



38. The Appreciative Inquiry Dialogue

Challenge

Collaboration, control, soft controls, management; for all these themes, it is important to be able to enter into a good conversation, where the focus is not only on any problems but also on understanding and analysis. The right conversation with the right depth helps to make a connection between the interests of the organization or society and the personal motives of those involved.

A genuine interest with attentive listening and speaking is important to connect with yourself, the other, the content and the context and from there to work pleasantly and constructively on a joint challenge or issue.

Solution

Dialogue is the conversation method par excellence to make and maintain this deeper connection. The methodology can be used for development or change processes, but also for social or organizational challenges.

As Herman Wijffels says from his role as ambassador of the Netherlands in Dialogue Foundation:

"I see dialogue as the method of the future. It is a method that makes a connection and of which listening to the other is perhaps the most essential element. Much more than through discussion and debate, where one's own right is paramount, dialogue can be used to build shared views and support for the major social changes that are currently underway."

Dialogue according to the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Method is based on equality and has a number of basic principles and phases. The method was first used in 1987 by the American scientists Cooperrider and Srivastva. In their opinion, excessive use of problem-solving models caused the focus to be too much on problems and too little to be placed on understanding and analysis. The basic principles and phases of the AI Method are explained in more detail in this tool.

Basics:

In the dialogue, a present question is examined. The foundation for the question formulation, the attitude of the participants and facilitator and for the conversation rules is formed by the basic principles of the AI Method. This tool uses the conversation rules as formulated by the [Netherlands in Dialogue Foundation](#) and which are, as it were, a translation of the basic principles:



- Let the other person tell his/her story, the rest shows that they are genuinely listening. Also pay attention to body language.
- Respect the story, postpone your judgment.
- Talk from the narrator's point of view, not generalities ("I experienced that" instead of "one says").
- Make sure everyone has their say.
- Allow silences.
- Treat each other with respect and kindness.

Five phases:

1st - Exploring: choosing a positive theme

You start by formulating the theme for the dialogue. It is essential that this is a beckoning perspective. Examples include:

- Setting up a feedback culture.
- The approach to customer integrity.
- Strengthening organizational integrity.
- Contributing to market integrity.
- A positive experience for all customers.

Not appropriate for AI is a change goal such as '10% fewer customer complaints'. With AI, it is important that you reframe the challenge in such a way that the possibilities become visible.

If you manage to reduce the number of complaints, what do you see? So what's different? What does that look like? Who is involved? In this way, scanning the subject, you will gradually notice something of what the ambitions are and the vision is with the chosen theme. And that's how you come to new angles.

2nd - Deepening: looking for where it (already) works

What are our best experiences on this theme so far? If the attendees are going to tell about what is already going well (what gives them energy), a picture is created of what the organization is really capable of and the feeling that the attendees have. This strengthens self-confidence: we can do this! Please note: this must go far beyond good practices. Those involved should feel invited to come up with personal experiences, to exchange them and to investigate them together. The facilitator will guide this.

3rd - Imagining: what future do we want?

The above almost automatically leads to thinking about the future. How would we really like it? The aim is to generate images of what is possible. The power of these images in issues for which we have to come up with solutions. From these images you can make a link with the present: which actions or initiatives will support us?



4th - Renewal: determining a next destination

In order to sharpen the ambition even more, the vision of the future is now being concretized. If your dream ... is, where will you be in x months? If this 'provocative proposition' is formulated in the present tense ('it is now January and I am going') it becomes concrete and is the most powerful Intention is that people formulate achievable and concrete goals and thus take steps towards future visions. Do they feel involved and owner? In the previous phases, trust and courage were built, which are needed in the Design phase. Which organizational elements should we address? Who and what do we need for this?

5th - Achieving: getting started

The final step is that we come up with concrete actions that create space to realize our ambition. What works, what do we continue, how do we proceed? Who does what? How do we involve others? A further dialogue can help with this. Often managers find this the most exciting part. They leave the comfort zone of leadership; tension arises due to lack of control over the result. The worst thing is when the organization sees the ideas of the participants as no more than recommendations. The "research question" must therefore be clear and seen as a joint thing by the organization.

Actors

- Dialogue facilitator – this is the moderator, who does not participate in the content of the conversation. All other actors are participants or table organisers. Observers are not allowed. Interested parties can follow a training course at [Leerweg Dialogo](#) or one of the other providers in the Netherlands.
- Table organizer - organizes one or more tables to enter into a dialogue about a strategic or social issue. A Compliance Officer can organize tables to enter into a dialogue about an ethical issue.
- Members of the Supervisory Board
- Members of the boards of directors
- Compliance professionals
- Executives

Techniques

This tool on dialogue is based on the Appreciative Inquiry method. In this model, people look for what works, instead of what goes wrong. Not only solving problems, but also analyzing and understanding them on the basis of positively formulated goals and possibilities.



Role Compliance Professional

- Initiator of a dialogue session with stakeholders
- Defining the issue together with stakeholders
- Taking the time to have the right conversation.
- Working out the results together with the parties involved in concrete action points