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# Age and Stage: Individuals and Organizations Flourishing Through Time

**ABSTRACT**

The previous issue of AIP - *The Inside and Outside Worlds of an AI Practitioner*, February 2010 - focused on how we evolve our practice and use AI with different models. This issue highlights our personal evolution; how we have become who we are as AI practitioners. Though the stories vary, one theme permeates them all; the value of letting go, and letting our strength-based practices magnify the best of who we are.

This issue is about us as AI practitioners. Reflecting on our practices, the organizations we serve, and who we are as practitioners, we will explore the changes we consultants have gone through as we and our practices have grown and matured.

**We became curious ...**

We were curious about how we practice: when did we know that our practice would be strength-based? How have our thinking and consulting practice using strength-based approaches changed as we have aged and (we hope) matured.

We wanted to know about where we practice and what happens when we have grown and the organization/client system we are working in hasn't. How our practice varies depending on the age and stage of the organization and the differences of practicing AI and other strength-based approaches in young organizations vs. older organizations.

And finally, we were curious about who we are as practitioners: the way training and development of consultants has changed over time and the impact that has on our practice. How do we nurture and develop other practitioners over time, and what legacy do we hope to leave to the next generation of consultants.

Guest Editors Loretta Randolph and Neil Samuels have known each other as colleagues for about ten years. As we were preparing for this introduction, we discovered that not only were we both born and raised in Ohio, we both received our undergraduate degrees from Ohio University, Loretta in broadcasting and Neil in geology, one year apart. Amazingly, we discovered that we both lived in the same dormitory – one year apart. These coincidences piqued our interest in how we came to be AI practitioners.

Our issue begins with Loretta and Neil each telling the story of their practice. In 'Toward a Discourse of Possibility', Loretta talks about her successes in



'Thinking of positive ways to improve their community'. Read more in Glyn Willoughby's article on p.26

traditional problem-solving scientific and technical environments. In 'Geology, Passion Training, and Appreciative Inquiry', Neil distils the lessons he's learned and stories that shaped him as a practitioner so far.

Their articles are followed by 'Dark Nights of the Soul: Doorways to the Future', a reflective article by Bernard Mohr and his journey toward a transformative AI practice.

Joan Colleran Hoxsey, D.Min., MS.ed., tells about her very personal transformation in 'Appreciating Helplessness'.

We then hear the story of how a group of practitioners continue to grow and deepen applications of AI theory and practice over time both personally and professionally from Ilene Wasserman, Lonnie Weiss and Susan Wood in 'From Duckies and Horsies to Real Art'.

Cheryl Richardson, Ph.D. shares how strength-based approaches have become the overarching way of life for her consulting business in 'AI: A Strength-based Journey, not a Destination'.

'Reflections on My Personal Pathway' by Glyn Willoughby tells the story of his transition from Principal of Heathside School to using conversation as a powerful catalyst for youth community development work.

### **So, did we find the answers we were looking for?**

Well, yes and no. Regarding how we practice, some of us have always practiced from a strength-based perspective, while others of us successfully re-learned a new way of consulting after years of successful practice.

We learned that we can have successful non-consulting careers and transition successfully and become AI practitioners. We also learned that the organizations in which we practice are catalysts for our best work. We learned that we are most successful in environments that are intentional and ready for positive change and willing to be nimble enough to sustain that change.

We also learned that AI can be successful in highly technical environments as well as service and educational ones. We learned the value of letting go, and that our AI practices magnify the best of who we are. We learned that we are most successful when we grow in our practices: when we continue to wonder and learn and tap into the generosity and wisdom of the AI community; when we have appreciations for ourselves, our colleagues and our clients; and finally, and perhaps most importantly, that we trust. We didn't learn much about how we nurture and develop future generations of AI practitioners and the legacy that we want to leave; perhaps that can be a topic for a future edition of the AI Practitioner.

We hope you enjoy learning more about how we all as individuals and organizations have flourished through time.

**Loretta Randolph and Neil Samuels**  
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