLES



USE PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE TENSES



INVITE THE PARTICIPANT TO RELIVE THAT EXPERIENCE

OPPORTUNITY FOR SHARED LEARNING aka “The Breakout”

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EXERCISE

Develop Powerful Sub Questions to Explore With a Candidate:

- COMMITMENT
- LOYALTY
- EXPERIENCE
- TEAM WORK

Tips on Designing Powerful Questions

Focus on increasing human participation that elicit responses rich in feeling and meaning.

Every question cannot be data focused.

Use stories because they invite parties to be active participants and visualize as a group.

Stories engage those involved, build relationships, and make discovery a collective process.

Encourage people to think about and tune in to different perspectives— not just their perspective. Choose other stakeholders.

RESULTS

Stimulates The Imagination

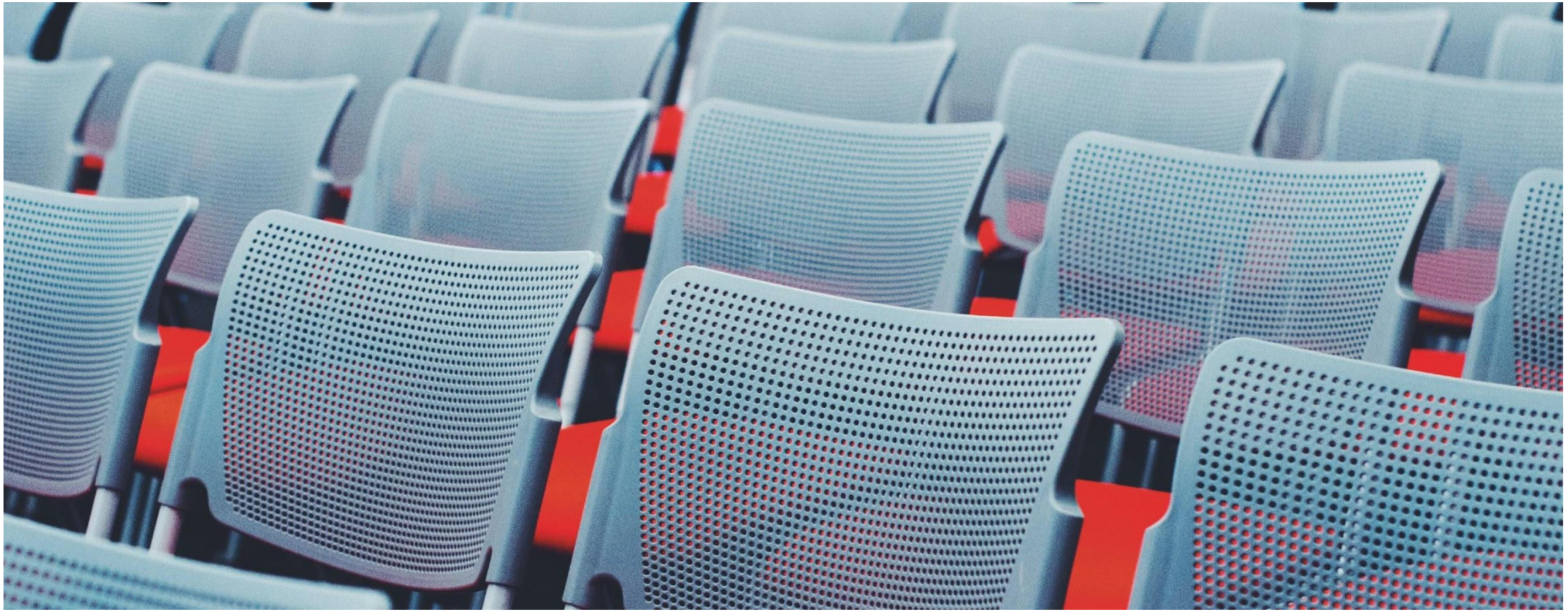
Invites Perspective-Taking

Encourages Compassion

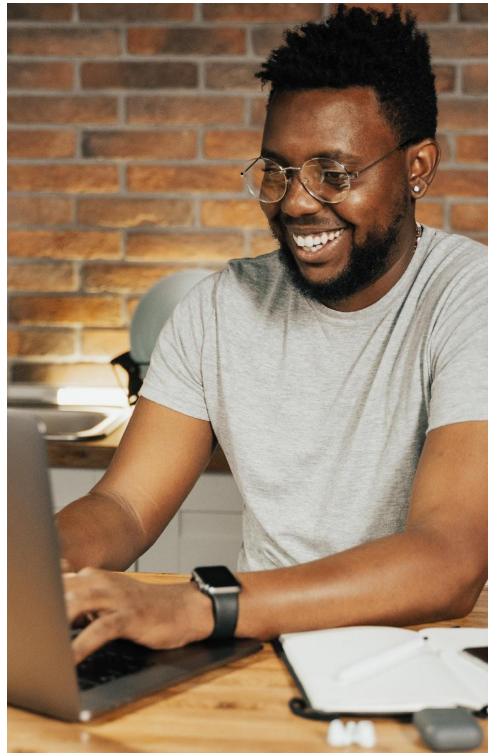
Builds Empathy

By changing our questions, we change our results.

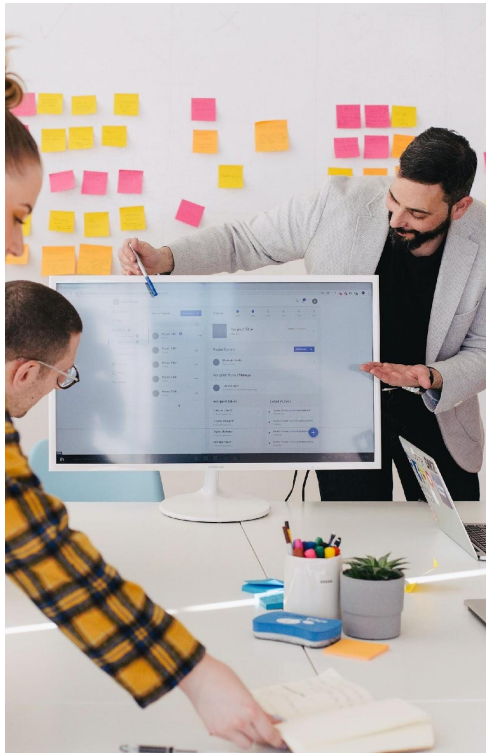
Applications for Learning & Development Professionals



Apply to Learning & Development - AIFT

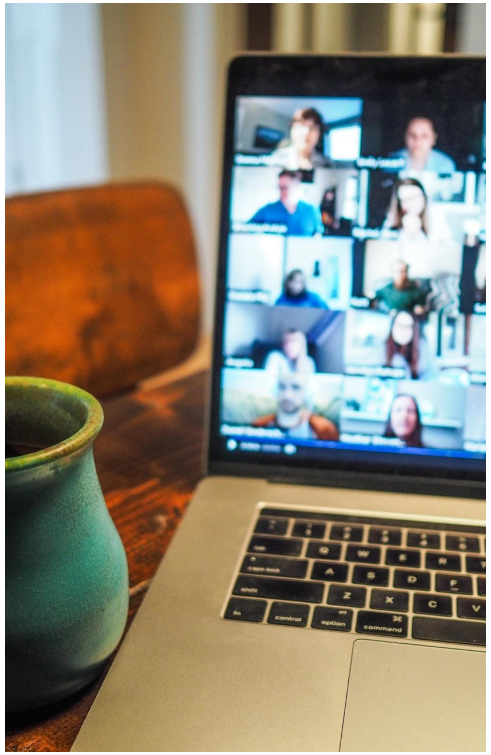


Individual/Coaching



Small Group/Workshop

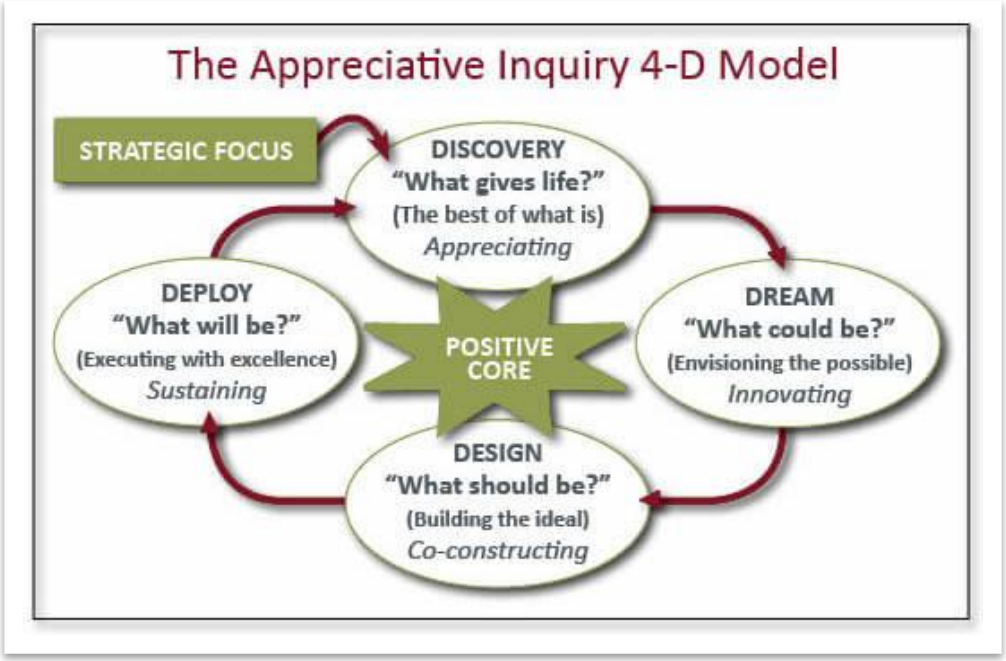
Large Group



Remote

AIFT Training – The 2.0

Use The 4 Ds



Apply Powerful Questions

Design: how to turn the dream into reality?

- Think back to what you "Discovered" about what's important to you in terms of your topic
- Which aspects of the "Dream" do you have most energy to take forward?
- As a group – generate ideas (for actions, processes, systems, changes) that could bring your Dream into reality.

OPPORTUNITY FOR SHARED LEARNING aka “The Breakout”

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TOMORROW YOU LEAD A WORKSHOP

1. PICK A TOPIC
2. APPLY THE FRAMEWORK
3. REPORT RESULTS

Report Your Results!

AI Round-Up

- YOUR AI JOURNEY
- AI BUSINESS CASE – ALL ENTERPRISE
- AI BUSINESS CASE for L&D
- ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Where Can Your Journey with AI Take You?

Collaborative Inquiry

- Start using collaborative inquiry, dialogue, and reflection

Positive Psychology

- Bring forth positively powerful performance and results from learners

Build Trust Faster

- Establish trust and rapport with your audience early on by asking provocative and life-affirming questions

Active Listening

- Become an expert in active listening and apply it with an open heart and a nonjudgmental mind

AI Business Case

Collaborative Inquiry

Helps everyone focus on what's right in the organization, rather than the singular focus on what's wrong. More efficient and effective business results.

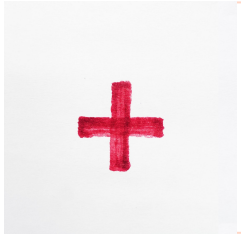
Strengths-Based

Organization evolves into true "center of excellence" while avoiding the risk and pitfalls associated with the constant reinvention of operations.

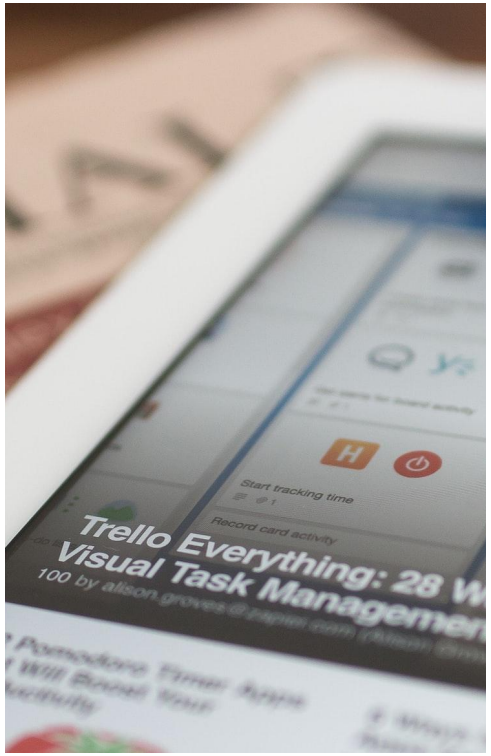
All Enterprise Engagement

Understanding "what is" and "what is not" critical to the overall success of the organization reduces capital costs, minimizes risk, refines and optimizes service levels.

AI Business Case for Learning = Increase QUALITY Exponentially

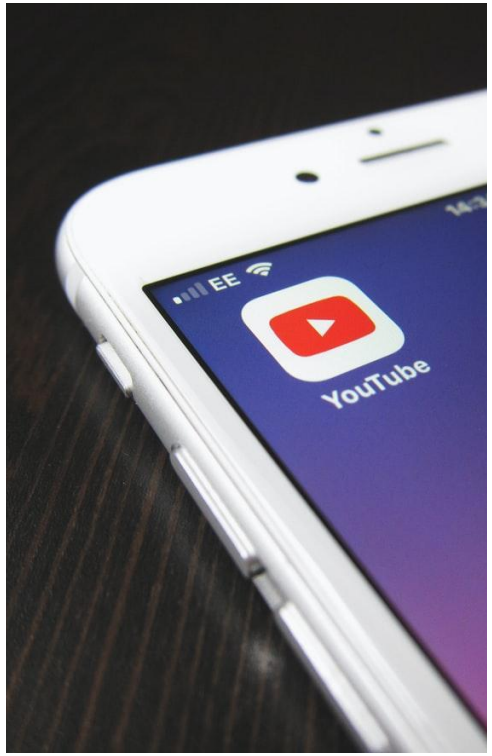
	Asking Powerful Questions	✔ Open the social context for learning ✔ Challenges underlying assumptions ✔ Elicits better insights for everyone
	Engagement through AI/Positive	✔ Develops a common concern for deeper levels of shared meaning
	Consistent Focus on Questions	✔ Casual conversations transform to collective inquiry and result in often unexpected creative solutions

Additional Resources

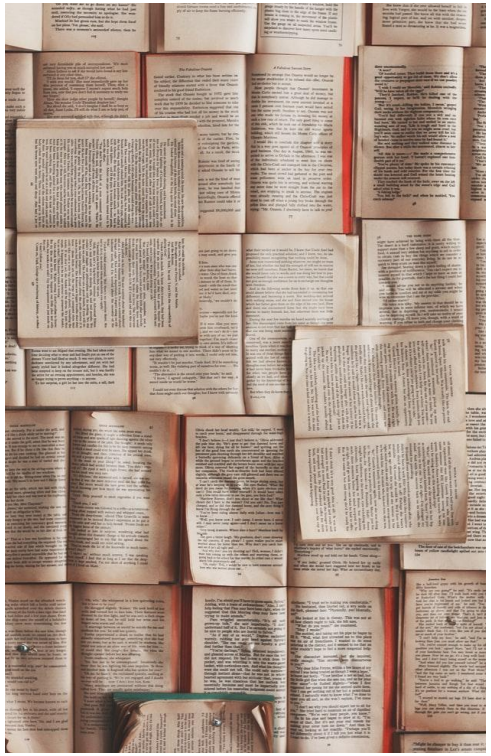


Articles

Podcasts



Videos



Studies

Thank you!

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