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*Gry ESPEDAL*

Creating growth and  
development in a coaching  
relation using appreciative  
inquiry and solution focused  
approach

*Secțiunea: Metode de cercetare  
și de intervenție*

Editura Lumen, 2008

# **Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială**

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# Creating growth and development in a coaching relation using appreciative inquiry and solution focused approach

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## Abstract

*Coaching is a new trend which helps coachee and organizations obtain good results by focusing on solutions. In this article you will learn it is possible to use the four D's in Appreciative inquiry in the coaching process. The four D's are: Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery. As human beings we have a tendency to search for problems and their causes or origins. However, the more time we spend on what does not work/function and also trying to find adequate explanations as to the reasons why it does not work, the less is the chance to find satisfactory solutions. Using appreciative inquiry and solution focused approach it is possible in a future-oriented way to find coaches dreams, help them design and deliver.*

*Key terms: Appreciative Inquiry, coaching, organizational change, model of growth, stages of change, traditional coaching.*

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## **Introduction**

Using appreciative inquiry and solution focused approach in coaching is a new trend which helps us obtain good results by focusing on solutions. As human beings we have a tendency to search for problems and their causes or origins. However, the more time we spend on what does not work/function and also trying to find adequate explanations as to the reasons why it does not work, the less is the chance to find satisfactory solutions.

On the contrary, the solution may be found by looking into what we know is already working and what we would want to change. Motivational power may be found in the dreams and the hopes of what we would like to be different. Growth will be created in the interaction between a coach and a coachee, when the focus lies on what the coachee designs and wants to obtain and what he/she has done to obtain this.

## **Crisis can lead to development and change**

A crisis may be many things. Some may need help when a marriage or a relationship is broken. Some experience illness, violence, accidents, death. At work people experience crises in connection with reorganization or lay-offs. These things often occur suddenly. They often represent change, on deeper levels, in a person's life and may also create chaos.

What, then, should a coach concentrate on and be aware of when meeting people who have experienced severe crisis and maybe find themselves in a chaotic situation?

Appreciative inquiry or solution focused coaching is a good tool when working with crises and difficult situations. It is important to avoid focusing on helplessness, suffering and apathy. It is of importance for the coach to approach the coachee in an optimistic, appreciative and solution focused way. However, one must never underestimate the coachee's need to talk about his/her problems. Some talk of their problems must be accepted, look for early achievement, find out what the coachee is looking for, dreaming of, and how the coachee will notice that his/her dreams are about to be achieved.

## **Coaching**

The essence of appreciative inquiry and solutions focused coaching is to concentrate on elements that will improve the coachee's situation. The starting point of the coaching is the coachee's situation and what he/she finds useful. It

continues with the changes the coachee dream of and wishes to obtain and, finally, it concentrates on signs that show this is happening. Some may think that coaching based on finding dreams and solutions is simple. They claim that vital elements in the process of learning to understand are skipped if we only concentrate on future perspective – without focusing on the origin of the problems. An essential question for many coaches has therefore been: What stops you from obtaining what you want?

### **Compared with traditional coaching**

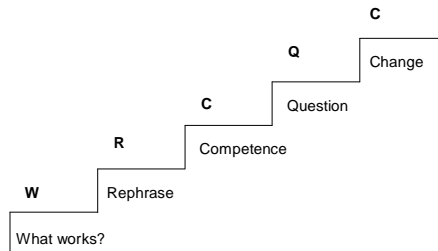
Traditional coaching focuses on the obstacles the coachee will have to deal with on his/her way to a future goal. It further focuses on how to remove these obstacles and, finally, how the coachee has to commit himself/herself to active involvement in order to reach this goal. In an appreciative approach to coaching we believe that it is very difficult to find good solutions if you focus on obstacles and elements. In solution focused coaching not much time is spent on defining problems or explaining why things are as they are. A key element in the coaching process is to keep focus on what works for the coachee – the dream, the resources and strength of the coachee, and, of course, the step by step road – design plan - to reach his/her dreams.

In appreciative coaching it is important to discover a personal goal for the coachee early in the process when we ask the question: what do we need to work with in order to make this process useful for you?

In *traditional coaching* a certain amount of time is spent to find proper measures which must be activated in order to reach the goal. These goals have a tendency to be general and large; they therefore say little of the individual needs that the coachee has in order to reach his/her goals. The coachee may also feel committed to act according to the organization's wish, and thereby not his own.

An appreciative coach will concentrate on the process, more than the outcome. The coach will focus on what the coachee finds essential to do (design) - and then the signs showing that the process is in motion, making it possible to deliver. This is a more personal approach which will trigger the coachee's motivation to act. This process which concentrates on what the coachee is willing to do – and not on what he/she should do, helps the coachee to faster understand what he/she needs to do.

## A model of growth



(Model 1: The model that helps remember steps in a coaching process.)

A simple model may help to keep focus on *finding the appreciative way and solutions* in the coaching process. What we have chosen to call the growth-model gives us both a base for this way of thinking and the tools needed to carry it through.

## Works

By concentrating on what WORKS, there will be a natural transition from focus on problems to focus on dreams and solutions. In stead of asking what the problem is – which in many cases is a question of *what does not work* – our solution is to show *how the coachee will know that the problem is solved*, which again indicates what to do in order to solve the problems.

## Rephrase

Focusing on problems may make it difficult to see dreams and solutions. However, the coachee will not always feel that the situation is bad all the time, and he/she will experience positive development.

By searching for other stories than the problematic story, you will be able to **rephrase** the story. By concentrating on finding new angles the coachee will experience a new understanding of the situation. This new understanding will motivate the coachee to find new approaches.



## Competence

The coachee is himself/herself an expert of his/her own life, and is thereby **competent** to define his/her dreams and solutions. The coach is not focusing on weaknesses or defects of any kind, but his/her task is to show interest and search for the coachee's strengths and resources, so that he/she will be able to carry through and deliver his/her own goals.

It is of importance that the coach uses the coachee's own frame of reference. If the coach does not do this there is great risk that the coachee will end up doing something he/she feels is wrong.

## Questions

Asking *questions* which triggers the coachee's ability to reflect and think, is the approach that appreciative coaches use. The question-asking is the main tool in this tradition, and the goal is to make the coachee more aware of his/her possibilities through a more conscious mind and an ability to change. A good question is supposed to represent a provocation in the coachee's life so that change will be obtained. The process of questions and answers creates a new consciousness and new possibilities for the coachee.

## Change

Appreciative coaching will lead to *change* at an earlier stage. Coaching is supposed to give a higher degree of satisfaction for the coachee; growth, a conscious mind and further development are important elements. Some are dreaming of leaps of change, but it is the smaller changes which, in the long run, will create larger waves of change.

The coach may think that she can use a magnifying glass in his/her coaching to dig out the small changes. The coach will ask questions in order to magnify and explore the changes that have occurred. Questions like: *What did you actually do? How did you get the idea that this was a smart thing to do? What made you do it this way?* In this way the coach and the coachee will discover other and new elements which may give the coachee ideas of what to do in order to deliver and find good solutions.

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