

## Foreword

Within these pages is a simple yet revolutionary philosophy of organizational learning and change: discover everything that “gives life” to the cooperative capacity of a human system—and then let go.

What gets co-constructed thereafter will be anything but linear. Like jazz improvisation or a creative jam session, it will literally be impossible to predict the emerging new opportunities, options, and shared possibilities. But one thing is almost certain: whatever gets created will be good. It will be valued *and valuable* to the human system for one overarching reason: the quality of the “relational space” from which the new constructions of the future are nurtured makes a difference that makes the difference.

Relationships, propose the authors of this wonderful introduction to Appreciative Inquiry, come alive where there is an *appreciative* question, when there is a deliberate search for the good and the best in one another; and in human systems the process of studying a phenomenon actually changes that phenomenon, in effect creating a new reality during the process of inquiry. That’s what this book is all about. It is all about power of “AI” as a way of creating a relational space for the cooperative construction of reality.

Based on almost twenty years of field research in organizations like the United States Navy, Roadway Express, and Nokia as well as years of scholarly commitment to social constructionist approaches to human science inquiry, the authors of this book finally put into print a pragmatic, inspiring, and simple account of an approach to strength-based change that has elevated the capacities of thousands of businesses, change leaders, and teams to realize their enormous potentials. It’s the kind of focus book that people will want to hand out at the front end of a major organization-wide change initiative. And it is a perfect companion piece for workshops, foundation courses on AI, and leadership programs.

Frank Barrett, a former jazz musician and now Professor of management at the US Naval Postgraduate School, and Professor Ron Fry, the Director of what is perhaps the most acclaimed Masters degree program in the country in positive organization development at Case Western Reserve University, have been pioneers in the appreciative inquiry movement since its earliest days. They are two of my treasured colleagues and closest friends—and along with Suresh Srivastva, Diana Whitney, Jane Watkins, Jim Ludema, and Ken Gergen they have done more to develop new understandings of how and why appreciative inquiry works than anyone else in the field. What is their core proposition? In Barrett and Fry's words it is this: "*Cooperative capacity is fostered through an appreciative declaration of faith in the potential goodness of human groups and organization.*" Cooperative capacity is the secret, they demonstrate, to achieving superior results in the change arena.

This is a Taos Institute *Focus Book* that is both substantive and accessible in a "how to" way with its stories from the field, practical tips, and its challenges to long-accepted myths about change. In my view this is a special volume that will at once captivate, guide and reassure, and enlighten, as it dramatically transforms the way you lead change in your organizations, your family or community, and your future.

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