

It's All In the Approach

By Rika Peterson

We pride ourselves on being a strengths-based work environment. Subscribing to two key assumptions about each team member:

- Each person's talents are enduring and unique.
- Each person's greatest room for growth is in the areas of their strength.

By acknowledging and honoring each person's strengths in the workplace—what they can do repeatedly, happily, and successfully—strengths become assets to the individual *and* company. Instead of encouraging team members to overcome their areas of weakness and shortcomings, they are pushed in the opposite direction, toward capitalizing on their strengths to generate competency and maximum performance.

Through our work with Sioux Falls Thrive, our exposure to Appreciative Inquiry has brought us full circle, with the insight and tools to apply a strengths-based model for change on organizations and systems. Similar to how managers default to identifying areas for improvement for their employees, it is common for organizations to describe what is not working or what their needs are. Appreciative Inquiry flips the script, making the assumption that *every system has something that works right*. The 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry guides organizations through...

- Defining the subject of inquiry in positive terms.
- Discovering strengths by appreciating what is already working and in good order.
- Dreaming of what could be, without the constraints of gaps and barriers.
- Designing the preferred future, what it looks like and how it works.
- Destiny is ongoing and sustains the Appreciative Inquiry outlook.

Appreciative Inquiry works because it generates change through collaboration that occurs in positive, confident headspace. When faced with any “problem”, consider how you can change conversations and underlying assumptions by shifting focus from deficits to strengths. If you aren't sure, ask us!