

The Challenge of Change: Turning Disruption into Opportunity

Catalyzing Whole-Systems Change through Appreciative Inquiry.....and Other Methods!

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Large Group Sessions



Small Group Sessions



Report-out Sessions: Sumitra



Report-out: Rahul



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Total Staff at Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT) = ~100

Total #'s involved (planning & participation):

- 40 Staff
- 45 children (25 children individually, 1 group of 20 children)

- Interviews: 43 conducted (27 staff; 15 children individually, 1 group of 20 children)
- Workshops: 3, all facilitated in Hindi - both staff and children attended

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SBT CEO's Comments:

- "This practicum helped the institution to form a positive mission and vision for its two very important programs, Health (physical & mental) and Outreach & Identification. It also helped us get an idea how to re-structure the program to benefit the children to its maximum."

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The Problem of Change

- We know change happens continuously.
- We know change will happen to each of us!
- We often know the logical reasons why change needs to happen... that is, when it is logical, which isn't always the case.
- But, we still resist change... we often find it disruptive, difficult and traumatic.
- Many people will say they hate change.

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Do we really hate change?

- "People don't hate change; they hate how you're trying to change them."
- "How very true. The people at the bottom of the chain live with the company's problems every day and generally know far more about them than upper management. The top-down command and control approach to managing people fails because its decisions often bear no connection to reality since they are made in ignorance of what is really going on."

From Acronym, ASAE & the Center for Association Leadership

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Turning the "I hate change" attitude around:

- "Successful companies engage people much earlier in the front end of the planning process. When people are engaged up front and are a part of generating the tactical plans, there is no need to get "buy-in" at any point. The ideas are already theirs."
- Citing a cement company's success - "That's the power of engagement up front. When people are invited in to help solve tough business problems and have a big impact on the results, they become inspired, motivated and engaged. This approach to leadership unlocks power in the organization."

From Acronym, ASAE & the Center for Association Leadership

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The real power of whole-systems approaches to change:

- Engagement
- Empowerment
- Unlocks innovation
- Fosters a Sense of Ownership
- Develops Teamwork/Collaboration
- Leads to understanding the Whole System – Encourages systems thinking
- Leads to real implementation
- Creates Sustainable Change

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What's really happening here?

- Changing the culture of the organization! Sceptics will ask: So what? Does it really make a difference?
- “Until I came to IBM, I probably would have told you that culture was just one among several important elements in any organization’s makeup and success—along with vision, strategy, marketing, financials, and the like... I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn’t just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value.”

Lou Gerstner, from his book
“Who Says Elephants Can’t Dance?”,
after turning around IBM.

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Realistic Assumptions:

- *Change will continually happen.
- *Change will happen at all levels.
- *Change in one unit will affect other units.

John Kotter...

- Managers deal with **organizational complexity** – Management “produces a degree of predictability”.
- Leaders deal with **change** – Leadership “produces change, often to a dramatic degree”.

Leading Change, Harvard Business Press, 1996

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Can the leaders in your organization facilitate a culture where effective, sustainable change can occur?

- The good news...this is really about leaders developing high levels of Emotional Intelligence, ...
- EI can be learned by those who are willing to learn...
- and, the success of leaders can be predicted on the basis of EI... not primarily on the basis of IQ!

The Emotionally Intelligent leader is a resonant leader, not a command and control leader!

Are you a Resonant Leader?

- Are you inspirational?
- Do you create a positive, hopeful emotional tone?
- Are you in touch with others? Do you know what is on people’s hearts and minds? Do you experience and demonstrate compassion?
- Are you mindful – authentic and in tune with yourself, others, and the environment?

Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, 2005

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Whole-systems approaches can lead to innovative, effective, and sustainable change ... particularly in organizations with resonant leadership.

Examples of Whole-Systems Methods :

- Appreciative Inquiry
David Cooperrider - CWRU
- Open Space Technology
Harrison Owen

However, there are many whole-systems methods available... find one or more that fit your organization... or, design your own, e.g., as GE did! The key is to engage people across the organization and at all levels of the organization.

The Change Handbook, Holman and Devane, 2007.

- Over 60 methods summarized

Appreciative Inquiry

A radically positive approach to whole-systems organizational transformation, focusing on:

- Current strengths... *the best of what is.*
- Brainstorming ideas about the ideal... *the best of what could be.*
- Designing the future organization... *what will be.*
- Making it happen... *what will be, starting now!*

Appreciative Inquiry: The 4-D Cycle

- **Discovery**... *the best of what is.*
- **Dream**... *the best of what could be.*
- **Design**... *crafting what will be.*
- **Destiny**... *what will be, starting now!*

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Appreciative Inquiry:

A Flexible Methodology for Change

Core Features:

- The unconditionally positive question.
- The Appreciative Inquiry interview.

Working groups... various combinations:

- Interviews in dyads/triads
- Small group sessions
- Large group sessions

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Discovery... *the best of what is.*

Sample AI Question: What has been the best experience you've had in the SPH? What specifically was happening that made this your best experience?

- **Response:** *When I came into the new SPH to lead and design a new MPH Stream, I found an enthusiastic acceptance of unique ideas for innovative courses and educational methodologies. I also received encouragement to continue to move in new directions.*

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Discovery... *the best of what is.*

Sample AI Question: When was the SPH at its very best? What was it doing specifically that put it at its best...that differentiated this time from other times?

- **Response:** *Moving quickly on forming the new school, realizing adjustments would have to be made rapidly to get it "right", and listening to the students for their ideas of what "right" means. There was a positive sense of urgency.*

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Dream... *the best of what could be.*

Sample AI Question: If you could transform the SPH in any way you wished to increase its effectiveness... to make it a more vital organization... to make it the public health educational institution of the future, what are the three highest priority things you would do and how would you do them? Be specific!

- **Response:** Create a much more flexible curriculum, using variable course credits, with more new elective courses. Create as much elective time as possible while still covering the required core materials.

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Design... *crafting what will be.*

- We have identified our strengths, the things we are really good at, as well as a variety of exciting possibilities for what we could become at our very best. Now we need to ask ourselves:

“What is the best combination of current strengths and exciting directions for the future that will make our public health educational programs the best in Canada”.

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Destiny... *what will be, starting now!*

At this point in looking at our organization, we know the strengths we have to build upon, and we've decided on our best directions for the future, i.e., a vision of what we want to become. (*This vision is a set of propositions about our ideal future.*)

- **What actions do we need to take, starting right now, to make our vision become our new reality?**

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Sample Proposition and Action:

(Affirmative Topic: Reaching Out...Near and Far)

- **Proposition:** The School of Public Health continuously develops its educational, research and service efforts so as to maximize its positive influence on public health provincially, nationally and globally.
- **Action Step:** Design the Public Health Leadership Stream in a way that clearly recognizes the diversity of health care and social systems from which our graduate students come, so that the program is equally relevant for any graduate student, regardless of their home country.

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A Typical Appreciative Inquiry: Sequencing the Process

- 1 - The decision to pursue and support change planning through AI.
- 2 - AI interviews for Affirmative Topic Selection – General AI questions.
- 3 - Identification of themes and drafting of Affirmative Topics.
- 4 - Drafting of specific AI questions for Affirmative Topics.

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AI Process Sequence Continued:

- 5 - AI Interviews: Individually or in AI Workshops using AI questions specific to Affirmative Topics.
- 6 - AI Workshops/Summit: Discussions and consensus building on key findings/ideas/future directions, ... followed by drafting of provocative propositions about the future ... and the actions that will immediately begin the process of making the new organizational design become the new reality, i.e., your “destiny”.

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NGO in Delhi, India: Samantha, Global Health MPH Graduate Student

- One course in whole-systems change: first and only introduction to Appreciative Inquiry.
- First attempt at designing and conducting an Appreciative Inquiry process.
- Working in another country and not knowing the language.
- A different culture with “top-down” management .
- She made it work!

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An American Dental School's Administrative Council: The “Executive Leadership Team”

- The Dean's description of their team: “We're not strategic; we just seem to always be ‘putting out fires’, not exactly the visionary leadership that people expect from our senior leadership group.”
- A series of three half-day AI workshops, the development of five propositions about their ideal Administrative Council, and action steps for each of the propositions.

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Administrative Council Sample Proposition With the Council's Action Commitment

- **Proposition:** The Administrative Council believes that a dynamic strategy development and implementation process is essential to the ongoing positive progress of the School, and continuously focuses the school's directions and actions through this process.
- **Action:** The Administrative Council immediately initiated an Appreciative Inquiry strategic planning process that involved dental students, staff, faculty, patients, alumni, professional groups and other school supporters, as well as other members of the University and local community.

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A case study on this intervention was published in 2006:

- Zakariasen K., *The importance of process in building an executive leadership team: A case study.* Healthcare Management Forum, Spring 2006, pages 6 – 10.

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The University of Alberta 2007-2011 Academic Plan, *Dare to Deliver*

- Decision by the Provost to turn over the drafting of the academic plan to a small group of faculty who came to be known as the “Three Wise People”, certainly more of a hope than a definitive statement! (*The Provost is both a risk taker and a resonant leader!*)
- Decision by the “Three Wise People” to listen to any and all individuals and groups in the University who wanted to provide input, to encourage them to do so, and to not stop the listening process until the point of data saturation. (Our “wisest” decision.)

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- In the end, what resulted was a very successful hybrid whole-systems planning process that was the first of its kind at the University of Alberta.
- We are recommending, for the next academic planning cycle, that the faculty committee be involved much earlier in the process, and that an AI or similar methodology be utilized.

Note: Presented at the first World Universities Forum in January 2006 in Davos, Switzerland, and published in 2008:

Zwicker H., Zakariasen K., *University of Alberta Academic Planning 2007-2011: The Provosts Initiative on Faculty-Driven, Whole-Systems Academic Planning and Its Outcomes*, Journal of the World Universities Forum, Vol. 1, 2008.

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A New Graduate Program - The MPH in Public Health Leadership:

- Primary focus: The leader as an agent of change.
- Basics of Leadership: Focusing on the practices of successful leaders and leading change.
- Whole-Systems Approaches to Organizational Change.
- Advanced Leadership: Leadership Assessment and the Development of Individual Leadership Strategies

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Building on the Discipline of Organization Development

Focusing on:

- Change and change agency.
- The centrality of people to organizational success and effective change efforts.
- Helping people grow.
- The concept of the learning organization.
- The effectiveness of OD inquiry methods.
- OD constructs applied as both educational methodology and course content for leaders.

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Recent article on the new graduate program:

- Zakariasen K., Zakariasen Victoroff K., Karegyeya G. (2008), *Developing a Public Health Leadership Graduate Program Responsive to a Global Perspective*, Leadership in Health Services, Vol.21(4), pp. 267-277.

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Be the leader you would want to follow.

Anonymous

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Gandhi

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