Appreciative Agile

Changing the world one question at a time

Scrum Gathering 2012

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Share Experience
Inform
Practical Applications
Feedback
Use
What is the most insightful thing that you have learned at this Scrum Gathering so far?

What great things can you envision happening if you apply what you have learned?
So what is “Appreciative Agile”

AND

How does it apply Scrum??
Appreciate – to value, to recognize with gratitude, to increase in value

Inquiry – to seek to understand through the asking of questions
Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations and communities, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives “life” to an organization or community when it is most effective, and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms.

David Cooperrider
As a life-centric change process (AI)…pays attention to the best in us, not the worst; to our strengths, not our weaknesses; to possibility thinking, not problem thinking …a change method with the perspective that every system, human and otherwise, has something that works
Collaborative Loops
Dialogue and Deliberation
Integrated Clarity
Open Space Technology
Technology of Participation
Whole-Scale Change
The World Café
Appreciative Inquiry
Ancient Wisdom Council
The Conference Model
Consensus Decision Making
Conversation Café’
Dynamic Facilitation
The Genuine Contact Program
Human Systems Dynamic
Leadership Dojo
Gemeinsinn-Werkstatt Project Framework
Idealized Design
Evolution of Open Systems Theory
Open Space – Online-Real Time
Organization Workshop
Peer Spirit Circling
Power of Imagination Studio
Real-Time Strategic Change
SimuReal Action Learning in Hyperdrive
Study Circles
Think Like a Genius
Web Lab’s Small Group Dialogues
Dynamic Planning
Future Search
Scenario Thinking
Search Conference
Community Summits
Large Group Scenario Planning
Empowerment
Values Into Action
WorkOut
SOAR
Strategic Forum
Strategic Visioning
21st Century Town Meeting
Community Weaving
Participative Design Workshop
Collaborative Work Systems Design
The Whole Systems Approach
Rapid Results
Six Sigma
Action Learning
Action Review
Balanced Scorecard
Civic Engagement
The Cycle of Resolution
Employee Engagement Process
Online Environments
Playback Theatre
Appreciative Inquiry is just as much a way of being in the world as a way of doing in the world—a philosophy and a practice.
Many (most) organizations are...

problem-focused
fear/conformance based
command/control centric
Choose your lens

Issues, deficits, failures

OR

Possibilities, strengths, successes
Key Assumption

In every organization or group there is something that works
The power of AI lies in...

THE POSITIVE CORE

and the impact it has on teams
Appreciative Agile starts with the questions that we ask and how we ask them
Key Assumption

We live in the world our questions create
Our questions determine the results we get.

The more positive our question, the more it will create the possible.
Constructionist Principle

Words create worlds
Fear
Blaming
Complaining
Problems
Excuses
We can’t...
Failures

Appreciating
Possibilities
Creativity
Envisioning
What if...
Strengths
Successes

Future

Future

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Fear
Blaming
Complaining
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We can’t...
Failures

Appreciating
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Creativity
Envisioning
Experimenting
What if...
Strengths
Successes

Future

Future
POSSIBILITY ≠ PIE IN THE SKY
Key Assumption

Change begins with the very first question
Key Assumption

Our questions create movement and change
Simultaneity Principle

Inquiry and change are simultaneous
Poetic Principle

What we focus on grows
Anticipatory Principle

Image inspires action
Positive Principle

Positive affect leads to positive action
The Positive Core
+ Possibilities
+ Vision
+ Appreciative Mindset

= CULTURAL CHANGE
The Positive Core
+ Possibilities
+ Vision
+ Appreciative Mindset

= CULTURAL CHANGE
Why are our estimates so bad?

What can we do to improve our estimates?

Why wasn’t Story X completed on time?

How can we track story progress more accurately? Or...how can we deliver ALL of our stories on time?

Who has not been on time for the daily standups?

How can we improve standup attendance? Or...how we can get everyone excited about standups?

Why won’t Bob participate?

What are Bob’s strengths and how can we help him contribute??

Or...Bob is great at xxx – how can we build on his strengths?

Our manager is not supporting us.

How can we help our manager better understand our needs?
EXERCISE – 5 min

1) Pick one problem, project, issue, question that you have encountered recently and restate in a way that creates possibilities.

2) Discuss how the situation may have changed or the results could have been different.
AI and Systems Thinking

“The change process in any part of a system creates change in all parts of the system.”
The Heart of the Method: Appreciative Interview
Practical Applications:

Ask positive possibility-focused questions
Become aware of words and language
Tell success stories
Appreciative team building/retrospectives
Conduct Appreciative workshops in Sprint 0
Visualize the future, e.g. ideal sprint, release, product, etc...
Affirmative Topic Choice

DISCOVER
“What gives life?”
(the best of what is)
APPRECIATING

DESTINY
“How to empower, learn & adjust/improve”
SUSTAINING

DREAM
“What might be?”
(what is the world calling for)
ENVISIONING RESULTS

DESIGN
“What should be the ideal?”
CO-CONSTRUCTING

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Creating High-Performing Teams

Workshop

Adapted from
Step 1: The Appreciative Interview (Pairs)
Step 2: The Positive Core 2A-B (Table)
Step 3: Envision the ideal (sprint)
Step 4: Reflection
Step 1: The Appreciative Interview (Pairs)

(5 minutes per interview)

1. **Experience Question**

Tell me a story about a time when you were part of a high-performing team that really worked—an exciting time of high performance and success. Describe that experience in detail.

2. **Values Question**

What is it that you value most about high-performing teams and being a member of a high-performing team?

3. **Life-Giving Force Question**

From your experience observations, what do you consider the core value(s), the life-giving force of a high-performing team?

4. **Wishes and Images of the Future**

Imagine that you are part of a high-performing team that fulfills all your expectations for excellence. Describe that team in detail.

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Step 2A: The Positive Core (Table)

(10 minutes)

1. In your small groups, interviewers introduce their interview partners and share the high points of their partners’ stories of “High Performing Teams.”

• As you listen respectfully, focus on the common themes that come up in the stories.

2. From the collective stories you’ve heard about high performing teams, what themes emerge: themes of strengths, assets, success factors?
Step 2B: The Positive Core (Table)

(10 minutes)

1. As a group – identify the common themes that are most significant in high-performing teams.

2. Collectively agree on a list of 3-5 common themes and document those themes.

3. Designate a speaker to present your group’s common themes.
Example Table Output:

Meet challenges; collaboratively contribute in open, receptive environment; personally grow, then enable others to empower themselves; AUTHENTICITY; greater responsibility; asking the right questions; successful outcomes.
Envision the ideal sprint

This week the team was lively and feeling very empowered. We reviewed the user stories and acceptance criteria with the product owner and created a clear, concise picture of what we needed to build. We conducted a planning poker session in which everyone was engaged in authentic discussion about each story and identified key technical aspects that we needed to address. We committed with a fist-of-five to the top five user stories and felt very confident that we could deliver those stores. The team then created a sprint backlog and we kicked off the sprint with a team appreciation session. During the sprint everyone was on time for standups, reported successes and focused in a positive way on impediments. We moved quickly as a team to overcome obstacles. The demo for the product owner was attended by many of the stakeholders and even some executive managers. Everyone was impressed with what we had accomplished and our energetic, creative way of working together.
“There are only two ways to live your life. One as though nothing is a miracle. The other as though everything is a miracle.”

Albert Einstein