Utilizing Appreciative Inquiry to Cultivate a Meaningful Work Perspective and Support Successful Organizational Change

2nd Symposium on Meaningful Work Prospects for the 21st Century
AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand

Patrick Farran, MBA, SPHR, PMP
Director of Consulting; SAS Institute Inc.
PhD Candidate; Center for Values Driven Leadership; Benedictine University
Patrick.Farran@sas.com

December 1, 2016
Introduction - Key Research Questions

- Can Appreciative Inquiry (AI) be used as an organizational intervention to increase work meaningfulness?

- What is the relationship of meaningfulness to organizational outcomes?
Introduction – Working Hypotheses/Propositions

1. Meaning is uniquely authored by those who experience it.
2. Experienced meaning is dynamic, not fixed.
3. Individuals and organizations can be taught to create conditions that will help cultivate meaningfulness.
4. Meaningfulness can be co-created by individuals within organizations through an AI intervention.
5. Organizational members who participate in AI will report higher subsequent levels of experienced meaningfulness.
6. Experienced meaningfulness is positively related to performance outcomes (individual and organizational).
Literature Review – Appreciative Inquiry

• valuing the best of what is and envisioning what can be
• collaborative/generative
• positive imagery/positive action
• process to give authentic voice to organizational members
• socially co-constructed sense-making/meaning
Literature Review – Meaningfulness

• nuanced views in the literature re. *finding* vs. *creating* meaning?
• static vs. dynamic?
• processes by which to impact?
• role of affect?
• meaningfulness at work (e.g. job crafting, integration outside of work, alignment to organizations)
Methodology

- Perform Several Organizational AI Interventions
- Administer the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Survey (CMWS) (Lips-Wiersma, M & Wright, S.; 2012)
- Mixed-Methods:
  - Pre-Test/Post-Test x2 Design
  - Quantitative analysis on CMWS surveys and available organization performance data for (e.g. engagement scores; CSR, financial metrics, etc.)
  - Qualitative analysis on themes from interviews and observations
References


