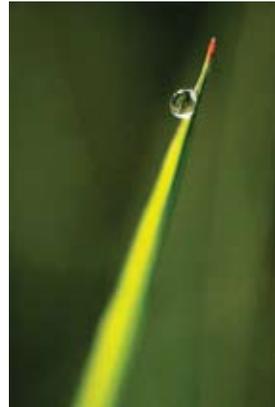


The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations

APPRECIATIVE PERSPECTIVES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COACHING



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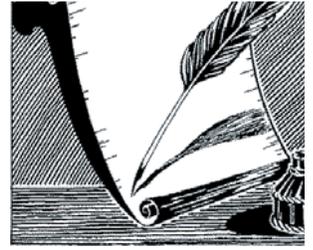
By William Bergquist
and John Lazar

“The shift from deficit consciousness to appreciative consciousness is profoundly important. After being trained to see what’s missing, what’s wrong, what’s dysfunctional ... to moving to what’s working ... and especially ... what do you want more of ... has been very useful. It has meant moving away from doing a diagnosis ... finding a problem and cure ... to getting a multiplicity of voices involved (to listen and talk) rather than to diagnose. . . . The thing that concerns me most about the current excitement and interest in appreciative inquiry (AI) is that many of the consultants and managers

I talk to who claim to be doing AI don’t seem to really understand it. . . . They all seem to get blinded by the “positive stuff”. After years of focusing on problems and deficits and dysfunction they get entranced with ‘focusing on the positive’ and equate this with AI. But that’s not the core of appreciative inquiry. AI is about the generative, not the positive. . . .

Generativity occurs when people collectively discover or create new things that they can use to positively alter their collective future. AI is generative in a number of ways. It is the quest for new ideas, images, theories and models that liberate our collective aspirations, alter the social construction of reality and, in the process, make available decisions and actions that weren’t available or didn’t occur to us before. When successful, AI generates spontaneous, unsupervised, individual, group and organizational action toward a better future.”

— From “Appreciative Inquiry and Coaching: AI Is Not About the Positive [An Interview with Gervase Bushe]” Interview conducted by Suzan Guest, Psy.D.



...of the Co-Editors

Positive psychology is a newly-born product of 21st Century complexity, unpredictability and turbulence. We are looking for a way to make sense of the world and for a way to remain optimistic about the future, in a world that is filled with fear, terror and polarization. Appreciative inquiry is one of the “toys” with which the newly-born positive psychology is playing—especially in the domains of organizational leadership, development and culture. Even more broadly, we are finding that organizations are being viewed, increasingly, from what might be called an “appreciative perspective” and that there is new opportunity for influencing organizational life by helping the leaders of these organizations shift the narratives in their organizations regarding success, advancement, vision, and opportunities. Given the emerging pre-eminence of this leadership and organization development meta-strategy, we believe it is important to also trace out the implications of this appreciative perspective for another 21st Century strategy: organizational coaching.

We first offer a powerful, personal account regarding ways in which not a coach—but instead a physician—has taken a positive and appreciative approach in treating the ailments of a noted international coach: Philippe Rosinski. After this very personal article, we turn to three articles that provide a broader, theoretical framework for understanding ways in which an appreciative perspective currently does or could be engaged in the field of organizational coaching. The first of these articles contains an interview conducted by Suzan Guest with Gervase Bushe, one of the founders and leading thought-leaders in the field of appreciative inquiry. Bushe emphasizes the importance of “generativity” when taking an appreciative approach to organizational change. The second article, written by Susan Meyer, Loretta Donovan and Stephen Fitzgerald, focuses on ways in which transformative learning (inherently embedded in masterful organizational coaching) links with appreciative inquiry in the production of deep organizational change. The third article, written by one of us (WB), offers a broadening perspective on appreciation and provides several suggestions concerning ways in which appreciative perspectives can be of benefit to those engaged in organizational coaching.

A second set of articles moves us toward the practical application of appreciative strategies to organizational coaching. Linda Page describes the ways in which appreciative metaphors can help bring

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about paradigm shifts in organizational settings—offering a personal example of metaphor (“my grandmother’s kitchen”) as it impacted on her own role as president of the Adler Institute in Toronto. Additional appreciative strategies are offered by Daniel Eckstein, Phyliss Cooke and Donna Eckstein, who describe a wide range of ways in which organizational coaches can be encouraging (building on these own interviews with 1,000 men and women).

This issue concludes with two of the frequently appearing features of *IJCO*. First, we offer our fourth set of dialogues between experienced senior coaches—in this case, Wayne Caskey, PCC and Zoran Todorovic, MCC. Their joint interview focuses on the multidimensionality of coaching in organizations. Finally, we turn as we do in virtually every issue of *IJCO* to the wise and provocative words of Mike Jay in his Musing. In this case, Mike offers his own variation on appreciative inquiry, which he labels “dynamic inquiry,” and suggests ways in which this inquiry should inform our work as organizational coaches.

So . . . we invite you to savor these diverse perspectives regarding appreciative healing, appreciative inquiry, appreciative perspectives, multidimensional perspectives, and the use of metaphor, encouragement and dynamic inquiry. We are entering a remarkable era in the formulation and use of organizational coaching strategies. Hopefully, we have captured some of the diversity and richness of these strategies in this issue of *IJCO*.

William Bergquist
John Lazar