

What it is

A method for helping teams and organizations to recognize and celebrate their own value

What it can do

This tool can assist you to:

- Generate positive energy in a team or organization
- Create team or organizational cohesion
- Help groups experience, clarify, and articulate essential qualities of their organization such as:
 - The purpose of the organization
 - The unique attributes or greatness of their organization
 - Their organization's core positive qualities

When to use it

- At the beginning of retreats or important meetings
- To initiate a planning or visioning process
- Any time it would be helpful to generate positive energy and cohesion

How it works

Step 1 Participants interview one another in pairs as follows (see possible interview topics beginning on the following page):

- Find a partner.
- Take turns playing the role of interviewer and interviewee.
- When acting as interviewer, support and encourage the speaker in sharing not only the facts but also their feelings surrounding their stories.
- Timing is usually about 5-6 minutes for each person to be interviewed.

Step 2 Participants form small groups of 6-8 and do the following:

- Each individual shares their story succinctly (1-2 minutes each)
- Depending on the nature of the interviews and the stories, the group may chart key elements: e.g., qualities, trends, etc.

Group collectively decides on:

- one story (or two, depending on time) to share with the large group that best captures the essence of the interviews
- (if relevant) identifying the key qualities/trends/etc., and writing them on a large sticky note

Step 3 The selected storyteller from each group shares their story (up to 3 minutes). If relevant, the storyteller or another group member can report on the qualities or trends in their group and post their sticky note on the wall.

NOTE: Subsequent spokespersons may choose to cluster their sticky notes as appropriate.

Step 4 Facilitator leads a large group discussion to pull out key insights and themes, and helps the group derive meaning from the exercise.

Possible interview topics

1. As you reflect on your time with _____ organization, what's one experience that to you embodies the purpose of this organization? It could be one particular experience, or perhaps a period of time that really seems to capture what this organization is all about: its purpose and the unique contribution that makes it all worthwhile.
 - What happened? Who was involved? What did you do? What did others do?
 - Bring the story to life, with all its power and emotion.
 - What was it about this story that makes it seem like a good example of this organization living its purpose?
2. During the time you've worked at _____ there have probably been ups and downs, twists and turns. For our purpose, let's focus on one high point experience. Describe a time when you felt your organization exhibited "greatness." This may have been a time when you were directly involved or you may have been an observer.
 - What happened? Who was involved? What did you do? What did others do?
 - Bring the story to life, with all its power and emotion.
 - What was it about this story that makes you describe it as great? (Describe specific qualities of greatness)
3. Every organization has a unique constellation of strengths that make it successful. We call these qualities the positive core – the root cause of the organization's success. Think of the unique constellation of strengths of _____, those qualities

without which it would no longer be the same organization. Tell a story about a time that illustrates one or more these strengths.

- What was the situation? Who was involved?
 - Bring the story to life, with all its power and emotion.
 - What was positive and unique about this situation?
 - What is this special essence of your organization?
4. Think about your time working in your organization. Reflecting on the ups and downs, twists and turns, recall a time that you consider a highpoint – a time when you personally felt the most alive, excited, and engaged.
- What happened? What was the nature of your involvement?
 - Bring the story to life, with all its power and emotion.
 - What was it about this story that made it so special and energizing for you?
5. What in your view are the most significant positive macro-trends affecting your organization and its mission?
- What trends indicate opportunity?
 - What trends give you a sense of hope?
 - Share an example/exemplary story
6. Without being humble, what would your colleagues say that they most value about you and the unique skills and gifts that you bring to _____? Now, tell a story about a time you made a contribution to _____ that exemplifies these unique skills and gifts.
- What was the situation? Who was involved?
 - Bring the story to life, with all its power and emotion

Things to consider/Additional benefits

This process, with adaptations on report-outs, can be used with any size group all the way up to a ballroom with hundreds of people. It rarely fails to generate significant positive energy and group cohesion.

These kinds of interviews are drawn from a discipline of organizational development called Appreciative Inquiry. For further information on Appreciative Inquiry, go to <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In organizations where there is built-up mistrust or resentment, people may need an opportunity to vent their frustrations before they are ready to appreciate what works.