Appreciative Inquiry and Communities of Practice

Call for Contributions to AI Practitioner May 2013

Editors: Mille Duvander, Sue James and Kaj Voetmann

In the May 2013 issue of AI Practitioner we will be gathering, sharing and disseminating stories from AI practitioners about what constitutes a genuine and effective Community of Practice (CoP) in our work.

A CoP is not simply a "community of interest" – a group of people who are interested in the same topic and come together to exchange information, ask questions and express opinions. Members of a Community of Practice are <u>active practitioners</u> who connect with one another to share tips and inspiring practices, ask questions of their colleagues and provide support for each other. Often, members of a CoP also link up to work collaboratively – whether over the long term or for shorter-term projects. One could say that in a vibrant Community of Practice, members create, maintain and transform "common unities" with their fellow practitioners.

This call for contributions and collaboration seeks to collect the experiences and important answers to the burning question many practitioners still face:

> *How do you create, maintain and transform "common unities" among practitioners, inspired by Appreciative Inquiry and strengths-focused approaches?*

> Why do we come together? What draws us to one another? What most supports us in our work together? What is the "glue" that holds us and makes collaborative efforts successful?

For this issue of AIP, we are also interested in gathering stories that reflect the diverse contexts in which AI practitioners work. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on "what gives life to human systems" and, as practitioners, we work in and with a wide range of those systems from "macro" to "micro". Some AI practitioners are involved in work at a global or national scale, while others work locally (for example with single companies or organisations, or with local communities or villages) and still others work with individuals, as in appreciative coaching. In addition, as AI practitioners, some of us work externally as consultants brought in to assist while others work internally as employees or members of an organisation. Also, some AI practitioners focus mainly on their practical day-to-day work in the field, others may be more engaged in participative research and still others involved in academic disciplines, exploring theoretical perspectives.

Whatever the context in which you work as an AI practitioner, please consider sharing your experience of common unities and collaborative ventures with fellow practitioners – and add your contribution to this exciting May 2013 issue of AI Practitioner.

Some Questions to Consider

In telling your personal story, you may like to browse through the following questions and perhaps select one or two – or more if you wish – that inspire you to respond. None of these questions are mandatory; they are offered here simply to help you reflect on your experiences and share your story. Also, picking just one "golden episode" or experience to talk about is fine.

- Why did you and your fellow practitioner(s) decide to come together in your work? What first drew you to one another?
- If you have continued to work together, what still remains true for you over time? What has changed?
- What has been one of the most significant or powerful highlights in your work together? For example, a golden episode or time when you felt your common unity was at its strongest, most seamless and best?
- How did the other practitioner(s) help you feel most creative, supported and energized in your work together?
- What did you contribute most to the relationship?
- How has the common unity in your shared work been improved and strengthened?
- What do you believe was the biggest "leap forward" you made as a Community of Practice? What is the smallest thing that made the biggest difference for you? What was it about these experiences that made them so powerful for you?
- Were there any significant challenges, barriers or hurdles that affected your capacity to work together? If so, what did you do to overcome them, transcend the situation and move forward? If you were not able to overcome these barriers, what happened? Whether your efforts were successful or not, what particular gifts of wisdom can you now see the experience held for you?
- What is supporting you most right now as an AI practitioner to help you find and build a Community of Practice with others? On which "common unities" are you currently focusing?
- Are there any particular skills or personal characteristics that you believe are enabling factors for AI practitioners seeking to work successfully together?
- Think about where you'd like to see Appreciative Inquiry Communities of Practice in five years' time. What are your highest hopes:
    - For yourself?
    - For AI Communities of Practice globally?
- What would you like more of? What differences would you like to see?
- When you reflect on your own experience of working with other AI practitioners, what is the most significant "golden nugget" of wisdom you'd like to share with others seeking to establish and sustain a successful Community of Practice or collaborative working relationship?

A Co-creation Process for the issue

For this issue of AI Practitioner, we are creating an exciting, innovative and different process for the gathering of stories: a process in which we would like to model the concepts of "common unity" and Communities of Practice by inviting contributors to be involved in a co-creation process for the issue. There will be three phases involved in this process:

Contribution Phase (Deadlines)
1. Call for Contributions (July 15, 2012)
2. Submission of first drafts (September 7, 2012)
3. Feedback from the editorial team (September 21, 2012)
4. Submission of revised draft, along with a short bio, a high resolution photo of the contributor(s) and any images (also high resolution) that go into the story (October 10, 2012)

Co-Creation Phase (Deadlines)
5. Drafts shared with other contributors. The editorial team will provide an online platform to support this process and will assist contributors to participate. (October 15, 2012)
6. A window of opportunity for all contributors to comment, respond or ask questions about others' contributions in this online space. (November 1 to 15, 2012)
   Co-created Table of Contents for the May 2013 issue of AIP. Each "chapter" will focus on a specific theme and write an introduction that sets the context for that theme and choose the contributions that illuminate the theme in the best possible way. (November 15 to December 1, 2012)
7. Invitation to contributors to form "co-writing teams" to finalise introductions for each "chapter" (November 15 to December 1, 2012)
8. Co-writing teams, together with an editor of the May 2013 issue, co-create their particular chapter and integrate the contributions that belong to it. (January 15, 2013)
9. Hold "resonance dialogues" across the co-writing teams in which the quality of each chapter is lifted by learning what resonates most for people in relation to that theme. For example, can we recognize the findings in each chapter across the world or are there important differences we need to emphasize? This activity will also be used to inform the introduction to the whole issue and to highlight the most important learning generated in the process. (February 1, 2013)
10. Co-writing teams review their chapter in the light of these resonance dialogues, and submit a final version. (March 1, 2013)

Final Editing Phase
12. Editing and proofreading phase completed by the contributors and May 2013 editorial team and sent to Production Editor for final editing and design layout. (March 22, 2013)

Contact for Submissions:
Submission of first drafts are to be sent to Mille Duvander, mille@intersmil.dk.

Bios of the Editors

Mille Duvander

Mille Duvander, master in AI and communication, has provided training and development consultancy in Denmark in the company Intersmil since 2008, and has contributed to the establishment of the Danish AI community. Mille Duvander works with Appreciative Embodiment and is trained process coach and facilitator, certified in Human Resources analysis tools and has worked with communications advice, development in sports clubs, as well as consultancy in marketing via social media among others.
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Sue James

Sue James is a highly experienced facilitator, speaker and storyteller, energised by people, the power of stories to lift and inspire the soul, Appreciative Inquiry, resilience and change. She works with partner, Chris Bennett, as BJ Seminars International. Based in Melbourne, Australia, they provide programs and services across business, community and education sectors. They focus on transformational change, drawing on their unique AQ-KQ® Framework that integrates Appreciative and Kinaesthetic Intelligences.
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Kaj Voetmann

Kaj Voetmann, MSc in Organizational Development, is a very experienced freelance speaker, trainer, teacher, external examiner and consultant specialized in appreciative organizational development, learning and leadership. Kaj is chairman of the board of Appreciative Inquiry Community Denmark.
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