



STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative inquiry is an organizational development model for **facilitating positive change**. The fundamental premise is that every organization has strengths. These strengths can be leveraged to develop hope for the future and a forward-looking strategic agenda. People who work from their strengths are more energized, productive, and feel a greater sense of reward. Organizations that promote a strengths-based culture can garner the same benefits. While a typical problem-solving approach works well with technical and other nonhuman systems, it does not work so well with people. When people are viewed as problems to be fixed, it results in drained energy and demoralization. **Telling stories about what is working well ignites the imagination and inspires stakeholders to communicate hopeful visions for the future.**

Appreciative inquiry does not ignore problems. Behind every problem is a desire for a different reality. Appreciative inquiry gets at problems by focusing on what should be different, which inspires a positive image of the future that encourages present day actions. In other words, **what can we do now to bring us closer to our desired future?**

SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) is a strategic planning tool that integrates appreciative inquiry and helps stakeholders understand the organizational system. **SOAR conversations center on what organizations are doing right, what can be enhanced, and what issues are compelling to those who have a stake in the organization's success.** SOAR invites participants to have a strategic conversation grounded in values, resulting in clarity and aligned action.

Sources

The Center for Appreciative Inquiry (n.d.). *What is appreciative inquiry?* <https://centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/resources/what-is-appreciative-inquiry-ai/>

Stavros, J. M. & Hinrichs, G. (2009). *The thin book of SOAR: Building strengths-based strategy*. Thin Book Publishing Company.

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