

Eight Ways to Deepen Appreciation through Coach-Based Consulting Questions

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In our own work with coaching and consulting clients – and particularly when we engage our unique coach-based consulting process, it is very appropriate and often very effective to engage an appreciative perspective. Following are the appreciative questions we offer our clients. We follow this presentation of the eight questions with a brief review of our coach-based consulting process and a restatement of the eight sets of questions with the broader framework in which these questions reside.

1. *Understanding:*

What do you know to be true about the major challenges you now face?

How do you know this is a true and realistic assessment?

2. *Valuing Another Point of View:*

What might be a valid alternative way to describe the major challenges you now face?

What might be a valid alternative way to frame, provide focus and provide an interpretation regarding the major challenges you now face?

3. *Recognizing Contributions:*

Who are the other people in your life that can be of greatest value in helping you meet the major challenges you now face?

What can they do that would be most helpful?

4. *Offering a Compelling Vision of the Future:*

How would you like your life and work to be better than they are right now?

Why would this be an improvement?

What are you doing right now, that you are particularly proud or excited about?
Looking at the “altars” in our lives – what is around you that matters?

5. *Recognizing Distinctive Strengths and Competencies:*

What are the primary talents that you bring to the major challenges you are now facing?

How have these talents been most useful to you in your recent life?

6. *Uncovering Distinctive Strengths and Competencies:*

What might other people who know you well identify as distinctive talents which you don't now acknowledge or frequently use when confronting major challenges?

How would you best discover talents of which you currently are unaware?

7. *Recognizing the Value of Cooperation:*

What could you do better in meeting your own major challenges by working closely with other people in your life?

In what ways would this collaboration be of benefit to everyone involved?

8. *Constructing Provocative Propositions:*

What is the most interesting and thought-provoking question that I could ask you right now?

What would be your answer(s) to this question?

Coaching-Based Consulting

The distinct fields of *professional coaching* and *organizational consulting* are rapidly expanding throughout the world. Organizations engage executive coaches to support

their leaders, challenged as they are by the complexity, unpredictability and turbulence of their markets - and of their own organizations. Such top executive coaches also have the opportunity to provide consulting services to their client companies, thus offering more systemic analysis and intervention capabilities. In practice, the interventions of consulting and coaching complement and leverage each other: consulting delivers broad understanding and tailored solutions; coaching develops those who implement and execute the improvements.

There are many coach training programs that prepare professionals for (mostly personal and life) coaching, and there are some programs that prepare professionals for organizational consulting. But there is only one program that is specifically focused on the preparation of professionals for the integrative work of *coach-based consultants* (CBC). This cutting-edge CBC program and accompanying certification is being offered exclusively by the Santa Fe Center for Advanced Organizational Studies (a division of the Institute for Professional Psychology Studies: IPPS).

As an advanced training program, intended for those who already have extensive human service experiences, the Santa Fe Center provides participants with multiple proven coaching and consulting strategies, ranging from decisional coaching to appreciative and empowering team building, and from the deployment of leadership assessment instruments to the design and delivery of Leadership Laboratories. Research derived from the latest studies in the neuroscience and cognitive decisional science laboratories are translated into practical concepts, interwoven with practice sessions that enable participants to become competent in the use of many appreciative developmental processes.

This advanced program offers distinctive *experiential learning* opportunity: No passive sitting in a training room listening to experts speak about their own coaching strategies and successes. Participants are actively involved in learning by doing coaching and

consulting through use of such innovative and highly interactive training tools as Guided Design and Balint Inquiry. Participants receive immediate and appreciative feedback for all of their case-based work. Guided by the highly experienced facilitators of the workshop, participants themselves will repeatedly translate concepts into practice.

An appreciative perspective resides at the heart of a Coach-Based Consulting process. While this perspective borrows heavily from contemporary appreciative inquiry concepts and strategies, CBC offers a broader perspective, relying on the diverse perspectives offered in the original book on appreciative inquiry (Srivesta, Cooperrider and Associates, *Appreciative Management and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990). The major themes to be offered with this broader perspective are listed below.

The Nature of an Appreciative Perspective

Understanding

- Appreciating the context within which another person or organization is operating (*"walking in their shoes"*)
- Seeking deeper levels of meaning in the messages given by other people (*what we focus on becomes our reality*)
- Finding compassion for, but not merging with, another person's or organization's problems or identity (*standing for but not taking the place of—ensuring no distraction from other person's presence with the problem*)

Valuing Another Point of View

- Looking at the world from the perspective of another person, group or organization (*valuing differences*)
- Providing articulate admiration (*appraising worth from an outside point of reference*)
- Identifying the nature and power of alternative narratives (*the language we use to create our reality*)

Recognizing Contributions

- Acknowledging the distinctive, unacknowledged impact of other people (*“wind beneath my wings”*)
- Identifying and celebrating past efforts and achievement before undertaking new challenges (*we should bring along the best of the past when journeying into the future—provides both direction and motivation*)
- Establishing an ongoing mutuality of respect, including rituals of recognition and respect (*“celebrating what’s right with the world!”*)

Vision: A Compelling Image of the Future

- Investing oneself and other people with a compelling sense of hope/optimism (*reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities*)
- Balancing a concern for "what is" (reality) with attention to "what could be" (ideal) (*balancing challenge and support*)
- Identifying ways all parts of system can contribute to a compelling future (*collaborating into the future:” it takes a village”*)

Recognizing Distinctive Strengths and Competencies

- Focusing on strengths rather than deficits (*we are more likely to change when we have been appreciated than when we have been criticized and told to change*)
- Focusing on lessons to be learned from mistakes and, in particular, the elements of competency and success within the mistake (*success-orientation versus failure avoidance*)

Uncovering Distinctive Strengths and Competencies

- Discover obscure strengths through the encouragement of feedback that focuses on moments of competency and success (*“catch them when they’re doing it right!”*)
- Realize potential and latent strengths through the provision of safe times and places for exploration, experimentation and learning (*creating sanctuaries*)

Recognizing the Value of Cooperation

- Integrating oneself through an appreciative culture (*appreciation is sociopetal/pulling inward not sociofugal/pushing outward*)

- Recognizing and uncovering the strengths and competencies of another as they seek to appreciate our distinctive strengths and competencies (*strategic advantages of cooperation and mutuality*)

Constructing Provocative Propositions

- A statement bridging the best of "what is" with a speculation or intuition of "what might be" (*"leaning into the future"*)
- Stretch the realm of the status quo, think in systemic terms, challenge assumptions or routines, and suggest real/desired possibilities (*"beating and breaking the bounds"*)