



**Measurable Results. Immeasurable Value.**

## Board/Staff Retreats Using the Facilitative Approach of Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology –

### Making A Dramatic Difference In Only One Day

Outstanding, rapid results are experienced by organizations using the leading-edge facilitation methods of Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology.

By combining the two methodologies into a single day of high-level interaction, groups experience two results:

**The surfacing of what's working in the organization and among participant groups.** A new awareness is discovered of strengths, shared values and commitment to the organization's purpose. The dialogues that occur in the Appreciative Inquiry phase of the day are long remembered, and new relationships are formed among participants that align with their positive beliefs and desired more-successful future for the organization and its members.

**An opportunity to jointly create strategies and paths to achieve greater results.** Using the discovered strengths and shared desires for a stronger organization, the group then can, in a unique Open Space format, explore and develop ideas and plans to move forward to new levels of organizational achievement. In only one day, relationships are transformed and new platforms for moving the organization forward are developed.

### Why These Methods Work – and Why They Work So Quickly

Drawing on long-established theories of human interaction, the designers of Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology created forums for bringing people and their ideas together in ways significantly different than past meetings, retreats and strategic planning sessions.

*Continued*

These methods produce outstanding results because:

- Participants surface and reach a joint understanding on the organization's or group's inherent strengths. Typical retreats focus mainly on problems; these methods look at how the organization's current capabilities for change can be tapped and utilized.
- People quickly engage with and support what's working. The natural defensiveness of focusing on problems is nonexistent.
- Energy to move the organization/group forward is quickly brought to the surface. Problems do get solved, but from a new perspective of strengths and from the surfaced awareness that the organization has succeeded in solving major issues in the past.
- Participants, perhaps for the first time, become aware of how deeply others care about the organization and its mission. In the Appreciative Inquiry portion of the day, a deeper understanding of the strong ties people hold to the mission and purpose are revealed. A renewed commitment to shared values is a natural outcome.
- Everyone comes to the event as an equal. There is no hierarchy during this day. Members get to know leaders as individuals, and leaders witness the commitment of employees in fresh light. The rationale behind this approach comes from systems and chaos theory: To achieve change, we must do something radically different, even for only one day.
- The entire system is represented. Participants may represent each function of the organization, board and staff, members and stakeholders. The choice is up to the sponsoring organization. The value of bringing together different representatives lies in creating a whole picture of how the organization functions.
- The opportunity to interact according to needs and wants. This principle is well founded in systems theory and the concept that people will self-organize as needed to achieve worthwhile goals. In the Open Space portion, participants can work on issues important to them and their jobs in a format rarely available in daily work environments. Acting as equals, with a heightened awareness of shared values and commitment, new ideas, concepts and strategies emerge with unprecedented speed.

## Methods Gain in Popularity

In only a decade since Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology have been developed, leading larger organizations have brought these methods into their organization when they needed to develop new products, achieve wide-scale organization change and when they wanted to connect more fully with internal or external constituent groups. Larger organizations employing AI or OST have include GTE, Boeing and the U.S. Navy. AI and OST are used in smaller organizations, including schools, non-profits, associations and communities.

*Continued*

Some specific examples of implementation of these methods include:

- Trucking company Roadway Express uses Appreciative Inquiry to gain greater employee input and improve union relationships. A team of short-haul drivers generated 12 cost-cutting and revenue-generating ideas. One distribution center is saving \$118,000 annually from worker discoveries about truckloads.
- Rockport Shoes gleaned \$18 million in sales from new product lines suggested at an Open Space by a security guard.
- In two days, instead of the typical 10 months, AT&T designed and planned its pavilion at the center of the Olympic Village in Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics.
- Ramsey County, Minnesota, used Appreciative Inquiry in its leadership development program to address challenges facing the county.
- Robert Stiller, CEO of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and the Forbes magazine 2001 Entrepreneur of the Year, uses Appreciative Inquiry in his daily management practices.
- DTE Energy Services used Appreciate Inquiry to achieve a major culture shift to a more inclusive organization to heighten employee involvement.
- Nutrimental Industria a Comercio de Alimentos SA of Brazil used Appreciative Inquiry to remain competitive after collapse of all Brazilian government support programs.

## Our Approach

The Center for Association Resources combines both Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology for a powerful one-day event to assist our clients in strategic planning, organization development and to address specific issues or concerns. Participants leave with renewed commitment and understanding of members' alignment with organizational purpose and goals – and with a charted course for quickly moving the organization forward with new speed and passion. We consult with selected stakeholders prior to selecting these methods for use. Our pre-work helps ensure success of the event and organizational or group readiness for these progressive methods. Any organizational intervention should be chosen with care, respect for participants and insight into group objectives.

**For more information on how this exciting approach could work for your organization, contact The Center for Association Resources at  
888.705.1434**