

Positive Power: Transforming Possibilities through Appreciative Leadership

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(This chapter is adapted from the book *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization*, Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010)

In the midst of the many economic, social and environmental challenges facing us today there is a glimmer of hope. A positive revolution in human organizing and change management is underway, calling forth new possibilities and practices for leadership.

The global success of the fully affirmative, high engagement process of Appreciative Inquiry (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, 2010, Cooperrider, Whitney, 2005) provides a compelling course for creating large-scale alignment, innovation and positive change in organizations and communities worldwide. Research into positive psychology (Fredrickson, 2009) suggests that people flourish and perform at their best when surrounded by positive emotions and positive communication. Teams, departments and entire organizations thrive in a positive emotional environment. And strengths based research makes the case for human learning and development in areas of strength rather than weakness (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001). Taken together these growing fields point to the relational model and innovative practices of Appreciative Leadership (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Rader, 2010).

In this chapter we explore leadership at the intersection of these three emerging fields: Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Psychology, and the Strengths Movement. We introduce Appreciative Leadership and provide an overview of the Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership: the Wisdom of Inquiry; the Genius of Inclusion; the Art of Illumination; the Courage of Inspiration; and the Path of Integrity. And we conclude with a brief overview of why Appreciative Leadership is so essential and fitting for the twenty-first century.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is both a philosophy and methodology for positive change. It is founded on the simple assumption that human systems – teams, organizations and people – move in the direction of what they study, what they focus on and what they talk about with regularity. The essence of Appreciative Inquiry is then the study of what “gives life” to organizations, teams and people when they are at their best.

Appreciative Inquiry does not assume that any person or organization is always at its best. It does posit, and both research and experience show, that people learn, and

organizations change, most readily when they focus on, study, and engage in dialogue about strengths, patterns of success and who they are at their best.

For this reason, the Appreciative Inquiry process engages large numbers of people in dialogue and deliberations about their individual and collective strengths, their hopes and dreams for the future, as well as opportunities and plans for collaborative action.

The process generally follows what is called the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Figure 1).ⁱ

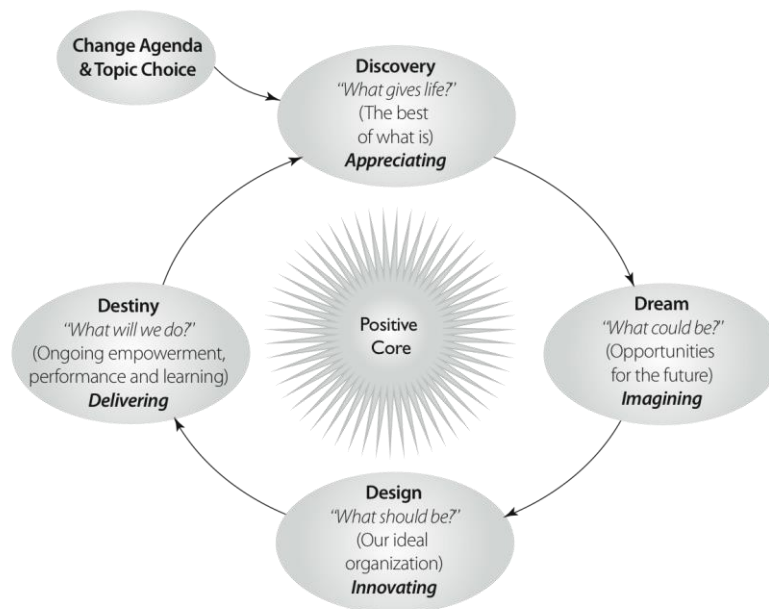


Figure 1. The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle

Lessons About Leadership Using Appreciative Inquiry

We have worked with dozens of leadership teams to help them introduce Appreciative Inquiry to their organizations and communities and to successfully use it for significant transformation. In the course of doing so, we have noticed that the leaders who chose Appreciative Inquiry as their vehicle for positive change have the following four things in common.ⁱⁱ

- *First, they were willing to engage with other members of their organization or community to create a better way of doing business or living.* For example, Bishop William Swing, founder, and Charles Gibbs, executive director of the United Religions Initiative, both attended and fully participated in five annual international planning summits, a year-long series of design meetings, and multiple regional summits. At each meeting, they participated

enthusiastically in conversations with people of different faiths, different countries, different ages, and different cultures. Similarly, leaders of Hunter Douglas Window Fashions Division, most particularly the president, Rick Pellett, engaged with the entire 1,000-person workforce, together with key customers, suppliers, and community members, in a process of forging a 10-year vision for the company. Finally, admirals in the U.S. Navy joined with other Navy personnel of all ranks and tenure during a series of highly inclusive, nonhierarchical gatherings focused on the development of “leadership at all levels.”

- *Second, they were willing to learn and to change.* They did not simply expect it of others. For example, Rodrigo Loures, CEO of Nutrimental, SA, the Sisters of Good Shepherd, PMNA, and an executive from Hunter Douglas all personally attended our Foundations of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) workshop before initiating changes in their organizations. All of these leaders continued to engage in learning and development opportunities with us, at Case Western Reserve University, and with other appreciative leaders, to build their capacities to work with AI. Perhaps more significantly, they were all open to learning from employees and stakeholders and to changing themselves as well as their organizations in the process. Reflecting back on his leadership of Hunter Douglas Window Fashions Division’s initiative, former vice president of human resources Mike Burns described the personal nature of his journey:

Leading this effort made a difference in virtually every aspect of my life. Day in and day out, it reminded me to look at positive possibilities rather than negative obstacles. It gave me tools to be a more compassionate, more inspiring parent, partner, and friend. As I think about it, the work gave me tools that made my life a better place—for me, and for the people around me. What more could you ask?

Rick Pellett, president of the company, described similarly profound changes in himself and his worldview:

The work I did here began to change me, almost right away. It got me asking questions—not just about the company, but about my life. It opened doors for me, and it invited me to consider where I was heading and whether it was the future I really wanted to live. It compelled me to take action to correct things that I’d simply chosen to live with for years and years and years. I recognized that this experience wouldn’t create the same kind of “awakening” in everybody that it touched. But for me, it was revolutionary. And for many of the other hard-core, quick-deciding, bottom-line leaders that rise to the top in corporate America, it just might be life changing, for the better.

- *Third, these leaders truly believed in the power of the positive.* For executives like Theresa Bertram (then executive director of the Cathedral Foundation) and John Oechsle (former CIO for IHS), the positive was a direct line to high performance. When faced with low levels of employee morale and engagement, they both chose positive approaches to change. They understood that by studying what was successful and promising in their organizations, people would gain confidence and hope; but also that morale and performance would improve. Similarly, Margaret Browne, former manager of budget and finance for the city and county of Denver, Colorado, chose Appreciative Inquiry to address a \$70MM budget shortfall, thereby achieving truly positive results. As these cases illustrate, belief in the power of the positive pays off in social as well as financial matters.
- *And fourth, these leaders cared about people, often describing the work of their organization or business in terms of helping people learn, grow, and develop.* Carolyn Miller, executive director of the Community Development Institute (CDI), is an exemplar of this kind of leadership. Leading from a stance of coach and mentor, she actively solicits people's hopes and dreams for their future then supports them in taking on work that is consistent with those dreams. Her commitment to personal development is also reflected in the company's robust training budget, as well the regular, ongoing coaching that she and her fellow leaders engage in with their staffs. As a result of our work with these exemplary leaders and others, we began to see that people and organizations could learn, grow, and change through a purposefully affirmative process. The old "no pain, no gain" view of personal development is not a requirement for people engaged in Appreciative Inquiry. When leaders participate with people in a positive and caring manner, people collectively transform their organizations and communities; and in the process they change.

In many ways these leaders live what Peter Drucker described as the primary task of leadership – to create an alignment of strengths toward a goal, in such a way that weaknesses are irrelevant. They seek to understand and learn what works well and to build the future upon it. They are part of the growing strengths based movement.

The Strengths Movement

Though the term itself is new, the research and thinking on which the Strengths Movement is based is over 30 years old. In their book *Now Discover Your Strengths* Buckingham and Clifton share the history of this research,ⁱⁱⁱ describing the term "strength" as "consistent near perfect performance in an activity."^{iv} They suggest that strengths – which are a composite of talents, knowledge, skills and *use* - feel easy for people. The exercise of strengths provides a sense of joy, flow, energy and fulfillment; and operating from strengths increases people's success, productivity and performance.

The strengths based assumptions about learning and performance presented by Buckingham and Clifton challenge the very foundation of more traditional leadership development and HR practices. Traditional leadership development goes something like this: identify competencies for a position or a role; assess people in relation to the competencies; identify weaknesses; and put together a plan to develop people in their area of weakness. The assumption is that growth stems from improvement in areas of weakness. The same process is followed as a basis of much organization development: conduct a survey; identify areas of weakness; and hold managers accountable for planning improvements and measurable change. The assumption is that organizational change requires a “burning platform” or problem to motivate people to change.

Strengths based change and development is based upon the following ideas:

- Each person’s greatest room for growth is in his or her greatest areas of strength – *not* weakness.
- Excellent performers are rarely well rounded. They capitalize on their strengths and avoid or minimize their weaknesses.
- To help people capitalize on strengths, give people opportunities to identify and understand them – then reinforce them with practice and learning, and find roles (jobs, projects, classes) that draw on them.^v

The notions of strength based learning and performance have tremendous implications for leadership, HR processes and team building. Appreciative leadership addresses these new directions by focusing on what works. It articulates and organizes around what people are good at, finding ways to enable each and every person to shine. Appreciative HR processes such as performance management systems, succession planning and career development are designed so that people can learn and leverage their personal strengths and high performance patterns. And finally, appreciative team building ensures that the diverse strengths of team members are aligned and complementary.^{vi}

Our extensive experience in the arena of large-scale change – as well as our recent research asking people “What do you want from leadership?” – shows that high performance and positive change both require large amounts of positive emotions. Strengths based approaches to learning and performance build confidence and hope – two qualities needed, personally and collectively, for successful positive change.

The Birth of Positive Psychology

In 1996, as Appreciative Inquiry was growing in use and maturing as a process for positive change, Dr. Martin Seligman, then the new President of the American Psychological Association posed a powerful question to the field of psychology. “What,” he asked, “has the field of psychology been studying for the past 30 years?” A review of literature and research answered his question: there had been

approximately 45,000 studies of human malaise, neurosis, or distress in some form, and only 300 studies of human wellbeing, joy, happiness or success over the course of the same time period. Believing that the field had gotten off track, he dedicated his tenure as President of APA to leadership in the area of positive psychology. He issued a call for psychological science and practice to be as concerned with strengths as with weaknesses; as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst; and as concerned with making the lives of normal people fulfilling as with overcoming pathology.

Among other things, the field of positive psychology explores the source and benefits of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2003) the relationship between inner dialogue and performance (Seligman, 2006), and the nature of character strengths and virtues (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).

Peterson and Seligman's work focuses on the development, measurement, and cultivation of character strengths such as: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. It offers conceptual and empirical tools to craft and evaluate interventions and organizations that promote human flourishing and well-being. In the development of the VIA-IS Strengths assessment,^{vii} Peterson and Seligman systematically synthesized philosophical, religious, and scientific discussions of good character. They identified what was common across these discussions: core virtues and specific character strengths that represented virtues in action. They describe signature strengths of character as strengths that a person owns, celebrates, and frequently exercises. These strengths are central to a person's psychological identity. Furthermore, different strengths have different life outcomes, with strengths such as zest and hope being highly correlated with subjective wellbeing or happiness. Recent research findings suggest that the process of defining and embodying your strengths, or putting your strengths into action leaves you feeling connected, enlivened, competent, and with a strong sense of being in community (Fialkov & Haddad, 2010).

Fredrickson's research established what she calls the "broaden and build" theory. It suggests that humans flourish when they are in an environment of positive emotions. Specifically, she finds that when people are surrounded by emotions such as hope, joy, optimism, love, confidence, trust, and happiness they become more open to and capable of learning, their capacity for new experiences and knowledge broadens, as does their resiliency to uncertainty and change. (Fredrickson, 2009)

Positive emotions support organizational and community success as well as human flourishing. Indeed, many of the organizational qualities that leadership seeks to foster – collaboration, achievement and innovation – are a natural by-product of positive emotions. Thus, a positive emotional environment will foster high levels of performance as well as satisfaction, in organizations and in teams.

A mere decade from its inception, the Positive Psychology movement now holds a prominent place in popular Western culture. Graduate and coaching programs alike

promote research, training, education, and dissemination of the philosophy and practice. It seems that psychologists, like organization development scholars and consultants, recognize that human systems move in the direction of what they study.

To contribute constructively to human, organizational and societal wellbeing, leadership needs to develop and enhance vocabularies of joy, hope, optimism, care, compassion and health along with positive practices that foster human flourishing. Key among these practices is maintaining what Fredrickson calls a 5/1 “Positivity Ratio.” This means saying and doing five things with positive impact for every one negative. The ratio of five positive for every one negative communication seems to be the optimal determinant of an overall positive emotional environment and success for couples (Gottman, 1994) and teams (Losada, 1999) as well as in organizations. It can be said that positive emotional environments are created one conversation at a time, as leadership skillfully manages the ratio of positive to negative conversations.

Appreciative Leadership Defined

Drawing from our research, the principles and practices of Appreciative Inquiry, the assumptions of the Strengths Movement and research in Positive Psychology we arrive at an understanding of Appreciative Leadership as:

The relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power - to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance - to make a positive difference in the world.^{viii}

Embedded in this definition are four formative ideas about appreciative leadership: (1) it is relational; (2) it is positive; (3) it is about turning potential into positive power; and (4) it has rippling effects. Each of these four ideas represents a paradigm shift: a clear movement away from the habitual, traditional and individualistic, command and control practices of leadership toward “a new normal:” the positive, socially generative principles, strategies and practices of Appreciative Leadership.

Appreciative Leadership is relational. All work, indeed all life, occurs in relationship. While there are people with titles called leaders, and people others perceive as leaders, nothing of worth happens without the involvement of many people. Professor, Kenneth Gergen, offers the most substantive understanding of relational capacities in his book, *Relational Being*. In it he describes the paradigm shift from “individualistic” views of leadership to relational views, saying, “None of the qualities attributed to good leaders stands alone. Alone, one cannot be inspiring, visionary, humble or flexible. These qualities are the achievements of a co-active process in which others’ affirmation is essential. A charismatic leader is only charismatic by virtue of others who treat him or her in this way; remove the glitter in their eyes and the ‘charisma’ turns to dust... Leadership resides in the confluence.”^{ix}

Appreciative Leadership is a positive world-view, a set of beliefs, a way of seeing the world, people and situations that is uniquely and by choice positive and life affirming. And as such, this positive world-view informs all that is Appreciative Leadership: its identity, strategies, practices and results. Appreciative leaders hold each and every person in positive regard. They look through appreciative eyes to see the best of people. They seek to treat everyone positively, with respect and dignity, no matter their age, gender, race, religion or culture--even education or experience. They believe that everyone has positive potential--a positive core of strengths and a passionate calling to be fulfilled--and they seek to bring that forward and nurture it. Take Mary Beth's story as an example. Having contributed positively to her organization for nearly ten years as Manager of Human Resources, she approached her boss asking to move into the Operations side of the business. Together, she and her boss negotiated a plan: she would attend a few outside classes and workshops to obtain some crucial skills she was missing; and the boss would find a new place for her in the organization, where she could learn and grow with support. Within a year, the transfer was achieved. Nearly a decade later, she serves as a senior operations leader in one of the company's largest and most profitable business units.

Appreciative Leadership senses potential and turns it into positive power – life-affirming results. Trusting that with few exceptions, each person has the capacity to make a meaningful contribution, appreciative leaders see their job as to draw out and nurture potential, and ensure conditions for its success. In so doing, they turn human potential into positive power. Appreciative leaders often see potential in people and situations where others do not. When they do, they talk about it, engage with others, and act on it.

Appreciative Leadership has rippling effects. Through their words, actions and relationships appreciative leaders start waves of positive change rippling outward, often to destinations unknown. You know how this goes: someone at work stops you and tells you that you did a great job, that they would have missed their delivery date without your contribution. It lifts your spirit. When you go home you tell your son thanks for recycling the trash, something you don't often do because it's his job and he's just supposed to do it. He nods at your approval. The next day after lunch at school he offers to put his friend's empty soda can in the recycle bin. His friend also says thanks. Your son is on his way to a habit of environmental consciousness that will last a lifetime. Positive ripples keep magnifying and multiplying through relationships in meaningful, and often surprising ways and directions.

Five Core Strategies of Appreciative Leadership

The five core strategies of Appreciative Leadership point to key areas of relational practice. Each is a means by which Appreciative Leadership successfully unleashes potential and elevates positive performance.

The Wisdom of Inquiry – Asking Positively Powerful Questions. Appreciative questions are a ready source of positive power. All you have to do is ask and a wealth of information, ideas and knowledge unfolds. Positive questions are keys to treasure troves of best practices, success stories, and creativity. They unlock positive emotions essential to high performance such as acceptance, validation, job satisfaction, confidence and courage. Positive questions are appreciative leadership's most powerful tools. They are compelling vehicles for empowerment, for fostering risk taking and for guiding value-based performance. They are the means to all learning, change and innovation.

The wisdom of inquiry lies with the willingness and ability to ask questions that break the mold and challenge the status quo while at the same time, strengthen relatedness and guide people to values-based performance and higher levels of consciousness. Inquiry requires daily practice: to ask more and tell less; to study the root causes of success rather than the root causes of failure; and to wonder why people do what they do rather than judge and berate them. Appreciative leaders choose to ask about, care for and celebrate what works well now, and trust that by doing so good things--what they want at work and in their life--will emerge.

The Art of Illumination – Bringing Out the Best of People and Situations. People's strengths, capabilities, needs, wants, hopes and dreams are a readily abundant yet frequently overlooked source of positive power. Generally, unrecognized and very often underutilized, strengths are a deep well of potential waiting to be tapped. Appreciative leadership puts strengths to work, transforming them from raw potential into positive results through the art of illumination.

Success breeds success. Stories of strengths, high performance, and success create momentum and pave paths forward for ongoing high performance and success. People want to succeed. They listen and look to leadership to understand how to do so. Few people get up in the morning thinking, "I really want to make a lot of mistakes today." Most people wonder, "What do I need to do around here to succeed?" They seek answers to that question by watching the actions of their leaders and listening to the stories they tell.

Leadership can shine the light on strengths, high performance patterns and root causes of success, or it can leave people in the dark wondering what is expected for success. When leaders fail to engage people in sharing stories of strengths, hope and high performance people are left unclear about what they must do to succeed. When leaders discover and pass along stories of success they are implicitly saying, "this is the way to do things around here if you too want to be successful."

The art of illumination requires the willingness and ability to see what works rather than what doesn't, the interest and capacity to discover peoples' strengths, and the appreciative intelligence to sense the positive potential in every person and

situation. Illumination is like the sun: when it radiates, people feel and are warmed by it--and are therefore anxious to give their best.

The Genius Inclusion – Engaging with Others to Co-Create the Future. Inclusion--consciously inviting people to engage in co-authoring their future--is a foundational strategy for appreciative leadership, and an indispensable practice for unleashing the positive power of today's multicultural, multigenerational and multitalented workforce. Realities are crafted in relationship, through conversations and collaborations. In order for decisions and plans for the future to satisfy and serve diverse groups of people, all the people whose future it is must be invited into relationship and included in dialogue and decision-making.

Imagine you are planning for the future of a school. Who would you include on the invitation list? Faculty, administrators, parents, students, and who else? One school included cooks, janitors, board members, bus drivers and graduates in their strategic planning process. Or imagine a meeting to consider alternatives for community health care. Who would you include? Yes, physicians, nurses, administrators, politicians and patients are among the many voices that need to be invited and engaged. How about pharmaceutical companies, social workers, educators, laboratory technicians and local media? In every situation there is a myriad of people, groups and organizations with a stake in the outcome, all of who can make a valuable contribution, whose voice matters, and who will be enlivened through participation.

What people want from leadership has changed dramatically over the past decade. Now, people want leadership to include and engage with them. They want leadership to facilitate collaboration and co-authorship of the future. People no longer want leaders who are bosses, who act as if they know best. A successful architect described how this shift has changed the way he works. He explained that the new and innovative Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) process is based on inclusion:

It requires that all the stakeholders involved in constructing a building get together to plan the building process. Architects, engineers and subcontractors from all the trades collaborate right from the start. Historically this just wasn't done. It is a new process that avoids all the glitches and blame that come from lack of coordination. It makes things go a lot smoother and it saves time and money, in the end.

In ancient Greece, it was thought that all groups, communities and gatherings have a "genius:" a spirit that animates their conversations, decisions and activities. The *genius of inclusion* emerges when all relevant and interested people have a voice in the dialogue and decision-making: when they are invited to co-author their future.

The Courage of Inspiration – Awakening the Creative Spirit. Appreciative leadership unleashes the otherwise latent potential--great ideas, strengths,

capabilities and skills--by inspiring creativity, confidence and hope for the future. Even when all the necessary resources are available, nothing changes and nothing of merit happens without inspiration. Inspiration opens people to the source of life that moves through and among us all. It gives people hope and courage to shed habitual ways of living and working and move in new, innovative and more life affirming directions. Inspiration, hope and creativity--three essential ingredients for personal and collective transformation--go hand in hand.

Inspiration moves people to action. It gives them something to work for and toward in service to a better world. It calls forth their contribution to the whole. It encourages people to learn and to do what it takes to realize their dreams, achieve their goals and help others do the same. Inspiration sparks the fire of excellence. It is the source of all achievement.

Appreciative leadership pays attention to what inspires people. During our research we heard story after story of leaders, coaches and managers who were respected because they were attentive in this way. Whether their team was 5 or 50 people, they watched, listened and they learned what people cared about and what moved them to action. They learned what inspired the people with whom they work.

Do you know what inspires the people around you? It's easy to find out. Just ask them, "Tell me about a time when you were at your best. What inspired you?" Or watch them. When people feel inspired they show excitement, enthusiasm and high energy. Or listen to them. When people say things like, "I don't know where this idea comes from but what if we..." or, "I have a creative idea that I need your help thinking through..." or, "I would love to..." they are expressing their creative spirit. Some of the clues that tell you when people are inspired include: joy, enthusiasm, energy, intuition and creativity. An inspired workplace hums with the sounds of creative collaboration, synergy and the surprise of collective wisdom unfolding.

The Path of Integrity – Making Choices for the Good of the Whole. Appreciative leadership begins and ends with integrity. When you are on the path of integrity people know it. They follow your ideas and ideals. They model their ways of working after yours. And they contribute their best to the ideals you put forth.

When you are off the path of integrity people sense it. They see it in your actions: when the way you relate to people minimizes them, belittles them or even harms them. They hear it in your words and the tone of your voice: when you make promises you cannot deliver upon. They feel it: when you are short on emotional intelligence, avoid conflict, blame others or express anger inappropriately. When you are off the path of integrity people move away from your ideas and your way of working. They seek out others whom they can respect. When you are off the path of integrity you become a role model for what not to do. People learn and perform in spite of you rather than with respect for you.

Integrity refers to a myriad of relational practices. When people talk about the

presence or absence of integrity they describe it with words such as: honesty, transparency, morale and ethical conduct, speaking truth to power, making and keeping commitments, open communication, congruity of words and deeds, reconciliation, forgiveness and authenticity. All these notions point to the idea that *integrity means wholeness*. Appreciative leadership stays on the path of integrity by making choices that serve the whole. Any time your thoughts, words and deeds bring greater wholeness to people and groups you are on the path of integrity. For example, when you help people discover their strengths and full fill their dreams you are supporting their wholeness. When you include people in conversations and collaboration that bridge social divides you are enhancing organization and community wholeness. When you take care of yourself and work to your strengths you are nurturing your own wholeness. And when you design sustainability into the processes, products and services of your organization you are contributing to the integral well being of the whole planet.

Conclusion – Appreciative Leadership Now

The world has changed. Approaches to leadership that served in the past do not address the needs of the twenty-first century. Appreciative Leadership does.

We have crossed a threshold to a new era: one that demands a radical shift in leadership strategies and practices. Few places on the planet are untouched by the “progress of the industrial age” and the “dawning of the electronic age.” Cities and local markets from New York to Chang Mai to Santiago to Lahore all feature cars, computers, and cell phones. Our planet is wrapped in a web of airplane routes, satellite orbits, and telecommunication signals.

This transformation from an industrial age to an electronic age brings us face to face with the reality of our interdependence. As inhabitants of the earth, we are connected—from the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the energy that powers our lifestyles, to the pain, hunger, and sorrow in the eyes of children around the world. With the help of technology, we have discovered, as if for the first time, something that has always been and will always be: we are all related.

Acknowledgment of this interdependence leads us to profoundly shift what we wish for and expect from leadership. Success in the future will go to those who help us come into harmony, among ourselves and with the planet—to those who help us to thrive as one global community. To meet this challenge, leadership now—in the twenty-first century—must be aware of and respond to trends currently defining the social milieu of organizations and communities.

New generations have come of age. Younger people expect different things from work, from community, and from leadership than the generations that preceded them. Today, people want to be engaged and heard. They want to be involved in decisions that affect them and to be acknowledged for a job well done.

Diversity is the norm. Organizations and communities are no longer homogeneous.

Whether local or global, small town or corporate, they are composed of people with a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, of differing ages and preferences. Speaking many languages and sharing many different histories, people in today's organizations need leadership that is collaborative and just.

Institutions are being reinvented. Leadership is no longer operating in stable, sturdy, and predictable environments. In all sectors of industry and society, institutions that have failed are being re-imagined and redesigned. These new institutions are more fluid and more agile. In them, distributed leadership and power emerges as people self-organize to meet the needs of the whole. Holistic, sustainable approaches are essential. Today's decisions will cast the die for generations to come. The most pressing social, economic, environmental, and political challenges of our time are global in nature. They cannot be resolved by one person, one country or one business. They require unprecedented appreciation of differences and collaboration. In short, they call for Appreciative Leadership.

Each of the five strategies of Appreciative Leadership meets a need that people have for high performance: to know they belong; to feel valued for what they have to contribute; to know where the organization is headed; to know that excellence is expected and can be depended upon; and to know that they are contributing to the greater good.

***Inquiry** lets people know that you value them and their contributions.* When you ask people to share their thoughts and feelings--their stories of success or ideas for the future--and you sincerely listen to what they have to say, you are telling them, "I value you and your thinking."

***Illumination** helps people understand how they can best contribute.* Through the practices of illumination you can help people learn about their strengths and the strengths of others. You give them confidence and encouragement to express themselves, take risks and support others in working from their strengths.

The practice of ***inclusion*** gives people a sense of belonging, which in turn opens the door for collaboration and co-creation. When people feel they are a part of something, they care for it.

*Through **inspiration**, people get a sense of direction.* When you put into place a vision and path forward, you give hope and unleash energy and the action needed to realize the vision.

And finally, when you practice ***integrity***, you let people know that they are expected to give their best for the greater good; and that they can trust others to do the same. Taken together these five strategies enable leadership to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power--to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm and performance--to make a positive difference in the world.

Endnotes

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- ⁱ Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010, p. 6.
- ⁱⁱ Adapted from *Appreciative Leadership: Focus on What Works to Drive Winning Performance and Build a Thriving Organization* by Diana Whitney, Amanda Trosten-Bloom and Kae Rader.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Buckingham, M. and Clifton, D.O., *Now Discover Your Strengths*, New York: The Free Press, 2001, p. 11.
- ^{iv} Ibid., p. 25.
- ^v Ibid., pp. 25-35.
- ^{vi} Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney and Fry, *Appreciative Team Building*, Lincoln: iUniverse. 2004, pp. 9-15.
- ^{vii} The VIA-IS is an online (35 minute) self-administered assessment tool that offers a rank ordering of 24 character strengths. Scores from the VIA Survey are valid, reliable, and stable (see <http://www.viacharacter.org>). After taking the VIA, you receive a print-out of your 24 character strengths in rank order, as well as a delineation of your top 5 signature strengths.
- ^{viii} Ibid., p. 3.
- ^{ix} Gergen, K., *Relational Being*

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