Appreciative Leadership

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES THAT TURN POTENTIAL TO POWER

NSPA Annual Conference • October 10, 2016 • Kansas City, MO
Our Agenda

- **Understand** Appreciative Leadership: a relational process that mobilizes creative potential and unleashes “positive power.”
- **Explore** the five core strategies of Appreciative Leadership.
- **Experience** personal, one-to-one and team practices that can turbo-charge staff, students and donors – and our capacity to promote college success through the power of scholarships.

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The Global Context

1. New generations have come of age
2. Diversity is the norm
3. Institutions are being reinvented
4. Holistic, sustainable approaches are essential

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The Philosophical Context

A **positive revolution**:
- Personal
- Interpersonal
- Organizational
The Experiential Context

- Personal Observation
- Appreciative Interviews
- Appreciative Focus Groups

Appreciative Leadership

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The relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power.
Positive power means ...

- Bringing your best forward
- Recognizing creative potential
- Enhancing individual and collective capacity

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Let’s explore ...

Describe a time when *exemplary leadership unleashed positive power*, enabling a powerful and positive outcome that would otherwise not have been possible.

- What was the situation? Who – and what – was involved?
- What specific strategies or practices did leadership employ, to mobilize creative potential: both individual and system-level?
- What were the initial results?
- How about the long-term or residual benefits?
Five Relational Strategies of Appreciative Leadership
“If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask.”

Albert Einstein
The Problem with Problem-Solving

• What happens when you focus on a problem during a meeting?
• What are the unintended consequences?

Downward Spiral

Thought
Action
Behavior

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From Problems to Opportunities

Outcomes / Results

The Problem or Opportunity

Root Causes
Root Causes of **Turnover**

**Root causes:**
- Low compensation
- Bad leadership
- Lack of recognition
- Long hours
- Insufficient training

**Outcomes we might achieve:**
- Increased productivity
- Reduced training costs
- Satisfied employees
- Higher pay
Root Causes of Magnetic Work Environment

Root causes:
• Humor and fun
• Creativity
• Effective training
• Connected workforce
• High engagement
• Meaningful rewards

Outcomes we might achieve:
• Use of skills and passions
• Connection to mission
• Pride
• Appropriate recognition

• Increased productivity
• Reduced training costs
• Good PR
• Enhanced recruitment
• Satisfied employees
• Risk Taking
• Innovation
Fixing Problems vs. Building Capacity

Illness
Narrow Focus
Error-prone
Divisive Conflict

Health
Wider Focus
Reliable Compromise

Well-being
Infinite Possibility
Flawless Collaboration

Fix Problems

Build Innovation and Capacity

So great questions often ...

- Focus on opportunities vs. problems
- Engage people personally: heart, mind and spirit
- Invite stories
- Draw on life experience
- Stimulate imagination
- Suggest action

Three Kinds of Positive Questions

Backward: “Describe a time when ...”

Inward: “What are the core factors that enable ...”

Forward: “Imagine ...” / “If you had three wishes ...”
“Hope is having a dream and believing it’s possible to get there.”

Verena Kast
Author
Joy, Inspiration and Hope
“The task of leadership is to align strengths toward a purpose or goal, in such a way that weaknesses become irrelevant.”

Peter Drucker
“Founder of modern management”
**il·lu·mi·na·tion (n.)**

1. Willingness and ability to see what works (vs. what doesn’t)
2. Interest and capacity to discover strengths
3. Ability to sense positive potential in every situation

**Synonyms:** CLARIFICATION, ENLIGHTENMENT, ELUCIDATION

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“Correction does much; but encouragement does more.”
Be a Strengths Spotter!

1. Select a partner.
2. Ask your partner to tell you a success story.
3. Probe and listen deeply to discover your partner’s strengths.
4. Reflect back to your partner the strengths you heard embedded in the story.
5. Reverse roles.

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Positive Inner Dialogue

"This project is impossible. I’ll never get it done right."

"This project is hard. I’m going to have to bring all I know to get it done well."
“Diversity in the world is a basic characteristic of human society, and also the key condition for a lively and dynamic world.”

Hu Jintau
Former General Secretary
Communist party of China
Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind

- “To continue or to close? Why? Where? How?”
- Broad, diverse participation
- New relationships ... new realities
- Final recommendations implemented 2009
Six Categories of Stakeholder

Information
Influence
Impact
Investment
Interest
Innovation
Everybody Whose Future It Is

Employees

Colleges

Individual Donors

Educators

Students

Legislators

Foundations

Board members

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It’s Your Turn ...

ROUND ONE

- Divide into groups of 3 or 4
- Imagine and describe a life-like scenario in which a number of diverse stakeholders might come together to fulfill or extend your organization’s mission. Examples:
  - Strategic planning
  - Development of a new scholarship program
  - Formation of a new partnership
- Write the scenario out, and trade with another group
It’s Your Turn ...

ROUND TWO

- Within your group, read aloud the scenario you’ve been passed.
- Discuss and make recommendations. Given what you know:
  - Who *must* be directly included?
  - Who *should* be engaged or informed?
  - What creative ways might there be to engage people, beyond direct participation in meetings?
“All human beings are part of that unbroken whole which is continually unfolding and making itself manifest in the world.”

Joe Jaworski
CEO
American Leadership Forum
Practice Conscious Decision Making

- Every choice emerges from other choices
- Large or small, conscious or unconscious, our decisions influence ourselves and others
- We are all connected through an interdependent web of life
- *Consider the web*, when making your choices

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