

Real World Methodology: Appreciative Inquiry

By Michaela Santen

The editors of the 100th issue of *New Directions in Evaluation*, titled "Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation," wondered "...if there was a place for Appreciative Inquiry in the evaluator's toolbox." While the issue sought to introduce evaluators to Appreciative Inquiry (AI), the idea that it could be added to the "evaluator's tool box" may confuse what AI is and what it's not.

AI is not a new concept. It started in 1984 when a team of consultants were brought in to conduct an organizational improvement assessment of The Cleveland Clinic – consistently ranked among top US hospitals. The team interviewed employees asking them about the positive aspects of their work. This focus on the positive brought out a "wave of energy" and actually enhanced the clinic's successes by bringing this energy back out.

The "tool" the team used was your standard structured interview – something every evaluator has readily available in their toolbox. What the team discovered, however, is that a new perspective on an old tool made it even more effective. By focusing on what was already working for the organization, the team was able to help The Cleveland Clinic build on those successes.

So, if AI is not a new tool, then what is it? It's a philosophy. It's a perspective. It's a way of questioning that stops trying to figure out what went wrong. Instead, it asks "what

went right."

There are four basics steps to AI dubbed, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. As you will see, the steps are run of the mill evaluation or strategic planning. You start by asking what has gone well in the past (Discover). Then of those, what might work well again (Dream). From that list decide what you want to try again and prioritize your approach (Design). And then, go out and do what you said you wanted to do (Destiny).

4 D's of Appreciative Inquiry

- Discover - "Best of what was"
- Dream - "What might be"
- Design - "What should be"
- Destiny - "What will be"

The revolutionary piece is the shift from trying to figure out what's broken to figuring out what works and repeating that.

AEA was right in asking the question of whether or not evaluators can learn something from AI. What AI offers is a new approach to using the old tools we already have. Rather than looking for the cause of the evaluation problem you are looking to solve, instead try to redirect your focus to what is working well and leverage that success.

For more information on Appreciative Inquiry or for the sources for this article:

Preskill, Hallie & Anne T. Coghlan (editors). Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation: New Directions for Evaluation, No. 100, January 2004

Kinni, Theodore. The Art of Appreciative Inquiry. Harvard Business Review. September 22, 2003. <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/3684.html>

Appreciative Inquiry Commons (website). Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University.; <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>



About the Newsletter...

The Newsletter is one way to help AaEA members: *Learn, Participate, Share, Network and Evaluate*

Each issue contains an article to help us:

- *Learn and Evaluate* by translating methodology into practice,
- *Participate* by featuring recent or upcoming AaEA events,
- *Share and Network* by putting a spotlight on one of our members.

CONTACT US!

Have a suggested topic for one or more of these areas?

Or is there something else you'd like to see in the newsletter?

Want to write an article yourself?

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Atlanta area Evaluation Association

Visit Us on the Web!!!
http://evalatl.org
email: info@evalatl.org

Learn, Participate, Share, Network and Evaluate.

Featured Event: 3rd Thursdays

Join the AaEA Council,
Committee Chairs,
and your fellow Evaluators for
3rd Thursdays!

The 3rd Thursday of every month AaEA members gather in open forum to:

- **Learn** about an evaluation topic of interest
- **Participate** in the planning of future AaEA programming
- **Share** evaluation experiences
- **Network** with other evaluators
- **Evaluate** your own work by gaining feedback from your peers

When: 3rd Thursday of the Month

12:30-2:00pm

Where: Girl Scouts of

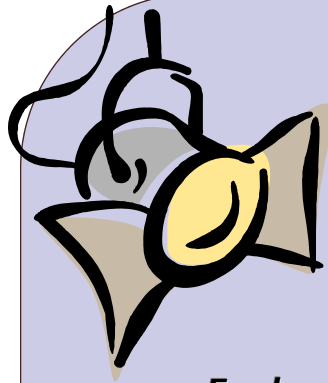
Northwestern Georgia

1577 Northeast Expressway,

Atlanta, GA 30329

For more information, contact:

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AaEA Member Spotlight

AaEA members come from diverse professional and educational backgrounds. We appreciate these differences and yet recognize similarities in our work. This section of the newsletter focuses on an AaEA member, their organization, and the evaluation functions they perform.

Brandee Menoher Evaluation Manager with Hands On Network

What are your role and responsibilities as an evaluator?

Conduct national and international data collection and evaluation initiatives for Hands On Network and its affiliate organizations; Provide training and technical assistance for affiliates and national staff to strengthen assessment and evaluation capacity. Develop internal procedures for improving data management and utilization practices. Monitor affiliate performance and organizational Standards of Success program. Participate in organizational strategic development, management and leadership initiatives.

What are your evaluation interests?

Organizational learning and evaluation capacity building, educational evaluation, evaluations for nonprofit and foundations; and evaluation utilization.

What evaluation challenges do you face in your job?

Increasing the capacity for evaluation and performance measurement in the nonprofit sector; balancing stakeholder information and evaluation needs.

About Hands on Network:

Hands On Network brings people together to strengthen communities through meaningful volunteer action. Hands On Network is a growing network of 69 volunteer organizations and more than one million volunteers changing communities in and outside the United States. For more information visit www.handsonnetwork.org

One more thing about, Brandee...

Brandee has played drums for more than 12 years. She's a gourmet pastry chef, and has hopes of opening a B&B with her hubby.

OH! Did we mention that when she's not rock'n'rolling, cooking, or business planning, she's traveling the world? Brandee visited 18 countries across 4 continents! It makes us tired just to write all that!

If you would like to be 'spotlighted' or want to shine the spotlight on someone else, please contact us!



Brandee Menoher