

The Sustainable Enterprise Learning Guide

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Instructor Materials

Chapter 2

Mental models for sustainability: Appreciative inquiry

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Editors' Notes:

These materials are intended for use by academics and practitioners. In order to simplify the language, editors have determined to use the terms instructors, learners or participants rather than facilitators, professors or students.

ACTIVITY INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The following are Mental Model “Lead-in Activities” that precede a facilitated (recommended) Appreciative Inquiry process.

Objectives

Upon completion of this activity, learners will/will be able to:

1. Describe why mental models differ
2. Give examples of the impact of differing mental models
3. Describe how to minimize the disparity between the models individuals have
4. Conduct an Appreciative Inquiry Interview


Activity Length

1.5 hours (approximate)

Audience Description

These activities are designed for the undergraduate, or graduate/practitioner level learners.


ACTIVITY PREPARATION

Activity Name	Appreciative Inquiry: Company Visioning Process	
Preparation Checklist	<p>One Week in Advance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask learners to read The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook, <i>Mental models for sustainability</i> (pp 58-88) <input type="checkbox"/> Assign pre-reading (see list below) <input type="checkbox"/> Make copies of Handout: Interview Preparation and Handout: The Interview and Debrief for the session, one for each learner <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm venue, catering, and in-room supplies and audio visual equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure there are four flip charts and four flip chart stands with plenty of magic markers and tape to post the completed flipcharts. 	
Timing Flow	<p>Step 1. Activity set-up</p> <p>Step 2. Conduct Interviews</p> <p>Step 3. Debrief Interviews</p> <p>Step 4. Identify common themes</p> <p>Step 5. Debrief activity to entire group</p> <p>Step 6: Questions for Reflection</p>	<p>10 minutes</p> <p>40 minutes</p> <p>10 minutes</p> <p>20 minutes</p> <p>10 minutes</p> <p>(varies)</p>
Total Time	1.5 hour (approximate)	
Pre-reading	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>McNichol, T., <i>Appreciative Inquiry Case Study</i>, The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook: When it all comes together, (pp 81-86).</p>	
Pre-work	<p>None</p> <p>NOTE: This activity can be preceded by either activity (or both activities) in Chapter 2: Introducing Mental Models</p>	

ACTIVITY: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Learners will conduct an Appreciative Inquiry sampler exercise. In this Discovery process they will interview each other about their respective companies to come up with what is “life-giving” about each learners’ organization. Then pooling from the list of what is “life-giving” to each company discussed, the participants will look for a common theme or blend two or more into a theme that will be the overarching vision for their mutual company that will guide the activity.

Instructor Notes	Activity description
Step 1. Set up activity	<p>Say: Imagine your company library, or archives. Think about what it demonstrates about the values held by your organization or institution that is important to preserve for future generations. Think about what this collection will reveal about decision-making processes that are in the best interest of a broad spectrum of people both within the company and in its community, both locally and globally. Be prepared to play a role in the interview process. However, use the information about your own company as much as you can. You will be given a handout to review before conducting the interviews.</p>
Step 2. Conduct interviews	<p>Do: Leave 60 minutes for the interview, twenty minutes for each person in the pair to be interviewed by the other. Rather than being analytical during the process, instead focus on the emotion of the person speaking—what animates them—and make note of that aspect of their story.</p> <p>Say: After each individual in the paired groups has completed their interview and being interviewed, the pair will then do the debrief together.</p> <p>Do: At 40 minutes, stop the interviews and remind them of the debrief questions.</p>
Step 3: Pair debrief Note: The debrief questions are located in Handout: The Interview.	<p>Do: Give instructions for how to conduct the pair debrief, the “best” of the companies will make up Our Company. (Note: Learners can also refer to ABC and XYZ companies in The Sustainable Enterprise Fieldbook, <i>Mental models of sustainability</i>, p. 83).</p> <p>Say: Use as much or as little space as you need in order to answer each of the debrief questions in writing. The Debrief questions are at the end of Handout. The Interview.</p> <p>NOTE: The debrief questions are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview? What details and examples did the interviewee share?

Instructor Notes	Activity description
	2. What was the most positive quote that came out of this interview? 3. What was the most life-giving moment of the interview for you as a listener? How were you changed by the story? 4. Did a particularly intriguing "golden insight" emerge during the interview? If so, describe this insight--use metaphor if that conveys it better. 5. What were the 1-3 themes that stood out the most for you about the interview?
Step 3. Review for Common Themes	 <p>Do: Divide the learners into small groups with at least 4 people in a group. Have them share their debrief findings and determine their proposed titles. Members share individual title with other small group members</p> <p>Small groups identify common themes and compose a title that reflects an agreed upon theme.</p>
Step 4. Sharing themes	<p>Do: Ask groups to share their themes. Discuss the similarities and differences. Have them share what they used as a basis for their themes. Come to consensus about one theme they all can agree to use.</p>
Step 5. Debrief the activity	<p>Do: Debrief activity to entire group. Focus on how Appreciative Inquiry is different from other data collection approaches. Focus on how they felt during the process.</p>
Step 6. Questions for reflection	<p>Do: Handout: Questions for reflection. You can either have learners fill this out and hand it in or you can discuss their responses.</p>

ACTIVITY MEASUREMENT

See Handout: Questions for Reflection below.

FOLLOW-UP: RESOURCES/ACTIONS

Sources on Appreciative Inquiry

[AI Commons](#)

The "AI Commons" is a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing *discipline of positive change*. It can be accessed using the following URL:

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

Sample AI Commons Resources

Cooperrider, D. "AI and The HR Business Opportunity of the 21st Century. Keynote at 2008 Society for Human Resources Management Conference

Annotation: Cooperrider, D.'s 2008 Keynote at SHRM--on sustainable value as the HR opportunity of the 21st Century; including the business case for appreciative inquiry approaches.

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/toolsModelsPPTsDetail.cfm?coid=11875>

FOR FURTHER READING

An interview with Stephen I. Sadove, chairman and chief executive of Saks Inc., entitled, "For the Chief of Saks, It's Culture That Drives Results." was conducted and condensed by Adam Bryanton May 30, 2010

A version of this interview appeared in print on May 30, 2010, on page BU2 of the New York edition of the New York Times. It can be accessed using the following URL:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/30/business/30corner.html>

St. John, E. P. (2009). *College organization and professional development: Integrating moral reasoning and reflective practice*. New York: Routledge.

St. John argues that unless moral reasoning is integrated into reflective practice through a formal process, individuals may not be made aware of the social injustices that exist in today's society. Ignoring such processes will prevent professionals from making a decision that is in the best interest of everyone.

HANDOUT: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Interview Protocol for Initiating Our Company's World Class Library Collection

Directions:

Each learner brings a unique company experience based on their own work history or through the work stories they have heard from their family. Use that experience when answering the interview question following the Our Company reading below.

Reading: Our Company's History

Our Company's Vision for its Library and the future

Our Company is making a commitment to adapt to its changing community and empower its employees to grow intellectually along with making a contribution to the world community-at-large.

Our Company can do this on many levels: it can connect its employees not only to the world community in real time through technology but also to its roots and its 'sense of place' by tapping into the collective wisdom of what has gone before.

Through books (databases, collections, etc.) Our Company's knowledge base has provided its community "the accumulated wisdom of our species that has been put at the disposal of anyone who can read." In effect, the world's libraries serve an annex—a huge, well-ordered, ever growing annex—to human memory. As a result, what has already been discovered, invented, or imagined can be used as the basis for future forays in thought. Ideas can build hierarchically upon ideas. Moreover, books are not mere repositories of knowledge. In a genuine sense they are interfaces between minds. Their very familiarity and "down-to-earthness" hides their full significance: that they are the first step toward expanding consciousness further—through technology.¹

Through this technology, Our Company wants its library to be a model for other companies throughout the world and to use its findings as a benchmark against which to measure the responsibilities, potential usage and cost of maintaining special resources.

Our Company is visionary in examining the trend for preserving and restoring its rich history (collections, patents, etc.) along with identifying current trends in its community that may also relate to larger movements. It could, perhaps, represent beginnings of the creation of a vibrant sustainable process with employees and community residents taking on the interpretative role to work collaboratively in that it will holistically align company processes for sustainable value. That is, at the beginning of 21st century, could we be seeing beginnings of a "new" wave of a sustainability that is rooted in its knowledge economy.

¹ Darling, D (2002). *Equations of Eternity*. Speculations on Consciousness, Meaning, and the Mathematical Rules that Orchestrate the Cosmos. MJF Books: New York. (pp 161-162)

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

“When we make a measurement, when we observe any facet of reality, we participate in establishing what that reality is.”² For this reason, the Appreciative Inquiry Framework will be applied to the evaluation process.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organization, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system “life” when it is most effective and capable. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen an individual or a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential. In AI, intervention gives way to imagination and innovation supplanting negation, criticism and spiraling diagnosis. Instead there is discovery, dream, and design. AI assumes that every living being and system has untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive and succeeds by inviting discourse that values differences while building on its collective assets (adapted from the AIV-GEM/Images and Voices of Hope brochure).

² Ibid. Page 179.

HANDOUT: THE INTERVIEW AND DEBRIEF

Directions:

Interviewers: Read the following opening before going on to the numbered questions:

Opening:

We begin by surfacing glimpses—from our personal experiences—times that may inform the possibilities of the future. To help us articulate what’s possible, we will consciously focus on those situations that have enlivened and animated us. For it is from our best experiences of the past and present that we will draw the inspiration and confidence to aspire and act with boldness and conviction.

Questions:

- 1. Introductory story:** Tell me about a time when you felt the most engaged, even excited about working at Our Company. What was it about that time that made it exciting or engaging?
- 2. Current situation:** Great libraries dedicate themselves to collecting and distributing an array of information and ideas that are diverse in material, varied in format, and rich in viewpoint, reflecting the trans-cultural character of their enterprise and the world. What is the potential for a library that represents Our Company’s wisdom community at its best and what is making that (or would make that) possible?
- 3. Possibilities:** Imagine that it is year 2015. You have been a member of the steering committee for the library project and it has been successful beyond your wildest dreams. Employees and users from around the globe alike are thrilled to have access to this great resource. You have been asked to grant an interview to a faculty member for the *Harvard Business Review*. As you reflect on the project, what are the most important changes that have taken place in Our Company as a result of the project? What made those changes possible? What do you see happening in the company culture that tells you the changes have taken place?
- 4.** If you wrote a book (produced a video, etc.) about the Our Company’s future and its prestigious library, what would be the title? What would the main theme or message of the book/video be?

Interview Debrief

Use as much or little space as you need in order to answer each question in writing.

1. What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview? What details and examples did the interviewee share?
2. What was the most positive quote that came out of this interview?
3. What was the most life-giving moment of the interview for you as a listener? How were you changed by the story?
4. Did a particularly intriguing "golden insight" emerge during the interview? If so, describe this insight-- use metaphor if that conveys it better.
5. What were the 1-3 themes that stood out the most for you about the interview?

HANDOUT: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Surface and make more concrete basic assumptions
2. Examine both personal and collective mental models
3. Move toward alignment of conflicting mental models and values

Questions:

1. On a scale from 'zero' to 'ten' was this exercise useful for demonstrating the importance of alignment of collective mental models and values?

(10 = Extremely useful; '0' = useless)

Extremely useful			Reasonably useful					Useless		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comment: _____

2. On a scale from 'zero' to 'ten' how **useful** do you think that this framework is for moving closer to alignment and away from conflicting mental models for companies?

(10 = Extremely useful; '0' = useless)

Extremely useful			Reasonably useful					Useless		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comment: _____

3. On a scale from 'zero' to 'ten' how would you rate yourself as a listener?

(10 = very important; '0' = not important)

Extremely engaged			Reasonably engaged					Required concentration		
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments: _____

4. On a scale from 'zero' to 'ten' did the workshop process provide an opportunity for you learn something new about yourself? (10 = Extremely useful; '0' = useless)

Extremely useful					Reasonably useful					Undecided
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

In what way? _____

5. On a scale from 'zero' to 'ten' will you take something of **value** back to your workplace as a result of this introduction to the **APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY** Framework?

(10 = very important; '0' = not important)

Highly valuable					Reasonably valuable					Not of value
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Comments: _____