COMPLEMENTARY APPLICATION OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

R esumen

A bstract

En este artículo se resumen los procesos de Creative Problem Solving (CPS) y Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Ambos son procesos que contenienen sus debilidades respectivas. Sin embargo, este artículo describe cómo el AI y el CPS pueden complementarse para superar algunas debilidades como la dinámica improductiva del grupo encontrada a veces en sesiones de mejoramiento continuo y de círculos de calidad. Ambos procesos son necesarios: el CPS para sobrevivir diariamente; el AI para prosperar al largo plazo.

This paper reviews the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) processes. Both processes have their respective weaknesses. However, this paper describes how AI and CPS can complement each other to overcome them, namely, unproductive group dynamics sometimes found in continuous improvement and quality circle sessions. Both processes are necessary: CPS for surviving day-to-day, AI for prospering in the long run.

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INTRODUCTION

Creative Problem Solving is a change process used by organizations to continuously improve, conduct quality circles, and seek opportunities to reinvent themselves. The appeal of Creative Problem Solving (CPS) is its emphasis on approaching creative and critical thinking skilss in a more affirmative and constructive manner (Isaksen & Treffinger, 1985). CPS also consists of ground rules and road maps that provide navigation to breakthrough solutions (Miller, Firestien, & Vehar, 1997).

Despite these approaches to Creative Problem Solving facilitation, facilitators of CPS sometimes run into difficult group dynamics. Preplanning and assessing the task prior to facilitating a meeting goes a long way to anticipate and at best preclude these dynamics. A facilitator, however, may still encounter group members, for example, who deliberately do not engage in a CPS meeting because of fear, win/lose positioning or hidden agendas (Covey, 1989).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is also an affirmative change process that focuses on appreciating and valuing the best of reality, envisioning the future of what's best of that reality, and then manifesting what has been envisioned (Hammond, 1996). The appeal of AI theory is its emphasis on approaching creative and critical thinking with a more appreciative eye and in a more energizing manner (Hammond, 1996). Hammond (1996) stated, "It is this energy that distinguishes the generative process that results from Appreciative Inquiry." (p. 7) Because AI's focus is on appreciating and energizing, a facilitator of CPS may find this methodology complementary and useful for rebuilding and refocusing the team without having to divert a stage or postpone a meeting for deeper exploration and intervention.

Notwithstanding this approach to AI facilitation, facilitators at times may run into groups that at best only provide a few insights coupled with mostly superficial explanations;

or at worst, they encounter jeering. Subsequently, groups leave these sessions excited but shortsighted instead of leaving with better images of the future that are appreciated, applicable, provocative and collaborative (Bushe, 1995).

Because CPS is designed to clear the way for breakthrough solutions, a facilitator of AI may find the CPS methodology complementary to maintaining the group's energy levels and their visions of the future while transitioning to stages of idea development and road mapping of their vision. Table I illustrates a comparison of CPS and AI.

In this article the author briefly reviews the CPS and AI processes; describes example impediments to CPS and AI effectiveness; and, introduces how AI and CPS' complementary nature are useful for overcoming each other's impediments.

THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING (CPS)

The CPS process consists of three major components, namely, Explore the Challenge, Generation of Ideas, and the Plan for Action Component (Miller, Vehar, & Firestien, 1997). Each component has its stages. The Explore the Challenge component has identifying goals, wishes or challenges, gathering data and clarifying problems as its stages. The Generation of Ideas component has one stage and holds the same name as its component. The Plan for Action component has selecting and strengthening solutions and planning for action as its stages (Miller, Vehar, & Firestien, 1997). Furthermore, each stage strikes a balance between divergent thinking (a push for many responses) and convergent thinking (a push for one response). The balance that is struck in each stage equates to the same basic operating principle of a car: to move forward the car can't have its brakes and its accelerator pedals be depressed at the same time. Finally, a CPS meeting requires preplanning. It requires a thorough assessment of the task at hand and it also requires strategy before the start of the meeting (Puccio, 2001).

TABLE 1
CPS AND AI COMPARISON

CPS	AI
Explore the Challenge Component • Identify the goal, wish or challenge, Vehar, Miller, & Firestien, 1997). *Diverge* by providing many responses. *Converge* by selecting the best goal, wish or challenge. • Identify the facts, emotions, information and questions involving the goal, wish or challenge. *Diverge* by providing many responses. C *onverge* by selecting the best data. • Clarify the problem. *Diverge* by providing many responses. *Converge* by selecting best problem statements. **Generation of Ideas Component** • Generate ideas. *Diverge* by providing many responses. *Converge* by selecting the most promising ideas. **Plan for Action Component** • Select and strengthen solutions. *Diverge* by providing many responses. *Converge* by selecting the most promising criteria and then ideas. • Plan for action. *Diverge* by providing many responses. *Converge* by selecting the most promising actions.	**Discovery** • What do we do well? *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements. *Converge* by selecting the responses that stand out. **Dream** • What could be? *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements. *Converge* by finding themes. **Design** • What should be? Diverge by providing many responses to questions and statements. Converge by selecting the most promising provocative statements. **Destiny** • What will be? Diverge by providing many responses to questions and statements. Converge by selecting the most promising actions.

AI model adapted from Cooperider and Srivastva (1987).

An appealing ingredient to Creative Problem Solving is its iterative nature. In other words, a facilitator of Creative Problem Solving may deliberately, depending on the challenge and/or situation, move from one CPS stage to another or from one component to another. Another ingredient to CPS is its dynamic nature. A facilitator can draw from the many principles, theories and techniques of other change methodologies. And when applied to the stages, these external techniques contribute to the dynamic nature of CPS.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF CPS

There are three roles to appoint when preparing to use CPS with a group:

Facilitator

Generally, the facilitator is charged with the care of logistics, coordination, interface and preplanning with client or owner of the subject matter. The facilitator also provides direction to the group by promoting cohesion among group members and by removing blocks to process movement. The facilitator's role is to remain neutral. In essence, the facilitator is an expert of the CPS process with the primary focus of making CPS process decisions (Miller, Vehar, & Firestien, 1997).

Resource Group

The group members are charged with providing the client with many ideas and options. They are expected to provide energy to the group, speak up when something is not understood and provide insight without compromising the client's ownership of the content and subject matter.

Client

The client is charged with exercising decision-making authority to screen and select important pieces of information, ideas, solutions, and approve a plan to implement worthwhile solutions.

As stated earlier, there are three basic building blocks to CPS; each block consists of subset stages (Miller, Vehar, & Firestien, 1997). In each stage a variety of tools, methods and techniques—too many to include within the scope of this article— are used to facilitate the flow of CPS.

Explore the Challenge

• Identify the goal, wish or challenge (Vehar, Miller, & Firestien, 1997).

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions such as:

- Wouldn't it be nice if…? through use questions like:

What influence do you have on the goals, wishes or challenges?

How willing are you to take action on it?

Wouldn't be awful if…?

Converge by selecting the best goal, wish or challenge.

Does it require novel thinking?

• Identify the facts, emotions, information and questions involving the goal, wish or challenge.

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to the following questions:

What is involved in this situation?

Who is involved? Who are the key players?

When did this situation occur? How often does it occur?

Why does it occur?

- *Converge* by selecting the best data through use of the following questions:

What are the key pieces of data?

What data do you find interesting?

What data is relevant?

- Clarify the problem

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to the following questions:

How might I or we…?

In what ways might I or we…?

How to…?

- *Converge* by selecting best problem statements; use of the following questions:

What are some statements that are "ahas" to you?

Are there any "ahas" that are related? What are they?

Are there any themes that can be attributed to these related "ahas?"

Generation of Ideas Component

- Generate ideas

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to the following questions:

What are a variety of ideas to solve the problem?

From the ideas generated, how might you put them to other uses?

How might you adapt them?

- *Converge* by selecting the most promising ideas; use of the following questions:

Which ideas are a hit?

What are some advantages of the ideas?

What are some of the limitations of the ideas?

Plan for Action Component

- Select and strengthen solutions.

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to the following questions:

What do you see yourself doing?

What criteria should be considered?

What are the standards?

- *Converge* by selecting the most promising criteria and then ideas; use of the following questions:

What criteria are important?

How do the ideas measure up to the criteria?

What ideas are promising?

- Plan for action.

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to the following questions:

What are some actions that can be taken?

What are some sources of assistance and resistance to these actions?

- *Converge* by selecting the most promising actions; use of the following questions:

Who will do what in the next 24 hours, 7 days and 30 days?

What can help?

WHERE IMPASSES CAN OCCUR IN THE CPS PROCESS

When the word *problem* is used it connotes there is something wrong. Perhaps nowhere is the reality of this problem concerning the word problem more evident than in organizational climate latent with distrust. Organizational members naturally will ask themselves, "Why are we here? and, what prompted this meeting?". Because there is something wrong, the task then requires finding out why there is a problem and fixing it. But it also may require resource group members to feel vulnerable because they potentially expose themselves by responding to these questions.

Another impasse stems from negative perceptions of change and the events that follow it. Change, which is the end result of CPS, ultimately requires a person to let go through something that is of importance to them him. These changes initially produce endings and feelings of loss that are difficult for people to manage (Bridges, 1991). Although a client has authority, influence and decision-making power to carry out a CPS plan of action, the client nevertheless has to answer to constituents—of which some may be among the resource group members.

From a managerial perspective, the most cited block to creativity is fear: self-imposed or environmentally imposed (Groth & Peters, 1999). Some examples of self-imposed blocks are history of failure, fear of failure, stress, fear of success and fear of criticism or rejection. Some examples of environment imposed blocks are rules, standards, peer pressure, stress and money. Many of these fears manifest themselves throughout the phases of CPS. When a facilitator asks the client to select a goal or a challenge based on degree of ownership, motivation and required novelty, resource group members may feel compelled to resist when they perceive the client's selection as having an undesirable impact on them or the organization. In this situation behavioral guidelines are navigationally helpful in moving the group along a constructive and affirmative pathway but the guidelines exclusively do not

ensure the client of psychological and intrinsic buy-in from group members.

When a facilitator asks the client and resource group members to explore data, namely, facts, feelings, and questions surrounding the challenge, resource members sometimes cannot think about the challenge without wondering about the genesis of their current situation and of specific and immediate solutions to mitigate it (Schwarz, 1994). Albeit exploring this information is appropriate but not appropriate when the focus becomes the latter.

In some cases during the strengthening and developing solution stage, resource group members may become reticent to share and rank criteria; the process may mean exposing a hidden agenda (Schwarz, 1994). The implication here is that exposure leads to redress or to a perceived competitive loss stemming from a win/lose mentality.

THE GENERATIVE ENERGY OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Imagination is the beginning of creation. We imagine what we desire; we will what we imagine; and at last we create what we will.

George Bernard Shaw

Here is a man who understood Appreciative Inquiry (AI) a long time before Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) elaborated it. Even more remarkable are the similarities between Shaw's thoughts on the creative process and AI's basic phases: Discovery – what do we do well?, Dream – what could be?, Design – what should be? and Destiny – what will be? These four fundamental questions are the heart of AI, a provocative philosophy that assumes change is sparked by investigating what is of value. Find out what you do well and do more of it! A simple but radical proposition because it departs dramatically from traditional deficiency centered approaches to change.

Conventional problem solving processes operate on the assumption that fixing weaknesses will make everything all right.

AI challenges this popular notion by claiming excellence which can be achieved only by focusing on existing strengths. Error-free means average or normal, not excellent. Therefore, change is generated by first valuing the things you do well. To focus on strengths is energizing and exhilarating. Conversely, obsessing over weaknesses arouses defensiveness and leads to burnout. Naturally, a facilitator needs to locate and amplify energy for change, not to suffocate it. Regrettably, this is the unintended consequence of traditional deficiency centered approaches to problem solving and change management.

Now, it seems appropriate to distinguish traditional problem solving from creative approaches to problems. The author is talking about opposing virtues or polarities that are complementary in nature. Traditional ways are best suited for familiar day-to-day operational/technical problems that can benefit from a down to earth solution. However, unprecedented challenges demand new thinking and new configurations, enter CPS and AI. Clearly, the primary activity of a company is to exploit already proven ideas rooted in experience. However, enduring companies also explore and implement new ideas (Collins & Porras, 1994). Obviously, to

be truly effective organizations of all kinds need both.

AI leads to new thinking because it is a generative and collaborative process. By generative he means it focuses on what you want more of, instead of less of. Additionally, representatives from all parts of the system are encouraged to participate. This aspect emphasizes wholeness and collaboration. First, people are brought together to understand what they seek to change. Then, they are encouraged to build up their understanding by inquiring together into what is already working no matter how small it is. All this happens because AI assumes it is easier to expand the "positive" than to eradicate the "negative".

The foundational principle of AI is quite simple and incredibly powerful. Namely, that people and organizations grow in the direction that they focus their attention on. Therefore, it makes absolute sense to channel their energies toward desired results. This, in turn, generates its own momentum and engages people in building productive workplaces.

AI's foundational principle is also supported by key assumptions. Hammond (1996) describes them as follows: (1) In every

society, organization, or group, something works; (2) What we focus on becomes our reality; (3) Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities; (4) The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences this group in some way; (5) People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (The unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (The known); (6) If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past; (7) It is important to value differences; and, (8) The language we use creates our reality.

AI has been successfully applied to everything from reducing product development cycles to large-scale community development. However, what is most exciting is how AI invites all to think strategically and then to plan collectively. This is a big shift. Historically, strategic thinking and planning were the exclusive domains of top management. Now, AI offers an approach that democratizes strategizing. The timing could not be better when the speed and complexity of today's business world is considered.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF AI PROCESS

As stated before, there are four basic building blocks to AI of which are iterative and malleable in its design. The four blocks are (a) Discovery: appreciative interventions that begin with a search for the best examples of peak performances within the experiences of organizational members, (b) Dream: appreciative interventions that begin with insight creations into the forces that lead to superior performance as defined by organizational members, (c) Design: appreciative interventions that begin with a development of a vision that reflects the insights garnered from examining peak performances and, (d) Destiny: appreciative interventions that begin with the development of an action plan to reinforce and amplify the elements that contribute to these peak performances. Here is a proposed process flow model that parallels CPS:

Discovery - what do we do well?

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements such as:

Recall times when you felt "most alive, most vital and most energized at work.

Describe a time when you felt most proud in being a part of a team.

Describe incidents when you or someone you know went above and beyond to "wow" a customer.

- *Converge* by selecting the responses that stand out:

What responses grab you?

What responses are pressing?

What responses hit the mark?

Dream – what could be?

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements such as:

What contributed to these peak performances?

Describe the circumstances.

What does it feel like and look like to "wow" a customer? Why were you proud?

- *Converge* by finding themes

What are some of the values that emerge?

What other patterns do you see?

What insight do you get from looking at these responses?

Design – what should be?

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements such as:

What are the ways in which we can replicate peak performances?

Articulate themes as if they were already happening.

- *Converge* by selecting the most promising provocative statements:

Which provocative statement(s) will capture people's energy and excitement?

Does the statement stretch, challenge or interrupt?

Will people defend it or get passionate about it?

Are they articulated in a positive way?

Destiny – what will be?

- *Diverge* by providing many responses to questions and statements such as:

What are some actions that can be taken?

What are some sources of assistance to these actions?

- *Converge* by selecting the most promising actions; use of the following questions:

Who will do what in the next 24 hours, 7 days and 30 days?

What can help?

WHERE IMPASSES CAN OCCUR IN THE AI PROCESS

There are going to be times when the group reaches a lull. And sometimes using AI as a way to foster more thoughts may facilitate a retreat instead of an advancement. An AI question may just annoy or anger the group signaling a deeper problem requiring some type of intervention. Other times, a group may have an urgent view of the challenge and would prefer a top focus on what is wrong instead of what is right. Group members here may find dissecting and understanding the situation may yield more answers and instead may find AI as sidestepping real issues.

Sometimes the dynamic nature of a group may yield superficial explanations and perfunctory peak experiences not quite understanding the purpose, intent or the "how to" of generating the best of what exists in a group member's context. As AI is such a paradigm shifting experience, group members may get puzzled or have difficulty in generating peak experiences because this method is so different from what they have been asked to do for so many years.

A newly formed group, for example, may consequently find exploring their differences more fruitful than identifying peak experiences. Since the group is new, the experiences they share may be limited. And if they are asked to share stories from previous group experiences, they may feel shortened when their interests may be geared on understanding and optimizing differences.

Hammond (1996) provides a cautionary tale for facilitators to anticipate incongruence between group member excitements around a vision of the future with current job descriptions. She singles out an experience she had with one of her clients:

We had stayed together as a group and had taken turns giving answers to questions about what kind of work each person found most exciting. It became clear that what they found exciting did not fit their current job descriptions and the boss called them on it. (p. 48)

It turned out the manager had a history of employee abuse and his expressed intention to learn how to manage differently was not sincere (Hammond, 1996).

In these types of cases a thorough exploration of the context would have yielded unexpressed and true intentions during the preplanning stages of change initiative. However, a reluctant unmasking of clients may have also yielded counterproductive consequences. One way to navigate through sensitive situations is by having clients generate images of themselves, based on affirmative understanding of their past; this yields a productive transition of change initiatives for all stakeholders.

APPLYING AI TO CPS AND CPS TO AI

Group Impasse

One of the advantages of CPS is its inclusive design. It allows for other changing methodologies to be incorporated into the process based on task and situational needs. As the process is versatile and has a breadth of tools and techniques, the facilitator of CPS is at a greater advantage than other experts to tackle impasses.

A facilitator, aside from being expected to manage the CPS process, is also expected to manage negative group dynamics such as intergroup conflict, fear, I-win-you-lose positioning (Covey, 1989) and/or hidden agendas, to name a few. The same thought applies to AI theory. Left unanswered, dynamics will predictably play a role in breaking down group collaboration or worse, foster insincere collaboration. An effective strategy to curb these dynamics is to discuss and plan for challenging group dynamics to preclude them from surfacing during a CPS session. In this instance, AI is appropriate and effective in complementing a preplan; it is also more effective when used to accelerate group process throughout a CPS session. Tuckman (1965) described group process as encompassing four evolving stages that all groups must navigate to reach an optimum level of performance; these stages are forming, storming, norming, and performing. At the forming stage, the group members are learning and discovering about each other. Group member attitudes, behaviors, and influences are tested. At the storming stage, the group members know each other better and learning is used as a seedbed for intergroup rivalry and tension. At the norming stage, the group accepts group member roles, norms, and each other. At the performing stage, the group is highly effective and focused on achieving successful results while nurturing positive interpersonal relationships.

Although Heider (1985) argued that this process is self-regulating and should not be interrupted with control processes, the author argues, in part, that it *should* be interrupted, but not with control. Instead, it should be interrupted with affirmation. If there is a "storm" and it's allowed to rage, when the problems are deep-seeded and the group members carry long-memories, that storm will potentially become a destructive hurricane, especially when deep-seeded distrust is an issue. In some cases, a client or a group will not share their "dirty laundry" or issues to a facilitator. As a consequence, a CPS session would have transpired neatly, albeit insincerely, within the eye-wall of the hurricane.

Much of the dynamics in the forming and storming stages of group process stem from team members clashing and jockeying for position to establish their personal identities instead of being relegated, in their view, to complementary roles fulfilled by a follower (Srivastva, Obert, & Neilsen, 1977). The unintended effect of pushing other team members to complementary or perceived relegated roles comes from group members, attempting to assert their identities.

One way to use AI within this context, after having appraised the task and planned for CPS, is to craft affirmative questions in conjunction with the appraisal results. For example, if the appraisal involves a team building challenge, then craft questions like: (a) Describe a time when you feel the team/group performed really well. What were the circumstances during the first time? (b) Describe a time when you were proud to be a member of the team. Why were you proud? (c) What do you value most about being a member of this team? Why? Once the questions are created, they are offered to the group. For more effectiveness, the groups can be paired to ask each other these questions. After the paired group members have completed the inquiry, the examples are then shared with the whole group. If possible, an aide would be used to record elements of the inquiry so that the facilitator is free to focus solely on listening and validating to determine if the spirit of their story has been captured.

It is important to extract the stories that group members have about the task because fresh images and insight come from exploring their real stories people have about themselves

and others at their best (Bushe, 1995). As a way of converging or focusing on the peak experiences, ask the group to list and develop a consensus on the attributes of a highly effective group. When AI theory is applied, Busche (2001) states the following:

> Having the opportunity to tell one's "best team" story provides individuals with an important opportunity to establish their identity in the group. It gives them the chance to tell others, in a somewhat indirect way, what is important to them in relating to other team members, what roles they prefer to occupy, what group characteristics they most value, and so on. As they talk about what-about-them made this a peak team experience, they are, in effect, describing the roles and role complements they most value. (p. 7)

In doing this, the underlying needs and issues that might take days or weeks to work out become salient, but not as concerns or conflicts but rather as wonderful memories (Busche, 1995).

There is something about a feeling of exuberance and pride that fosters a magnifying and calming force among team members. In a real sense, these feelings become therapeutic and, because of its ethereal and therapeutic affects, it also fosters solution.

Explore the Challenge

This component of CPS is designed to address situations or challenges that appear vague and unclear. Therefore, if the situation is lacking all the facts and does not have a clear direction, this component is most effective. A question to ask a client or a team while exercising this piece of the Explore the Challenge component is, "What things have you done lately that you'd like to do better?" In complimenting this question, AI can be applied by crafting a question that asks, out of things that you want to do better, try remembering a time when you were at your best. What were the best experiences you had? Can you please describe me what you believe that helped make these experiences successful?   The result of AI inquiry, as described above, can be used as a facile transition to listing wish statements or gathering information about the challenge.

Anytime the group reaches a lull, AI can be applied to re-invigorate the team members. First, identify a challenge that has a negative connotation to it. Then, craft a question that creates for the group generative images based on an affirmative understanding of the past (Busche, 1998). For example, if the challenge involves an issue regarding one's career, ask what have your most satisfying career experiences been? What are you responsible for now and what gives you the most excitement and energy in doing this? What would it take for your current job to become a peak experience? Here is another example of a challenge. The HR professional and line manager do work as partners. Use the following questions: Describe a time when you or someone else in HR helped a business unit get something they needed to run the business. What made the partnership possible? Describe a time you partnered with someone outside your department to get something done. What made it possible to get results? What makes you proud to be a part of your department or profession? Here is an example of a customer service challenge: Describe an incident when you or someone you know went the extra mile to deliver what the customer wanted when they wanted it? What made it possible? Describe a time when you were a part of or observed an extraordinary display of cooperation between teams to deliver a service to a customer? What made the cooperation possible? Here are questions for improving quality (Blair, 1997): Think of the projects that you worked on. Which product best exemplifies quality? Describe it. What does quality mean to you? Describe a particular process that, for you, worked well in producing a quality product?

The important tip to remember is for the facilitator not to invest the time listing the responses on the flipchart. Allow for pairing among the group members and let them capture it on flipchart paper. Once that is completed, the pairs share their peak experiences or the positive moments to the whole group. Again, the contents of this

exercise are readily available for the facilitator to transfer it to a list of wish statements or information about the challenge.

Clarifying the problem phase specifically targets the definition of a challenge or problem. AI complements this phase by providing an in-depth analysis of data attributed to the peak performances or generative images that were shared. Group members are asked to look for patterns, themes and categories that will emerge from the data. Group members are also asked what they think are the life-giving forces that emerge from the data that is fundamental to the peak performances (Pinto & Curran, 1998)? They are then asked to mark any ideas or concepts that come to mind. Moreover, they asked to look for meaningful passages in the data that speak of feelings, inspiration, and other special instances that go to the spirit of the task and why a person wants to pursue this task (Pinto & Curran, 1998). Each marked concept or idea is then given a one or two word description. Finally, as a way of integrating this output with CPS, statement starters (Miller, Vehar, & Firestien, 1997) are applied such as: "how to…?" "How might…" or "In what ways might…?" Much of the information that has been gathered from the use of AI theory also serves as a seedbed for generating ideas. A particular question that is useful is what the ways in which we can replicate the peak performances are?

A problem can also be clarified by extracting the opportunity or situation inherent in the challenge. If the challenge, for example, is to reduce consumer complaints, organizational members are asked to share poignant, heart-warming or peek experiences of handling irate customers. Details leading up to these peek experiences are then captured to formulate patterns, factors and qualities to managing consumer complaints.

Plan for Action Component

This component of CPS is designed to strengthen and turn ideas into workable solutions. It is also designed to gain acceptance and support of the idea. Once the idea has been selected and strengthened, revisit the momentum, the memories and the

energizing moments of success that lead to the idea because it is this energy that distinguishes the generative process that comes from Appreciative Inquiry (Hammond, 1996). Articulate themes of the idea as if they were already happening. In essence, the group members will be envisioning what could be done to make the idea come true. The resource group members are asked to write an affirmative statement that captures the idealized future as if it were already happening (Hammond, 1996). Some examples are: (a) Our customers have a pleasant experience when they talk to us (b) The information we need to answer their questions is available to us with a touch of the finger (c) We do our best and know that our decisions are appreciated by others (d) We improve our city and one person at a time with our determination, energy, urgency, and commitment (e) In this community—every child grows up in a nurturing home with neighbors and community members, valuing and supporting the nurturing home.

Writing an affirmative statement—it has also been referred to as a provocative proposition or a strategic focus—is based on the principle

mentality. The conception of a new order is the objective of the creative mind-set. Obviously, both are necessary, the former for surviving day-to-day, the latter for prospering in the long run.

CPS and AI are both primarily concerned with change and innovation. The introduction of change is not without its share of obstacles. Obstacles rooted in a largely unconscious fear of being unable to cope with the new. To surmount these obstacles we suggest applying CPS to the AI model and AI to the CPS model. The energy generated by substituting evaluation with valuation can dissolve an impasse encountered by groups trying to think creatively (Bushe, 1995).

The latest research led by Collins (2001) compellingly illustrates the remarkable results that companies can accomplish when they discover what ignites their deepest passions and concentrate on what they are best at. The "good to great" companies examined all following a basic pattern: Fifteen-year cumulative stock returns at or below the general stock market, punctuated by a transition point, then cumulative returns at least three times the market over the next fifteen years. These findings serve to underscore the formidable power of having an appreciative eye that focuses on the best of what it is.

that all things are created twice (Covey, 1989). There is a mental creation. And there is a physical creation. To use the analogy, one cannot build a house until the blueprints have been manifested, or to use another analogy, it is like having a road map without a destination or a compass. Not having an affirmative statement to couple the action plan, the client would run the risk of incurring costly change orders and lengthy delays. The mental creation is the affirmative statement or the blueprint. The action plan describes how the affirmative statement will be manifested, and the physical creation is the end result. An action plan needs an affirmative statement to navigate and to sustain its momentum. It also provides needed checks and balances which are critical when things go off course.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have addressed a long-standing duality between continuity and change. Continuity demands we work to "fix" things. Change, on the other hand, demands we labor to "create" things. Maintenance of the existing order is the objective to fix its

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