

Ai Practitioner

The international newsletter of Ai best practice

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On Appreciative Strategy: an introduction to the November 2003 issue of Ai Practitioner

guest editors

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Welcome to the November Issue of the Ai Practitioner. 'Appreciative Strategy' uses the principles of AI to provide a holistic positive framework for strategic assessment, formulation, planning, and implementation. It explores when an organization has been at its very best, involves an extended group of stakeholders and appreciates the wider social and environmental context in which the organization flourishes.

Often time strategic plans have sat on shelves around the world. We believe strategies are living and energetic inquiries with appreciative intent. So our intent has been to learn more on how Appreciative Inquiry has been used in strategic management and planning field. We asked several questions:

Tell me about a time when you had fabulous success in using the principles of AI in the assessment, formation, planning, and implementation of strategy.

What worked really well?

What brought the process to life?

What was your part in that?

What did appreciative inquiry and strategic planning process look like?

What are your three wishes for the future of appreciative strategy?

If you want to hear the answers from your colleagues in the field, then welcome to the November edition of the Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner, which has a special focus on Appreciative Strategy and Appreciative Inquiry and Strategic Planning. The issue is packed with practical and theoretical work at the cutting edge of Appreciative Strategy. In these pages you will find a positive core of tried-and-tested ideas that make unique difference to clients and their world of endeavour.

We start with an article on 'The Heart of Appreciative Strategy', by two of our editors, Sutherland and Stavros. Where has strategy come from? How do the principles of AI impact on strategic planning? What might Appreciative Strategy look like?

The theoretical ideas from this first article are given practical expression in the piece on 'Strategic Inquiry and Appreciative Intent', by Stavros, Cooperrider, and Kelley. This shows what can happen when a positive focus on strategy is put into strategic planning systems and action. This article also introduces us to the SOAR! model, a practical and positive framework used as part of the strategic planning process.

Next, we have a series of eight practical examples from the field of Appreciative Strategy, each with learning points to offer on what worked best and their own story to tell.

In case 1 Morris and Dowse help us in preparing senior managers for the work of strategy.

In case 2 Alfred shares a brave use of silence in deepening strategic debate.

In case 3 Sutherland shows how his 4P's alternative to the SWOT analysis can be used in mentoring a director in the formation of vision and strategy.

In case 4 Lee has preparation work down to a fine art and notes the usefulness of scenario planning in strategic formulation.

In case 5 Gordon and Egan find a horse or two helpful alongside AI in developing strategic vision!

In case 6 Canine finds pre-work a positive boon in steeping the vision work for a media company in the positive core of shared experiences.

In case 7 Bright, Fry, and Barrett show us just what can be achieved when you are invited back to follow through on earlier strategic work.

In case 8 - Mann and Silbert highlight how Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was leveraged to enable such a rapid response to developing a collaborative and wide-ranging HIV/AIDS strategy in Ethiopia.

We close with two reflections:

One from the poet David Whyte, who has kindly given us permission to print a poem he offered a commercial client as part of their strategic work. The second is our own reflection on some key learning points from this edition of the *Ai Practitioner* on Appreciative Strategy and our three wishes for the future.

Our heartfelt thank you goes to each case writer and their clients who have co-created new processes in the field of strategy and AI. Special note and sincerest appreciation goes from John to Anne Radford and Mette Jacobsgaard for all they taught him on five days of AI training in London earlier this year. And loving appreciation to our family members John's wife Gill, Marge's husband Simon, Jackie's husband Paul and father-in-law Ed. During the time of writing and editing these four individuals helped read the theory and concept articles while each of us celebrated a wedding anniversary!

We have kept you long enough. Get in there and enjoy.

Jackie Stavros, John Sutherland and Marge Schiller

Publisher's note: Extended versions of many of the articles in this issue are available at the Ai Practitioner website at www.aipractitioner.com/newshop/, or for subscribers at your usual subscription gateway.