The Power of Appreciative Inquiry

Dianna Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom

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1. Dianna explains AI as "the study of what gives life to human systems when they are at their best". How does that definition strike you? Do you find power in that? How?

2. In telling the story of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the author suggested that the project proved the axiom, "People commit to what they help create". Can you think of a time in your organizational life when you saw that happen? Share your story. When has that happened in your current organization? The result?

3. Dianna is convinced that our current problem-solving model is merely a learned habit and that it can be supplemented, or even over-powered, with the Appreciative Inquiry model. Do you agree? What is your normal approach to instituting change - problem solving or some form of appreciative inquiry? What is the result?

4. The author believes that the problem solving model has unintended consequences; among them, a focus on who caused the problem, which results in PEOPLE becoming the problem. Can you share an experience where this was the case? How could it have been handled using Appreciative Inquiry instead?

5. The first step in creating the Appreciative Interview is crafting the AI question. It starts with positive topics and uses openings such as "Tell me about a time…. ", then, "What was it that contributed to….", etc. Take a few moments to select a topic that might be important to your organization, craft a few questions, then partner with someone to begin the interview. How did that feel?

6. How would your interview work out in your organization if you tried the author's suggestion of "improbable pairs"? What would those pairings be?

7. AI seems to be based on the power of stories and the questions that evoke them. How could AI empower people in your organization?

8. What was the most significant idea you gained from this book or the interview with the author?

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