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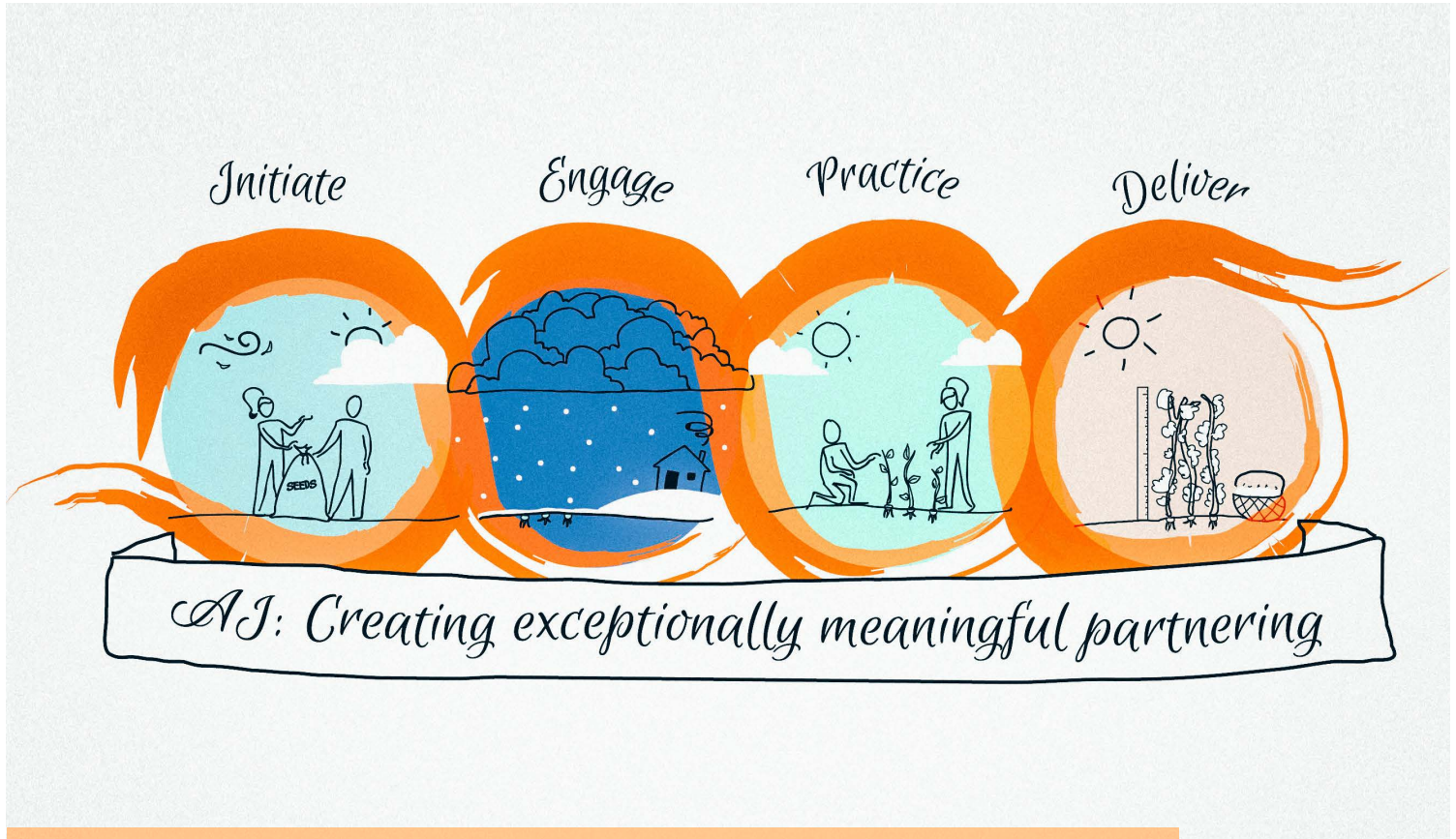
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Consultants & Clients Co-authoring Sustainable Results in Organisations and Communities

Edited by

Ralph Weickel

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Consultants & Clients Co-authoring Sustainable Results in Organisations and Communities

Inside this issue

Welcome to August 2015 issue of AI Practitioner

Consultants & Clients Co-authoring Sustainable Results in Organisations and Communities reflects the creative and new ways practitioners are delivering results while leveraging strengths and engaging the whole system. The articles show how clients are using the principles, processes and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry in rapidly changing environments.

David Cooperrider and Lindsey Godwin highlight what we have learned about

non-deficit, life-centric and full-spectrum strengths-powered change in the Feature Choice article, "Elevation-and-Change: An Eight-Step Platform for Leading P.O.S.I.T.I.V.E. Change".

In Research Review & Notes, Ron Fry at Case Western Reserve University in the United States summarises recent research on the generative power of the Appreciative Inquiry Discovery phase.

AI Resources focuses on resources to help practitioners improve the impact of AI processes and research studies that empirically highlight the impact of AI processes.

We would like to thank Corporation for Positive Change for sponsoring this issue.

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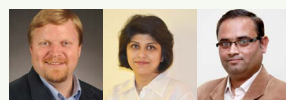


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Consultants & Clients Co-authoring Sustainable Results in Organisations and Communities

Organizations seek and communities strive for sustainable results: for many it is elusive. Appreciative Inquiry has proven to be very adaptive in delivering a wide spectrum of results. We in the AI community are keenly aware of the success that AI delivers; at times, though, we are left seeking concrete stories of such successes. This edition of *AI Practitioner* seeks to provide stories of success using Appreciative Inquiry, from the clients' perspectives and in their voices.

The articles in this issue of *AI Practitioner* reflect the creative and new ways practitioners are using the principles and methodology of Appreciative Inquiry to deliver results. It is this orientation – delivering results while engaging the whole system and leveraging strengths – that makes Appreciative Inquiry an ideal process for the rapidly changing environments we find ourselves in. The articles in this issue highlight the results achieved using AI, while detailing the varying and creative processes used by consultants and their clients.

In “Appreciative Inquiry Meets Positive Psychology: A Dialogue between Diana Whitney and Barbara Fredrickson about Organizational Change, Transformation and Innovation”, Diana Whitney and Barbara Fredrickson write about their shared experiences and reflection on Appreciative Inquiry, positive psychology and the intersection between the two. Their discussion introduces the reader to ideas that address negativity bias, which can hinder the attainment of results, through tools such as the “flip”. They also discuss the “positivity mindset” needed by practitioners to be effective in their client engagements, along with tools such as “multiple waves of AI” to sustain new behaviors and actions in the organization.

“*Tukae Tusemesane* – Let’s Sit Down and Reason Together: Enlivening Strengths and Community” is the story of enlivening strengths in partnership with individuals and community organizations for the greater benefit of the whole. It showcases the results that can be achieved when engaging the whole system through a process of action learning. The reader is walked through a process used in one Kenyan community to showcase strengths, then reflect them outward from the individual to the community. The authors share their tools, storytelling and reflective practice, and guide us through the application and the impact on the results: improvement in the quality of life in the community in tangible ways – hearing the villagers’ stories brings



Read about embedding AI in educational institutions in 'Partnerships that Matter: Results that Count' on page 37

this point home. The spirit of AI, present in both the story and the new tools used, shows the direction these practitioners are taking AI in.

"Partnerships that Matter: Results that Count" tells the story of powerful partnerships in creating lasting results. Of particular interest in reading the story was seeing how the partnerships started and were co-constructed by the client and the consultants – it illuminates how we create our future. This was also the foundation of the powerful partnerships that brought forth the best in all parties. The authors share the steps they took and the role Appreciative Inquiry had in generating specific results. Especially noteworthy is the process for embedding the principles of AI in the individual institutions. The words of the clients inspire the reader, as they underscore the power of AI.

"Strengthening Organizational Wings: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Achieve School Excellence" is the story of finding a voice: an educator who believed in his staff and took the risk to have them find their own voice. The story highlights the power of the wholeness principle and giving all participants a voice – their authentic voice. The metaphor developed in the process underscores the power of visual images and metaphors as a tool for change – Angels take Flight. The authors share their process and tools for re-engaging teachers, receiving within a very tight deadline, the strongest accreditation score in the school's history. The ripple effect of the appreciative inquiry is particularly noteworthy: several other initiatives have since been introduced, based on AI.



Find out how ARAG used the cultural cards in the article about the company's transformation, beginning on page 57.

"The City of Amsterdam: Amazing Results Due to Incremental Steps and the Ripple Effects of an 'Oil Stain' AI Approach" highlights the way that small actions can have large impacts, while reminding the reader of the power of persistence. In a rapidly changing environment, taking consistent small steps will lead to consistent results. The creativity that was deployed in engaging people speaks to the importance of using multiple tools to engage participants. Appreciative Inquiry is a methodology and process that can easily partner with other disciplines, such as LEAN, to strengthen organizational performance. With their story, the authors demonstrate their commitment to finding an "and" approach, rather than settling for "either/or".

Culture transformation is a process ideally suited for Appreciative Inquiry and challenging to measure results. The authors of the next article, "From 'Best' to 'Even Better': Rapid Relational Results at ARAG North America" undertook a process that allowed for measurements of results, and they were impressive. The story provides a detailed journey for getting results and shares several tools and processes such as Chatter (an internal social networking platform), Innovation Champions and an "all company brainstorm" for creating sustainability and developing organizational capacity. The comments from the organization and the results data speak to the power Appreciative Inquiry has in transforming organizations.

There needs to be a continued focus on delivering clear results and measuring them.

Following the thread

The thread that runs through all the articles and stories is the ability to tailor AI principles and methodology to the specific need of the client organization. It is this tailoring that underscores the power of AI: each engagement delivers results, in a manner that uniquely brings out the best in each system. The process of writing the articles allowed for a period of reflection over the engagements that served to bring clarity to the results achieved. Even at today's hectic pace, there is an opportunity to reflect on the results achieved and leverage processes that deliver results. Several items stand out:

- Each story had a different process that can be modified and applied in a myriad of scenarios to will deliver results.
- The consultants had the appreciative mindset discussed by Whitney and Fredrickson that served to guide their work.
- There was creativity and innovation in the development and application of AI-based tools and processes that reminds the reader that the application/ utilization of Appreciative Inquiry is limitless.
- That measuring results is important to further the work of Appreciative Inquiry and to remind client organizations of the progress they are making in delivering results.
- The power of appreciative conversations – each story talked about the power of conversation in creating results, with several tools being offered to use in developing appreciative conversations.

It has been encouraging to see the energy and enthusiasm clients had for sharing results and the pride the client/consultant team had in telling their story of results. As the application of Appreciative Inquiry continues to broaden, and as practitioners continue to be creative in its use, there needs to be a continued focus on delivering clear results and measuring them. These stories have demonstrated, in the clients' voice, the power of showcasing those results.

Ralph Weickel
August, 2015



David Shaked

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About the November 2015 Issue

Appreciative & Strengths-based Lean Thinking: Positive Engagement with Business Improvement and Efficiency

The November 2015 issue of AI Practitioner explores ways of combining Appreciative Inquiry and Lean Thinking to achieve results that exceed expectations.



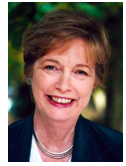
Lean Thinking is a widely known and practised approach to driving efficiency and business improvement. It is used by large and small businesses, by public-sector organisations and increasingly by the not-for-profit sector.

Many of the principles and the original thinking behind Lean Thinking have a positive focus. However, most applications of Lean Thinking follow the classic deficit-focused approach to problem-solving: understanding the existing efficiency problems in detail, finding root causes for the gaps and fixing them. It is based on an assumption that there is a theoretical "perfect state" for each organizational process and that the current state deviates from the perfect state due to inefficiencies and waste.

For several years the editors of the November issue have been taking a different approach, exploring the question: Can Lean practice and thinking be merged with Appreciative Inquiry principles, thinking and practice, with its clear, strength-focused approach to "problem solving"? Our experience has shown us that it certainly can and that in doing so, our results exceed expectations, and motivation for improvement is increased.

This issue will contain articles highlighting the many innovative ways Appreciative Inquiry can be integrated with Lean Thinking in practice to enhance the overall results and experience of all involved. These articles share tried and tested tools, processes and new thinking from all around the world and also include unique client testimonials taken during and after each intervention.

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Purpose of AI Practitioner

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