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# HOW IS APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY EXPERIENCED BY THE EMPLOYEES AT ABBA SEAFOOD?

*Master Thesis*

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## Acknowledgements

This thesis is written in the field of management during fall 2011 at the School of Business, Economics and Law, Gothenburg. Inspired by Organization Development and change management, our aim has been to examine how the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry is experienced to affect an organization.

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Last but not least, we would like to thank each other. With a creative and productive collaboration since day one, we wish each other the warmest recommendations for the future.

Gothenburg, January 2012

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## Abstract

**Master thesis in Management, The School of Business, Economics and Law, Fall 2011**

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**Title:** How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood?

**Background:** The Western world is characterized by a culture of criticism and the traditional approach of solving problems. In the 1980's Appreciative Inquiry (AI) emerged as a new approach to challenge the traditional manner of organizational development. Previous research in the area is narrow, but the number of organizations adopting AI is increasing. Therefore we find it interesting to immerse further in how AI contributes to the field of organizational development.

**Purpose:** The aim of this thesis is to examine how AI is experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood.

**Methodology:** The empirical material consists of 18 qualitative interviews with employees from the head office of Abba Seafood. The empirical material has been compared and analyzed using a frame of reference covering scientific articles and literature in order to gradually come to a conclusion.

**Results and conclusion:** The results and analysis show that AI is experienced to create positive emotions, focus on strengths, to increase the confidence, vision future possibilities, create a greater engagement, be applicable in private life and a change in communication. Moreover it is experienced in contrast to the traditional approach on change.

**Suggested further research:** This thesis can contribute to further research by illustrating what is experienced to happen when an organization shifts focus from problem solving to an appreciative approach. For researchers interested in immersing further on this matter, we suggest an additional study at Abba Seafood in a couple of years. Even though AI has only been implemented for one year, interesting results can already be seen. Thereby it would be interesting to see what results are provided in the long term. As the field of AI is still relatively unexplored, it can also be interesting to investigate other organizations.

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### Abbreviations

AI - Appreciative Inquiry

PS - Problem Solving

OD - Organizational Development

**Key Words:** Organization Development, Appreciative Inquiry, Problem Solving, emotions, motivation, communication

## 1. Introduction

*This chapter introduces the reader to our thesis about Appreciative Inquiry. It contains a general background, and a problem discussion of AI and the traditional approach when going through change. We also present Abba Seafood, as our object of study, and the aim of the thesis.*

### 1.1 Background

To keep up with competition in a constantly changing environment, organizations have to go through change and development. Organizational development (OD) is often a concern of top-level managers collaborating with work teams, together trying to change the organizational culture by using behavioral techniques and knowledge (Cummings & Worley, 1997). OD aims to give every individual within the organization the possibility to grow in competence by teaching them how to manage the organizational processes, structures and culture in a more effective way (French, Bell & Zawacki, 2005; Hurley, Church, Burke & Van Eynde, 1992), to create open communication and continuous learning (Hurley et al, 1992). OD began to emerge in the mid-1950s (French et al, 2005) and has usually been known for focusing on the organizational problems and its ability to solve them (Cummings & Worley, 1997).

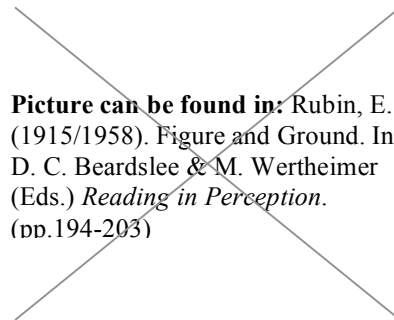
The greatest part of this century has been dominated by conceptions that are called modernism. The purpose of the modernist theory and practice is to solve problems, cure illness, and to achieve social, environmental and scientific improvement. Within the modernist theory there is a sense of certainty that the world is, or should be, in one way or another. It emphasizes rationality, knowledge, truth, and focuses on finding the proper or best way of providing information or being professional (Hosking & McNamee, 2006). Many argue that this era is changing and that we are moving into a period of postmodernism, because of a range of cultural and intellectual transformations (Lyotard, 1984, Turner, 1990, Gergen, 1991). Schein (1985) and Gergen (1990) suggest that organizations are a result of human interaction and social construction. The social constructionist perspective claims that people take part in the (re)construction of social realities in relational processes and cooperation and that these constructions are shaped by the thoughts of the people that are present in a specific context. The social constructionist perspective puts emphasis on the relational angle; what is created in a certain context depends on the people and their

relationships to each other. The constructions are a function of, for example, cultural traditions, local conventions, history, beliefs, truths and values (Hosking & McNamee, 2006).

According to Watkins, Mohr & Kelly (2011) the western part of the world lives in a culture of criticism where people view the world as a problem to be solved. Fitzgerald, Murrell & Newman (2002) mean that criticizing is seldom questioned, because it is part of everyday life. Instead of focusing on what we are already good at, we tell ourselves we are not good enough and that we should not weigh too many kilos or smoke too many cigarettes. Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros (2008) mean that organizations have adopted the same mentality as the society, spending significant resources in training managers to remain observant in detecting problems and identifying issues. Since our lives are influenced by weaknesses and solving problems, it is not hard to understand why organizational cultures are usually characterized by the same way of thinking. When using the traditional approaches of going through change, employees communicate about what is wrong within the organization, and they focus more on weaknesses than strengths (Cooperrider et al, 2008).

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) describes an alternative perspective towards the traditional approach on change (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). It focuses on increasing the positive aspects instead of the negative (Caza & Caza, 2008) and offers a new way to view old phenomenon where elements that used to be invisible gets visible (Cameron et al, 2003). Using the two figures below as metaphors, we can see that there is more than one way to view a situation. The first picture shows what appears to be a vase, but when taking another look two faces can also be seen. The faces become more obvious in the second picture, where another background is applied (Rubin, 1915/1958). When going through a situation, of for example change in an organization, not only the vase or the negative aspects of stress or downsizing can be evident. When viewing the situation twice, another perspective might also be seen, for example compassion of colleagues (Cameron et al, 2003). In the same way as POS, a philosophy called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) focuses on strengths instead of weaknesses.

## Figure 1.1 Rubin's Vase



The rising use of Appreciative Inquiry has received increased publicity in the field of change management and organization development (Cummings & Worley, 2004; French & Bell, 1998). AI has its roots in social constructionism and its' own twist that gives it a positive context (Cooperrider et al, 2008). Newly introduced in Sweden, and with an increasing popularity in the USA and Denmark (Interview Styrkebaserad), we want to take a further look at what Bushe (1995) refers to as "one of the more significant organization development innovations in recent years". We want to examine Appreciative Inquiry and how it is experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood.

## 1.2 Problem discussion

The aim of change is to make the organization more effective, and for the organization to gain organizational "health" (Lewin, 1951). The employees are an organization's most important asset, and when they grow the company grows. It is the employees who define the organization's character and impact its capacity to perform (Walker, 2002). More than 50 years ago psychologists discovered that food and water were not enough for infants to grow, but they also have the need for human contact where people notice them, talk to them, and give them love and attention (Harlow, 1962, Bowlby, 1952). When going through change, the emotions of the employees can affect the outcome of the change. Change is often associated with negative emotions among the employees, because it tends to be related to negative experiences (Marks & Mirvis, 1992) such as stress (Cartwright & Cooper, 1992) or unfairness (Conlon & Shapiro, 2002).

Many different OD processes can give organizations the tools to evolve or change, and these activities are usually focused on the organizational problems and an organization's ability to

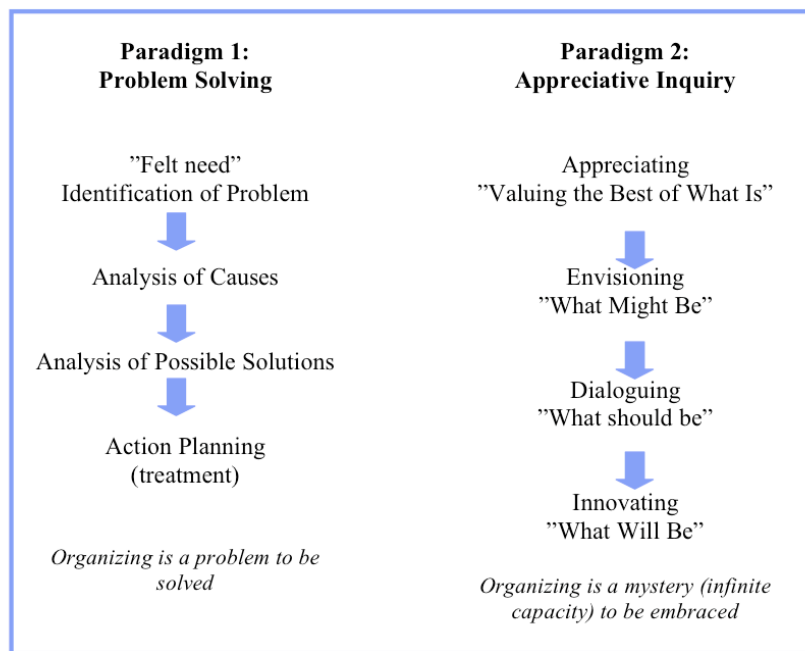


solve them (Cummings & Worley, 1997). Cummings & Worley (2001) mean that when using a problem solving approach communication concentrates on what is wrong in the organization. According to Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) methods that are focusing on problem solving are time-consuming and look back on what has happened in the past. Caza & Caza (2008) say that although organizations sometimes have to correct problems, an overwhelming focus on problems can divert focus from what is positive in the organization. McNamee (2006) says that we could gain by focusing on the things that we appreciate, i.e. the parts that are working, that can be valued and that make the employees coordinate a generative future together. She also says that when employees are focusing on strengths they can address problems more easily. According to Cooperrider et al (2008), AI moves from solving problems and focuses on the organizational strengths instead of considering what does not work. Lewis, Passmore & Cantore (2008) say that by focusing on the sales that are rising instead of falling, organizations begin to recognize the things they do right to get the effect of rising sales. The assumption of AI is:

*“Every organization has something that works right – things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities. AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, vision, and action for change.”*

- Cooperrider et al, 2008 (p.XV)

Figure 1.2 illustrates Problem Solving (PS) in Paradigm 1 and the alternative way of AI in Paradigm 2 (Cooperrider et al, 2008). As the traditional approach of PS claims, organizations and organizing are problems to be solved and the route of improvement is characterized by removing the problem. This is done by (1) identifying the (key) problems, (2) analyzing the causes, (3) analyzing the solutions and (4) developing an action plan. AI takes a different point of view where organizations and organizing are seen as solutions to be embraced (Cooperrider et al, 2008). It seeks to value the situation by “the best of what is”, continues with collaborate visioning of “what might be”, then ensures consensus among the people in the system for “what should be” to finally collaborate with “what will be” (Bushe, 1998).

**Figure 1.2 Two Paradigms for Organizational Change**

**Source:** Cooperrider et al, (2008). *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (p.16). (Modified)

Cooperrider et al (2008) put the two different approaches of PS and AI in contrast to each other. In this thesis we will distinguish the traditional way and AI, as two different ways for organizations to go through change. As a relatively new phenomenon, consequences of AI in organizations have just begun to be detected.

With an interest in OD, we got briefed about doing a case study at Abba Seafood, which has implemented AI since January 2011. The organization wanted to work with AI because of an interest in affecting their organizational behavior. We have had the opportunity to investigate how AI is experienced by the employees at the head office, and what actually happens when an organization takes the initiative to change towards a more strength-focused way of thinking.

### 1.3 Abba Seafood

Abba Seafood is a fish and seafood company within the food industry. Abba Seafood has its roots back in 1838 Bergen, Norway when a man named Christian Gerhard Ameln began

doing business with fish and salt. Today the company holds the market leading position in Sweden with a turnover of 1.2 billion SEK in 2010 and brands such as Abba, Kalles Kaviar and Grebbestads Ansjovis. Abba Seafood employs 60 people at the head office in Gothenburg and 250 in the company's production facilities in Kungshamn. The company also employs 30 sales people at different locations in Sweden and 20 employees at the warehouse in Uddevalla. Abba Seafood has been through many changes over the years, including several CEO-changes. In spring 2009 a new CEO took over and since then the organization has faced new strategies concerning its long-term goals, where a part of its major focus has been to strengthen the organization internally. A new vision has emerged of becoming Sweden's best food company by 2015. By enhancing the capabilities and collective vision of the employees, while at the same strengthening the organization's results, Abba Seafood seeks to fulfill their vision. The future actions of the organization were discussed during management meetings, and it was concluded that the members wanted to do something beyond vision and result planning. Discussions about behavior and what behaviors they wanted to see more of in the organization were prominent, and when executives got in touch with consultants from Styrkebaserad in 2010, Abba Seafood entered the process of implementing Appreciative Inquiry. Styrkebaserad is a Swedish consultancy company that works with AI in order to strengthen peoples and organizations' abilities to perform at their best. Since January 2011 two consultants have implemented AI on the managers at the head office in order to influence the managers of each department to reach their goals with AI. The intention has been to use the managers as a channel to bring out AI throughout the rest of the organization. AI aims to influence every aspect of the organizational behavior, such as decision-making, how to communicate with colleagues and the mindset of the employees. The implementation has until today reached the organization at the head office. In 2012 Abba Seafood intends to include the rest of the organization as well (Interview Markus Pregmark, Human Resources Director).

#### **1.4 Aim of study**

Our main purpose has been to examine how the employees at the head office of Abba Seafood experience Appreciative Inquiry (AI), as a new way of going through change. We want to contribute in documenting how AI is experienced to affect the employees within an organization, by providing a case of how AI is experienced at Abba Seafood today. To receive

an answer to our research question we have chosen to include a sub question where we ask how AI is experienced compared to previous processes on change.

#### 1.4.1 Research question

How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood?

#### 1.4.2 Sub question

How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced compared to previous processes on change?

### 1.5 Disposition

Our thesis has the following disposition:

**Chapter 1:** *The introduction* contains a general background and a problem discussion about AI and the traditional approach when going through change. Here we also present our object of study (Abba Seafood) and the aim of this thesis.

**Chapter 2:** *The frame of reference* begins by describing how change can be experienced, what motivates people, and how communication can be a tool for change. A thorough description about of AI and how AI changes an organization is given to help us examine our aim of study.

**Chapter 3:** *The methodology* presents the manner in which the study was conducted. It covers how the data was collected, analyzed and what our course of action means for the study.

**Chapter 4:** *The empirical findings* summarize the findings we received during our interviews at the head office of Abba Seafood.

**Chapter 5:** *In the analysis*, we analyze the frame of reference and our empirical material to answer our research question.

**Chapter 6:** *The conclusion* presents our answers to the research question: How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood? and our sub question: How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced compared to previous processes on change?

## 2. Frame of Reference

*This chapter presents our frame of reference. First we begin by describing how change can be experienced, what creates motivation and how communication can work as a tool for change. We continue by giving a thorough description of the philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry. This chapter intends to help us examine how AI is experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood.*

### 2.1 Emotions and change

Emotions are a part of the workplace (Ashkanasy, Zerbe & Hartel, 2002). They affect attitudes, performance, trust and commitment (George & Jones 1997, Kiefer 2005, Weiss 2002, Weiss & Cropanzano 1996), and work as indicators if personal goals are being reached or threatened. Emotions also indicate what employees believe is good or bad, for both themselves and the organization (Hartel & Zerbe, 2002). Emotions can be experienced as positive, reflecting for example warmth, friendship or love. They can also be experienced as negative and reflect feelings of for example shame, guilt or fear (Taute, McQuitty & Sautter, 2011). Differences in interests, values etc. affect how people react, and what emotions that are reflected (Liu & Perrewé, 2005).

Liu & Perrewé (2005) claim that change can be troubling for organizations. When going through change in an organization, the emotions of the employees can affect the outcome of the change (Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Paterson & Hartel, 2002). Changes can cause stress, fear and a resistance to change (Kiefer, 2005) and managers who are not able to handle negative emotions can expect resistance and problems during the implementation (Harris & Gresch, 2010). Kiefer (2002) says that resistance to change correlate with negative emotions and in order to avoid resistance, emotions that are negative have to be removed. Positive emotions can do the opposite and help the employees to support the change (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008). Fredrickson (2003) also means that positive emotions can give energy both to the individuals and the organization, as she claims that they make people more effective both today and in the future.

## 2.2 Motivation

Maslow (1954) mentions that after fulfilling physical survival needs, the need for safety, security and social belonging, people need to obtain self-esteem and self-actualization to get motivated. According to Maslow (1954) people have five types of needs, and when a lower level of need is satisfied, a higher level becomes visible.

The pyramid begins with the lower level of (1) physical survival needs (hunger, shelter, thirst and other basic needs), (2) safety and security needs (safety and security from physical and emotional harm), (3) needs of social belonging (acceptance, friendship etc.), (4) self-esteem (status, attention, recognition, achievement etc.) and at the top of the pyramid there is the need for (5) self-actualization (self-fulfillment, individual growth etc.). The lower needs (physical survival needs and safety and security) are externally satisfied and needs at a higher level (social belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization) are internally satisfied as these reflect internal feeling of the individual.

**Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



Source: Zalenski, R.J. & Raspa, R. (2006). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. (p. 1121). (Modified)

## 2.3 Communication during change

According to Frahm & Brown (2007) there is an evolving interest in how employees are accepting organizational changes, and communication is one important tool for explaining how change is perceived. A certain way of speaking can dominate an organization (Deissler, 2006). The articulation of questions is one of the most impactful tools when implementing change (Cooperrider et al, 2008). When using the traditional approach of going through change, we are focusing on problems and draw our attention away from what is already working (Gergen, McNamee & Barrett, 2001). As soon as we label something a problem it becomes a problem (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). By considering that problems are shaped communicatively by those participating in the conversation the persons who communicate with each other about the issue, that is claimed to be a “problem” or a “solution”, belongs to a certain discourse or form of conversation (Deissler, 2006).

Cummings & Worley (2001) state that communication using AI puts emphasis on what the organization is doing right. Preskil & Tzavaras Catsambas (2006) mean that AI does not avoid problems, but addresses them in another way by changing the use of communication towards a more hopeful language that expresses possibilities that are based on good experiences from the past. By creating space for appreciative conversation, groups begin the formation of their images of how the future could be (Bushe, 1998). When creating these images through communication using AI, employees are expected to behave and move towards this imaged and successful future (Preskil & Tzavaras Catsambas, 2006). According to Cooperrider et al (2008) a fundamental assumption principal to AI is that the language used determines one’s reality. For that reason, the emotional meaning of words like dysfunctional, incompetence and stress, affect one’s thinking and acting. Similarly do those of achievement, joy, opportunities and strengths. As human systems and organizations move in the direction of what they study, Cooperrider et al (2008) claim that the chosen path of optimism or negativism in the language spoken, determines ones future.

### 2.3.1 Transformative communication

According to Gergen et al (2001), a challenge for companies is to create a feasible future together through communication. Transformative dialogue is aiming to make it easier to

collaboratively construct new realities. To do this there is a need for what is called “imaginary moments” that help employees to co-create new worlds and to collaborate.

Gergen et al (2001) explains transformative dialogue as

*“any form of interchange that succeeds in transforming a relationship between those committed to otherwise separate and antagonistic realities (and their related practices) to one in which common and solidifying realities are under construction”*

- Gergen et al, 2001 (p.682)

Gergen et al (2001) mean that by using a transformative dialogue an organization puts emphasis on *“relational responsibility, self-expression, affirmation, coordination, reflexivity, and the co-creation of new realities”* (p.704).

Gergen et al (2001) mean that the participants move from a “we” and “them” way of thinking into a “we” focus where they all exist together. Change can be facilitated by changing the way of communicating. When changing the rules and form of communication and not permitting blame, focus can shift from the individual to the relational responsibility. When everyone is given the possibility to share their opinion through self-expression and by avoiding blaming each other, communication can move towards change. Less emphasis is paid on the individual focus, when affirming each other through confirming what is said, and by always supporting something within the conversation. Through coordinating actions, for example starting meetings by shaking hand and talking about common interests, patterns of interchange can be developed that moves the conversation forward. By shifting the way of communicating everyone’s voice can be heard for another kind of conversation to take place.

## **2.4 Appreciative Inquiry**

Appreciative Inquiry was introduced in the 1980’s by David Cooperrider, an associate professor at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University. Cooperrider developed the approach during his dissertation at the medical center of Cleveland Clinic, while studying successes and failures in the leadership team. Based on excessive findings in the field of successes, his discovery especially got to underline times when the organizational members were most alive, effective, committed and empowered. A pattern and



a brand new theoretical standpoint was found (Cooperrider et al, 2008), that got to challenge the orientation of classical problem solving approaches (Egan & Lancaster, 2005).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is defined:

*“Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives “life” to a living system when it is most effective, alive, and constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen that system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question,” often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. AI interventions focus on the speed of imagination and innovation instead of the negative, critical, and spiraling diagnoses commonly used in organizations. The discovery, dream, design and destiny model links the energy of the positive core to changes never thought possible”.*

- Cooperrider et al, 2008 (p.3)

#### **2.4.1. The 4-D Cycle and the positive core**

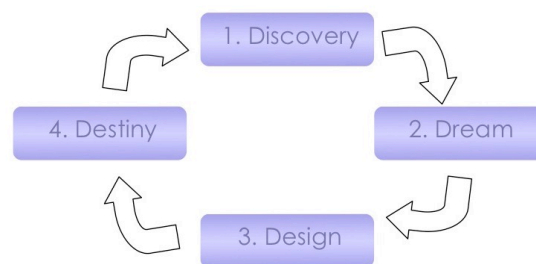
AI includes the process of a 4-D Cycle, which is meant to engage people at any or all levels of an organization to produce positive and effective change (Cooperrider et al, 2008). The 4-D Cycle includes four phases: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The principle of the cycle is that the four phases can support people within an organization to access and mobilize a positive core of strengths and thereby transform the current state of their organization to an enhanced future state where the organization is operating at its best. This positive core of strengths can be any aspect the organization values from the past and that it wants to develop, for example leadership and management capabilities, organizational wisdom, positive emotions, best business practices, product/service strengths or social capital. The positive core lies at heart of the AI process (Cooperrider et al, 2008).

Two questions lie behind any AI intervention, and aim to develop the positive core. These questions are asked when striving to change in the way AI advocates:

1. *What, in this particular setting and context, gives life to this system – when it is most alive, healthy, and symbiotically related to its various communities?*
2. *What are the possibilities – expressed and latent – to provide opportunities for more effective (value-congruent) forms of organizing?*

- Cooperrider et al, 2008 (p.4-5)

**Figure 2.2 The 4-D Cycle**



**Source:** Cooperrider, et al (2008) *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. (p. 34). (Modified)

The phases of the 4-D Cycle are explained below (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom & Rader, 2010):

- **Discovery (the best of what is):** In the first phase strengths and core competencies are identified that reflect the organizations' positive core.
- **Dream (what might be?):** The second phase focuses on envisioning the positive possibilities for the future, the formation of a shared vision and the decision what strategic opportunities the organization should focus on.
- **Design (how can/should it be?):** The third phase includes the creation of statements concerning objectives for each strategic opportunity and the design of the processes and structures that are needed to accomplish them. This phase contains in-depth dialogue about the best strategies, structure, processes and employees to achieve the objectives.
- **Destiny (what will be?):** The fourth phase is about the formation of a collaborative path forward and the creation of individual commitments to shared objectives. In this phase every individual is invited to provide his or her possible contributions, strengths and resources in co-creating the future.

To completely understand and internalize the theory of AI and the 4-D Cycle, Cooperrider et al (2008) claim it is necessary to understand the five principles that move theory to practice. These principles show how a positive revolution in change is organized and what to think of when doing AI. It consists of the constructionist-, the simultaneity-, the poetic-, the anticipatory- and the positive principle.

*The constructionist principle* means that the social knowledge and the future of the organization are dependent; the change that happens depends on the questions that are asked. The fundamental part of every organization development (OD)-task lies in knowing the organization, and to be effective leaders and other agents working with OD must be skillful in reading, understanding and analyzing the organization. *The principle of simultaneity* claims that inquiry and change aren't separate moments but can and should be simultaneous. The principle means that change and inquiry are related in the questions that are asked, as the questions determine what is discovered. *The poetic principle* puts forth the interpretative possibilities, where one has a choice for studying moments of creativity or moments of devastating stress. Referring to organizations with a past, present and a future, inquiry has the choice to focus on times when the organization was strong or times when it was not. In generating constructive organizational change, *the anticipatory principle* means that the most important impact lies in collective imagination and discourse about the future. In the anticipatory view of organizational life, the central idea is that the current behavior of the organization is guided by the image of the future. The discourse or projection of the people who maintain the organization has influence on the future. Furthermore, *the positive principle* claims that the more positive the questions are to guide an OD initiative, the more long-lasting and effective the change will be. As human constructions, organizations are affirmative systems, responsive to positive ideas and knowledge. Essential for the positive change to work is that the organization has to take the decision to focus on the positive to lead the inquiry, as the positive image will generate positive action (Cooperrider et al, 2008).

#### **2.4.2 The Six Freedoms**

In the evolution of AI, a concept called The Six Freedoms has emerged. The Six Freedoms are a result of an inquiry made by the AI consulting firm Corporation for Positive Change, on their client organizations. The purpose of the inquiry was to detect why Appreciative Inquiry works. By using a set of questions, holding focus groups as well as formal and informal

interviews, a key finding emerged among the interviewees. The finding was that AI generates six conditions that liberate and unleash personal and organizational power (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The six conditions, or freedoms, include the freedom to be known in relationship, the freedom to be heard, the freedom to dream in community, the freedom to choose to contribute, the freedom to act with support and the freedom to be positive.

AI creates *the freedom to be known in relationship* which embraces both the individual and the relationships within the group. This freedom integrates and values all people within the group for the unique individuals they are, and intends to liberate ideas, individual and organizational power via collaboration (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). It also put less emphasis on power and authority (Cooperrider et al, 2008). *The freedom to be heard* is according to Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) characterized by compassionate listening. The interaction is distinguished as empathic and curious, when the messages in the conversation are truly heard, not just listened to without understanding. When a conversation is appreciative, it encourages people to come forward and brings the conversation to a higher level because the interaction is intense and the messages become correctly understood. AI opens up for *the freedom to dream in community*. Neither leadership vision nor a shared vision alone is enough in today's complex world. In order to compose a unity, it is essential to let larger and diverse groups in organizations to feel safe enough to dream and to share their dreams together in dialogue. AI invites people from every level of the organization to take part in the dreaming process and to unleash the dreams of every individual. If organizations offer its' employees the freedom to choose the nature and extent of their contributions, *the freedom to choose to contribute* leads to enhanced capacities to contribute and learn. The employees get motivated, creative and determined when they feel they can affect their work and when they have the freedom of choosing their contribution. Furthermore, *the freedom to act with support* happens when employees are aware of the fact that large numbers of people know and care about their work. When this happens, a setting for feeling secure and relied upon is founded and people tend to be stimulated to do their best in experimenting, innovating and learning (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). At last, AI opens up for *the freedom to be positive*. The common norm in organizations today is that it is not meant for people to have fun when going to work, and this in turn can make people depressed. AI permits people to be

happy and feel positive, for example when going to work. The freedom to be positive is so powerful that it can transform mindsets that are negative (Cooperrider et al, 2008). The positive freedom cannot be ignored if an invitation to think of the positive is actively exerted on you (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

In conclusion, if enforced and present, the power of AI lies in the release of the six freedoms to circuit in the 4-D Cycle. AI creates an energy and power within the organization that is more effective than if AI was not present, which results in a positive change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

## **2.5 Summary - Frame of reference**

In our frame of reference we first took a more general approach where we described how emotions can affect employees during change, depending on if the emotions are positive or negative. Thereafter we described what needs that need to be fulfilled in order to motivate employees. We deepened in how communication can work as a tool for change. The chosen discourse of communication affects people's reality, their thinking and acting, and therefore communication has a great impact on how the future will be. Finally, we described the philosophy of AI to give an understanding for our empirical material.

### 3. Methodology

*This chapter presents the manner in which the study was conducted. It covers how the data was collected and analyzed as well as what our course of action means for the study.*

This study was conducted over the course of nine weeks in the fall of 2011. We decided to examine Appreciative Inquiry for our thesis, when we got briefed about a case study by our tutor who told us about the high-commitment investment of AI at Abba Seafood in Gothenburg. Our work began by contacting Abba Seafood and their AI-consultants at the consultancy company Styrkebaserad, to learn about their ongoing work and set the frame for how we could twist our thesis. At Abba Seafood we interviewed one of the initiators of the implementation of AI, the Human Resources Director Markus Pregmark, to collect initial information about how and why AI was implemented. During a meeting with a consultant from Styrkebaserad, we received a greater introduction in the field of AI. In order to achieve a foundation for our study, we have also read scientific articles and literature before beginning the data collection. The study has been based on qualitative interviews. More on this matter in section 3.1. Preparing and collecting the interviews.

In the process of conducting the interviews, it became evident that we had to change our aim of study. Initially our main objective was to examine: How is AI perceived in contrast to Problem Solving? When conducting the interviews we realized that the main part of our respondents did not know about PS as an approach on change. Somehow they did compare their experiences of AI to what we believe is PS, as they described the former way of facing development to be focused on solving problems and weaknesses, even though most of them were not able to name it as a way of going through change. In that sense we found their answers about AI comparable to PS. A few respondents mentioned PS by name and actually did compare it to AI. These comments represented unique cases and we found the respondents very well-informed about the two methods. As all of our respondents did not name their comparison to PS, we decided to mainly focus on the experiences of AI as all respondents could answer on this matter. With a data set indicating experiences and perceptions of AI and for us to provide a higher credibility, we decided to change our aim of study to “*How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood?*” because this question reflects our actual research results. We decided to supplement this main question with the sub

question: *How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced compared to previous processes on change?*

### **3.1 Preparing and collecting the interviews**

We have based our study on qualitative interviews. This method of data collection has been suitable for our study because we examine the experiences, the perceptions and the world from the interviewee's point of view (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In total we have conducted 18 interviews, 12 with employees from managerial positions and 6 with employees from subordinate positions at the head office of Abba Seafood in Gothenburg. We interviewed as many employees as opportunity allowed for and our choice of respondents was made according to Abba Seafoods' preferences. In order to capture a wide perception as possible, we have interviewed employees from different departments. Our objective has been to interview employees who have worked at Abba Seafood for a long period of time, in order to understand how the organizational culture was before and after the implementation of AI.

Before the interview process began, an interview template was compiled (see Appendix A) which was designed with respect to the frame of reference. We have chosen to use semi-structured interviews in order to understand the everyday world from the interviewee's own perspective (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The interview template was standardized in order to examine the same field of every interview that was held but depending on the stories told by the interviewees, the template was adapted to every unique interview. In some instances, we asked additional questions to gather more information (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Bryman (2011) means a test interview should be conducted in order to increase the quality of the empirical collection. We conducted a test interview, which allowed us to determine if any question needed to be clarified.

We have strived to collect stories and therefore we compiled questions that are as open-ended as possible in order to let the interviewees speak freely about their own perceptions and experiences. The insights we collected is a source of every employees own interpretations, and cannot be defined as facts (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). We are aware we cannot give proof solutions considering if AI works within the timeframe and the material we have. However, we have the opportunity to provide stories and experiences of how AI is experienced. Bryman (2011) means the traits of the respondents can affect their answers.

When collecting stories, the interviewee's social and verbal ability is important. If a person does not have the ability to express him- or herself, or is feeling comfortable to open up, we get a limited amount of information. In this sense, we have tried to convey that no answer is right or wrong.

Bryman (2011) gives suggestions what to inform respondents about before beginning the interviews. These suggestions concern how to describe the intention of the interviews. Our empirical collection began by sending the questions to the interviewees a couple of days before the meetings, together with a short introduction about what we wanted to examine to invoke thoughts about their perceptions, experiences and stories. When we met, we repeated the background of what we sought to study and thereafter we followed with the interview questions.

The interviews took place via personal meetings at the head office of Abba Seafood with both authors in attendance. To reach describing stories but without designating the answers, all interviewees were informed that their answers would be anonymous in the chapter about empirical data. The length of the interviews ranged 30-40 minutes, which proved to be sufficient in every case. We never stressed the interviewee to finish a story to ensure that every story was completed. Silverman (2011) mentions the difficulties giving an authentic understanding about peoples' own experiences. To ensure the interviews becoming as authentic as possible, notes were taken by one of the authors in addition to having the interviews recorded. Recording the interviews helped us to pay full attention to the interviewees during the interviews and to ask supplementary questions when necessary (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). When all the questions were asked, we summarized our notes to the interviewee in order to ensure that our understanding was correct. Then we listened to the recorded interview right after the meeting and wrote down our results in order to ensure the use of the interviewees own words. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and translated into English. We have translated the particular words and meanings in Swedish to English as accurately as possible but we are aware of the discrepancies that can occur when translating and documenting in another language.



### 3.2 Analyzing the collected interviews

Conducting the interviews, we noticed that the respondents had continuity in their answers by sharing similar information in their answers. Therefore, we labeled the different answers by theme during the transcription of the material, and these results are the titles for each section in chapter four and five. The themes are: an increase in positive emotions, a greater focus on strengths, an increase in confidence, visioning future possibilities, a greater engagement, applicable in private life, and a change in communication.

In chapter four the empirical data is first presented as summaries of our findings in order to facilitate the understanding of the empirical material, and the summaries are followed by examples of citations to illustrate the interviewees own words. The selected examples of citations in chapter four represent responses that were common and descriptive ones in our sampling. To bring in all perspectives, we have also published citations that represent deviant opinions in our empirical findings. As our empirical material is extensive, we chose to present a summarized version of the findings in chapter four and supplement it with the complete findings in an appendix. We wanted to keep the complete material as it contains interesting material for those who wish to immerse further in our findings. The complete set of citations is found in Appendix B, where the respondents have been renamed in order to make them anonymous.

The reliability of this study, if reproduced by other researchers at another time (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) depends on how the process of AI evolves at Abba Seafood. We find it important to keep in mind that the company has not implemented the philosophy of AI for more than one year. At the time of writing the thesis, the reliability is therefore uncertain. We do not know how the implementation will be characterized in a couple of years, or if the perceptions and experiences will be the same or different to what they are now. According to Peräkylä (2011) the validity of research depends on the interpretation of observations, and if interpretations of researchers' are supported by the data in a sensible relation to earlier research. To strengthen our validity, we have strived to interview as many people as we have had the opportunity to, to achieve a broader base from which we can draw our conclusions. Our conclusions in the analysis are supported by the gathered data and the frame of reference.

## 4. Empirical findings

*This chapter summarizes our empirical findings according to the following themes: an increase in positive emotions, a greater focus on strengths, an increase in confidence, visioning future possibilities, a greater engagement, applicable in private life & a change in communication. It also provides the reader excerpts of our complete empirical findings that are found in Appendix B. These findings will help us answer our research question: How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood?*

### 4.1 An increase in positive emotions

When going through the citations, we see that the emotions towards AI appear to be positive. The respondents explained the positive emotions to depend on the energy and the positive mindset AI creates. Many respondents described a change at the whole workplace towards a more positive orientation. The respondents meant AI creates a workplace where people now enjoy their work more than before, and they perceived AI to be a fun change.

*“I think you become focused in a good way working with AI, as there are no negative thoughts. It’s strange that people tend to focus on what is negative and nowadays we do the opposite. If people ask you questions that are positive in its orientation, it’s impossible to answer something negative. They have to say what is good or what they’re proud of. If we would apply this to sports and the employees were football players, they wouldn’t complain about what’s not going to work, shoes being too small or about another team being better than them. Everyone knows that’s not the right mental attitude”- Bart*

*“I experience a lot of personal joy from working with AI, it’s a positive experience. After interviewing employees at Abba Seafood about leadership style, a student told me “You seem to have so much fun! You seem to have positive energy in your team”. That’s how it is”- Harry*

*“In the short term I can see that people feel much better at work and they enjoy their work more than before. I think AI contributes to create a great place to work”- Harry*

Another comment that occurred is that many respondents believe that AI has provided a mental shift and made them realize that there are two ways to view a situation. They say that

they feel more positive and see more possibilities today than before, as they were finding sources of faults and weaknesses before.

*“I see more possibilities and potential now than I did before as well as something positive in any situation, even though the situation can be negative in itself. I think that AI will continue to be an important change for me in the future” - Hugh*

*“Usually, people are very good at whining and complaining. Now it’s easier and more fun even if you sometimes exaggerate and joke about AI. I think AI is good, but it should not go to the extremes. Sometimes it can’t be forbidden to consider things as hard, and I think it’s important to find a balance and not to complain when it’s unnecessary. It’s about becoming more constructive. It’s important to find continuity with AI and that you work with it all the time, not only when the management tell you to”- Louise*

*“Generally I think people are not very fond of changes, they prefer working as they used to do because they feel secure and comfortable doing so. AI doesn’t change our way of working, but it changes us mentally as we reflect about our problems and try to solve them with a positive approach” – Mark*

## **4.2 A greater focus on strengths**

The respondents mentioned the positive emotions to depend on that they are now facing problems in a different way. They meant that more traditional methods were focusing on weaknesses, searching for faults and who to blame. Now when using AI, they said they search for the best in all people and situations, and focus on strengths and solutions instead of weaknesses and problems. They also found the focus on strengths to be a reason for why AI creates energy. Furthermore, most respondents had not experienced any similar process to AI before, neither at Abba or at other companies.

*“I have never noticed this way of working before. It is wonderful not to focus on what is wrong in the organization, but to focus on solutions and what already is good. Earlier, when working in other organizations we have had discussions about what went wrong and whose fault it was. Previously we have been focusing on solving problems instead of finding solutions, which is more important. Now it doesn’t matter whose fault it is. I have been affected by the change of AI, for example I have noticed a change in my way of confronting*

*problems. Now I see solutions and when I tell someone about a problem or situation that I want to change, I also give solutions to the problem and don't stop by complaining" – Jennifer*

*"We have many sports interested people in the organization, and you can explain AI using metaphors. My last experience happened yesterday when I was talking to a colleague about what he should work with in the future, speaking of what he's good at. He pointed out things he doesn't do very well but I told him to think of his strengths instead. I told him to imagine Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who is extremely talented in scoring goals and playing offensive. There is no idea to train Zlatan extensively on the defensive part because that wouldn't improve the game. It's much better to train and keep him for what he's good at, which is scoring goals. I said that I felt the same thing about him and that we should use him for what he does best, leaving the rest to someone else. He became extremely happy about this way of thinking. People become obsessed with their flaws and tend to forget about their strengths"- Melissa*

### **4.3 An increase in confidence**

Many respondents mentioned that their confidence has increased after implementing AI into the organization. Now they feel more confident taking risks and they also dare to make faults, for instance because they now believe that nothing is impossible. Respondents also mentioned that mistakes are manageable and no big deal. They also added that they celebrate successes more than before and take a greater responsibility for failures. A few of the respondents mentioned that this depends upon positive feedback as colleagues encourage them. Several respondents mentioned that employees dare to ask other people for help more often after implementing AI. They also said they have a greater compassion for each other.

*"I dare to do more after being introduced to AI. You receive a greater confidence when people in your environment tell you what you are doing well. We have obtained more courage and greater compassion for each other" – Lisa*

*"I think we've always been proud of working at Abba, but previously we've been afraid of doing wrong and we didn't dare to take responsibility for neither successes nor failures. That has changed a lot! Today I feel that we have a greater individual pride. AI has made us dare to take responsibility for failures and we also celebrate successes more than before" – Lisa*

*"I've definitely been affected by AI. Indirectly, when it's not allowed to make faults, it's not allowed to try anything. When using AI mistakes are not a big deal. Now no one thinks that anything is impossible, I think it has meant a lot to me personally"- Melissa*

#### **4.4 Visioning future possibilities**

Using AI, many respondents said they have learned to vision the future in its best, what they call the desirable situation. Nowadays they look back on successful experiences from the past and dream about how they can use these in the future. Therefore they have experienced a change in their way of viewing a situation. They consider AI to be more future-oriented and more positive than previous ways of working, as they now put emphasis on what they want to achieve instead of what they want to avoid.

*"You can compare AI with what athletes do before a game. It's about visioning how it's like to win the competition and stand on the podium. It's not like professional skiers will be last in a big race"- Harry*

*"It's nice that we go back to good things that happened before and compare these happenings to what we dream of is going to happen"- Rose*

*"AI is a good tool if you want to create change. It's about visioning what you want to achieve, not about visioning what you want to avoid. What distinguishes AI from other kind of changes is that it represents a more future-oriented way of thinking. It focuses on what results we want to achieve, which is a smart methodology" - William*

*"You look back on times when you succeeded, like a good activity or a productive meeting, and try to remember what made us perform that well at that time. Then you think about how we can use that experience to perform just as well or even better this time. It's important that we don't try to reinvent the wheel again, because it's unnecessary. If you think of it, you already know what works. Furthermore I think you can apply best-finding into any situation, it doesn't only have to concern your work" – Mark*

#### **4.5 A greater engagement**

Most respondents experienced AI to create a great engagement within the organization and some said AI changes the whole organizational culture. AI is experienced not to exclude

anyone and to create an organization that is less hierarchical, making everyone participate and work better together. They mentioned that the strength becomes greater when working in teams. AI is also said to make it easier for conversations to open up, for example during meetings. Many respondents experienced AI to be easy for everyone to understand, not containing models, analysis etc. They also mentioned that it is easier to accept things that are positive.

*“We were in an extreme vacuum after several CEO-changes and it didn’t happen much within the organization. It felt like we had reached the bottom. There were no common meetings, no contact with middle managers, line managers and so on. That’s why it felt good when AI was introduced. It led to a completely different engagement when people met for internal training and so on. You miss a lot when there’s no kind of meetings, and in this sense AI made a great difference. It shapes relations and it’s easy to engage in AI”- Melissa*

*”By working with AI we have changed our organizational culture. One thing that differs AI from other processes of change is that all stakeholders are involved and that no one is cut out. We are less hierarchical now when working with AI and we are trying to involve more people in for example decision-making. AI has made us work more together in teams. The strength working together in teams becomes much greater as you involve everyone in a different way”- Lisa*

*”AI is a process of change that I find easy for everyone to understand. It’s not about models, processes, analysis or clichés. Furthermore, it’s always easier to work with and accept things that are positive” - Steven*

*“It feels great using AI, we have a greater commitment even though we sometimes go through hard times. For example we had a product launch of a concept called “Middagsklart” that was challenging from the beginning, but people felt a great responsibility and motivation which made it turn out well”- Harry*

#### **4.6 Applicable in private life**

Respondents mentioned that AI can become a part of your life, and if you once accept AI it will never go away. The respondents want to live AI because it is experienced to bring something positive. They developed by saying that AI eventually affects your fundamental

behavior, and it can not only be used at work. AI is said to be applicable in any situation, both at work and in private life. Some respondents also mentioned that they have practiced AI on their children. The respondents said that it can be used both on people you know and on people you just met, and they said their communication has affected these people in both cases.

*“I don’t think you only can put on the “AI-hat” when you come to work at Abba. I think you always have to live AI, even when you’re with your family. It’s about creating a change in the fundamental behavior” - Mark*

*“This kind of understanding will never go away. When you get this “disease”, it’ll be chronic, I’m totally convinced about that. You can compare AI to learning how to ride a bike. If you’ve learnt it once, you’ll always know how to do it and you will keep that balance until you’re very, very old. I think that AI works in the same way! I think it’s applicable to any situation, also in your private life. It creates miracles, especially when you exercise it on people you haven’t met before. If you for example meet a person who is mediocresly service-minded and you give that person some appreciation, he or she will move a mile in his or hers way of being which is incredible”- Melissa*

*“AI is the only method this far that has not only affected my work life, but also the way I am with my family. I use AI in my private life when I raise my children, because it induces something positive and gives results very quickly. I use it with my son when formulating questions and it works because he has begun formulating the same questions to me. When I ask him what the best about his day was, he ask me the same thing every now and then“ – Lisa*

#### **4.7 A change in communication**

Many respondents said they have experienced a change of orientation in their conversations, where they today focus on what is good rather than the opposite. Many respondents experienced AI to change their way of confronting problems. They meant that AI faces the problem but also moves on in order to get somewhere.

*“One can see that the society is structured to look at what doesn’t work. I think AI is about finding an approach, not about sweeping the problems under the carpet. For example, we*

*have learned about the five-to-one-rule. If you take ten minutes talking about the problem, then you should take 50 minutes to talk about what actually works. My experience is that you have to face the fact and admit that there is a problem but then you have to move on and focus on how to make it work in order to get somewhere” – Harry*

*”Those who have tried AI say that when they are going to meetings, they go with a different way of thinking. It is much more solving-oriented even if that word isn’t strong enough. You notice that we have begun to work with AI through fewer explanations, error-analysis and less blaming of each other. You enter discussions more quickly about how you want things to be” - Victoria*

*“The greatest thing that has happened to us is that AI has made our organization more positive. It has changed our way of confronting problems, starting to find opportunities and changed our way of talking to each other”- Steven*

*“There is a power in AI, a special technique for asking questions. It’s about making employees think in a different way and not to focus too much on problem areas. Of course there are problem areas that have to be considered as well, but with AI you approach them in a different way. You focus on what works and the desired situation rather than what doesn’t work and what you haven’t succeeded doing. I think AI is a mental approach which makes you realize that you have the power to change in a positive way” - Mark*

AI is experienced to be a fast change, not taking much time to perform. The respondents also mentioned the simplicity when using AI. The respondents said that AI can be seen in the communication within the organization. Many respondents mentioned that they notice AI during meetings, conferences, in e-mails, letters etc. Using AI through communication is by the respondents experienced to affect everyone.

*”AI is a tool that transforms words into action. Working with AI creates changes in the moment, when you otherwise just talk about doing changes. It’s when you talk, in that moment, the change happens. That’s really cool! Everyone has time to work with AI. Other changes can be said to take too much time, but AI is only a matter of changing the way of asking questions. Everyone has got the time to do that” – Victoria*



*"I experience AI as a simple method. By using small changes and twisting the way of asking questions you can get a totally different value out of the question. AI gives energy. It's fascinating"- Mary*

*"I think the whole headquarter has been affected of AI. Everyone knows about AI. From my perspective I can see that my subordinates have been affected as we put emphasis on the best in the meetings, the e-mails and the letters. We talk a lot about the best pictures, the best result and things like that" - Harry*

With the use of AI some respondents have noticed an increase in giving feedback. Feedback was also said to be used in a different way, to consist of more constructive criticism and confirmed information. Respondents also mentioned that AI is a human way to communicate, and the communication is not depending on structures or positions.

*"The managers have been educated in AI and that can be noticed in the way they are talking to coworkers. Now everyone is giving more feedback and also in a different way. They are more constructive and information is confirmed more often"- Steven*

*"I experience AI as very energy-giving, and by giving positive feedback a positive meeting is created. It is important though, to be honest when giving positive feedback and not only give feedback without a reason. It is a way of getting closer to everyone, and I experience the meeting to be the core of AI. It's fun to get to know each other better"- Ron*

*"The conversation and the kind of interaction that AI brought soon got evident. It felt like a revealing way of talking. It's not a common way to communicate, and usually we communicate from structures or positions when you talk with your colleagues. AI is a pretty human way to have a dialogue of what you actually want to achieve and what you have achieved. So at first AI felt a little bit uncomfortable because this way of talking was so personal" – William*

Additionally, criticism was mentioned towards the way AI is communicated, when two respondents said that conversations sometimes have to be about what is wrong in the

organization. One reason that was mentioned is that people become frustrated if they are not allowed to talk about what is negative.

*“My perception is that even though you search for the best, you have to find the rock that is at risk for tipping over the entire wagon and remove it, aerate it or however you wish to handle the question. People get frustrated if they’re not allowed to speak about what’s negative or things that don’t work. If that is not allowed, there’s a risk it’ll all become superficial. I’m a bit allergic to if it comes to that level when it all feels like a game, I’m not very fond of it”- Melissa*

*”I can’t use AI when someone comes to me and is not feeling well. You can’t ask someone about the best things of feeling bad. Then you might have to use a more traditional way of leadership, but of course you can use AI by asking the person how he or she wants the situation to be in the future” – Adriana*

## 5. Analysis

*In this chapter we analyze the empirical findings using the frame of reference. The seven themes of findings: an increase in positive emotions, a greater focus on strengths, an increase in confidence, visioning future possibilities, a greater engagement, applicable in private life and a change in communication, are analyzed in order to answer our research question about how Appreciative Inquiry is experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood.*

### 5.1 An increase in positive emotions

All respondents at Abba Seafood experienced AI to be positive, and that AI creates energy and positive feelings. The respondents said that they feel more positive and see more possibilities now than before, and that they have noticed a mental shift in how they view a situation. Some also mentioned that they enjoy work more than before. Fredrickson (2003) mean that positive emotions give energy both to individuals and organizations, and make them more effective today and in the future. According to Härtel & Zerbe (2002), emotions work as indicators if personal goals are being reached or threatened. As the respondents said that they experience AI as positive, it seems that the positive emotions towards AI indicate that personal goals can be reached. As organizations are human constructions (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008), we find it obvious that the organization itself will benefit if the employees feel positive emotions. We perceive it as an organization that is implementing AI can expect to create a change that is experienced to be just as good for the individuals as for the organization, also because it creates positive emotions that generate energy for both parts and make them more effective. Compared to previous processes on change, the employees now allow themselves to see the positive in every situation. We experience the changing mindset, where the employees start to see possibilities, to open up for new prospects. When other methods of change are usually associated with negative emotions (Marks & Mirvis, 1992), AI is experienced to be a positive change. We perceive it as traditional methods on change created negative emotions, which limited the energy in the organization.

Cooperrider et al (2008) say that AI permits people to be happy and feel positive. They also state that the current norm in society today, is that it is not meant for people to have fun when going to work, which in turn can make people depressed. If the employees get depressed, we

perceive it as the organization does not benefit as much from their employees, because the employees would not be as effective and productive as when they feel positive emotions. They mean that AI is creating a place where the employees can enjoy their work, which is confirmed by the respondents at Abba Seafood, as they now say they enjoy work even more than before. Respondents mentioned a change in the organization towards a more positive orientation and they experienced AI as a positive and fun change, therefore we find the freedom to be positive here. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) mean the freedom to be positive cannot be ignored if an invitation is actively exerted on people within the organization. As the respondents believe it is easy to be positive when the whole office is positive, we can see coherence in our empirical findings here. We think it is clear that AI is experienced to change the organizational culture towards a more positive orientation. We find it obvious that a change towards the better benefits both the employees and the organization, because positive emotions are energy-giving and make people less depressed. It is fascinating that the employees feel an increased joy about going to work after only one year of time. We perceive it as the following themes explain why AI creates positive emotions.

## **5.2 A greater focus on strengths**

The respondents mentioned they have never experienced a similar way of going through change before. They meant that when they were using traditional methods on change they were focusing on weaknesses, searching for faults and who to blame. Now when they use AI, they have a greater focus on strengths and possibilities, which they said give them energy. Cummings & Worley (2001) state that when using AI the organization puts emphasis on what the employees are doing right, and Caza & Caza (2008) mean that an overwhelming focus on problems can divert focus from what is positive in the organization. We experience that the respondents find AI to be strengthening, as it gives them energy and motivation. Maslow (1954) means that when the needs of the first three phases in his pyramid have become satisfied, people strive for receiving self-esteem and self-actualization. These needs include attention, recognition, achievement, self-fulfillment and individual growth. We perceive it as when people are focusing on their own and other people's strengths, they feel appreciated and get a feeling of satisfaction. This in turn fulfills Maslow's needs and makes the employees motivated to perform, while other methods of change usually do not aim to give appreciation

and thereby might not increase motivation as much as AI does. Therefore we perceive it as focusing on strengths increases the employees' motivation to perform. We experience focusing on strengths to create emotions that are positive, as they now feel appreciated for the unique individuals they are.

### **5.3 An increase in confidence**

Many respondents experienced an increase in their confidence after implementing AI. They have a greater courage when it comes to taking risks as they now believe nothing is impossible and they dare to make faults, as they have begun to think of mistakes as manageable. The respondents mentioned that they take a greater responsibility for failures and also celebrate successes more than before. Moreover, they also said they dare to ask colleagues for help more often. According to Gergen, McNamee & Barrett (2001) focus can be shifted from the individual to the relation when using transformative communication. They mean that this can be done by changing the form of communication into a state where blaming others is not permitted. When changing the individual responsibility towards a relational one, we perceive it as no one is pointed out if things go wrong. We experience that when not allowing blaming others, people get more confident in taking risks and therefore we can conclude that AI is experienced to create a greater confidence. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) mean that the freedom to act with support is apparent when people know that other employees care about their work. When this happens, they mean that a setting for feeling secure and relied upon is created and this in turn stimulates experimenting, innovating and learning. Respondents mentioned the increased courage to depend on for example an increasing use of positive feedback, as colleagues encourage them because they now have a greater compassion for each other. We perceive this to be a reason for why the employees at Abba Seafood have gained a greater faith in themselves and why they now dare to experiment and take more risks than before. We experience the increase in confidence to create positive emotions. As a contrast to the surrounding environment that is characterized by criticism (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011), we perceive it to be a relief to become encouraged instead of getting blamed.

### **5.4 Visioning future possibilities**

The respondents at Abba Seafood experienced that they now vision the future in its best, what they call the desirable situation. They said they are more future-oriented, positive and focused on success scenarios. According to Avey, Wernsing & Luthans (2008) change can be supported by positive emotions. By creating positive emotions as AI is experienced to do, it is clear that the employees support this change. We find it likely that when the employees believe that the future will be positive and that their human needs also will be fulfilled in the future, they feel more motivated to perform today.

Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) say that the freedom to dream in community unleashes the dream of every individual and allows every level of the organization to feel safe and take part in the dreaming process. The respondents said that when using AI, they learn to use past successful experiences, and dream about how these can be applicable in the future. They learn to vision the future in its best and to put emphasis on what they want to achieve, instead of what they want to avoid. By doing this, they find AI to be future-oriented and positive. It appears like the employees at Abba Seafood experience the freedom to dream in community when they allow themselves to vision the future in its best. We perceive it as the employees at Abba Seafood now feel safe to share their dreams and experiences with others, and dare to vision the future in its best together. Gergen et al (2001) say that a challenge for companies is to create a feasible future together through communication. We experiences that positive emotions are created when focus is shifted from analyzing problems from the past to visioning future possibilities.

### **5.5 A greater engagement**

As mentioned in our empirical findings, the employees feel more participative and experience that they work better together after implementing AI. They also experienced that Abba Seafood has become less hierarchical and that everyone's voice is being heard. As Maslow (1954) describes in his pyramid, people have to get attention and recognition to fulfill their needs to become motivated, which is consistent with our empirical findings where the respondents for example mention an increased attention because of the increase in feedback. Once again we experience that the human needs become fulfilled when using AI, and when this happens, people become more motivated and engaged. Furthermore, respondents explained that AI is easy for everyone to understand, because it does not contain models,

analysis or complicated practices. According to us it clearly facilitates a greater engagement when things are easy to understand.

In the theme of engagement, we can see that the freedom to be known in relationship is evident, as Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) state that this freedom integrates all people in the organization for the unique individuals they are. The respondents experienced AI to create a greater engagement where every coworker is included. Cooperrider et al (2008) mean that this freedom also emphasizes power and authority to a less extent. As mentioned above, the respondents experienced AI to make the organization less hierarchical and that AI has made it easier for conversations to open up. We perceive the respondents to experience the more engaged environment to depend on less focus on power and authority. When getting a feeling of being appreciated when contributing, we experience that it is clear that the employees enjoy contributing and getting engaged. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) say that AI intends to liberate organizational power via collaboration. The respondents have noticed a greater strength in the organization when working in teams, which appears to depend on the increased individual input and engagement. Another way, in which the greater engagement can be explained, is through the freedom to choose to contribute. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) claim that when employees feel they can affect their work, they become more motivated and determined. As our respondents experienced AI to increase the participation, it seems to be an effect of the permission to contribute as the culture has become less hierarchical. We perceive it as the joy of appreciation and being able to contribute creates positive emotions within every individual.

## **5.6 Applicable in private life**

Some of our respondents expressed that they also use AI in their private lives, and that when you once accept to live according to AI, this behavior will never go away. They meant that AI affects ones fundamental behavior and is easy to apply even outside work, because of its positive character. They say that AI can be used both in private life and at work, and some mentioned that they use AI with their children, who they mean get affected when communicating using AI. Härtel & Zerbe (2002) mean that emotions indicate what people believe is good or bad for themselves and the organization. We find it clear that the

respondents are willing to live AI, because they believe it is good for them. The fact that the respondents are using AI on people they love the most is according to us confirming their belief that it has something good to offer. We find it interesting to notice that the employees choose to live AI in their private life. We are surrounded by a culture of criticism (Watkins et al, 2011), and organizations have adopted the same mentality as the society (Cooperrider et al (2008). Therefore we perceive that people want to live AI both at home and at work, as a result of their desire for something that is not criticizing. As traditional ways of going through change are usually known for creating fear and resistance to change (Kiefer, 2005), we find it remarkable that AI makes people feel so good that they even want to bring the philosophy home to their families, although they have learnt it at work.

Cooperrider et al (2008) claim organizations are human constructions that are responsive to positive ideas and knowledge, and that the freedom to be positive allows people to be positive. According to Avey et al (2008), change can be supported by positive emotions. The respondents say that they want to live AI because it is positive. The positive emotions make them support this change, which is confirmed as they choose to live it. We perceive it as the employees want to live AI because they are responsive to positive ideas, and because AI is experienced to create positive emotions.

## **5.7 A change in communication**

One of our most obvious findings concerns how AI has affected the communication at Abba Seafood. Respondents said they have experienced a change in the orientation of the conversations. These have become more positive and they experienced a change in the way of confronting problems, as they now using AI face the problems and then move on instead of keeping analyzing causes of problems. Cooperrider et al (2008) say that the change that happens depends on the questions that are asked, and that the questions asked determine what is found. Gergen et al (2001) mean that if an organization focuses on problems it draws away attention from what is already working. McNamee (2006) claims that we can gain by focusing on the things we appreciate, the things that work and that can be valued, in order to affect our future. She adds that when doing so, problems can be addressed more easily. We can see that many respondents have commented that they now talk a lot more about opportunities, solutions and how they want things to be. The respondents experienced AI to be a fast change



only demanding the right use of words, and therefore it does not take a lot of time to perform. When reading the citations, it appears that Abba Seafood has changed their discourse to a more future- and strength-oriented way of thinking. Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) mean that methods that are focusing on solving problems are time consuming as they look back on what happened in the past. When changing the way of communication, it seems that the problems can be addressed more easily, as they put more time on the solutions and how to reach the desired future than analyzing the problems which is time-consuming. Respondents also mentioned that when communicating about strengths, they achieve their goals more quickly. While weaknesses take time to affect, strengths are individual traits that can be used whenever it is necessary. In this sense, we find it clear that AI is a fast way of going through change. As the questions asked determine what is found, we also experience that when talking about strengths your competitive advantages can be found, only with the right use of words.

The respondents mentioned that AI can be seen in the communication in the organization, and that they notice AI during meetings, conferences, in e-mails etc. They also experience that AI has affected the organization through the communication. Cooperrider et al (2008) say that how a person is articulating questions is one of the most impactful tools when implementing change. According to Cooperrider et al (2008) a fundamental assumption when using AI is that the language used determines ones reality because the words that are used determines ones thinking and acting. As the communication at the head office has changed towards a more optimistic approach, we perceive it as the mindset has also become positive. It is interesting to notice that a change in communication and only the use of the right words, can create positive emotions.

According to Preskil & Tzavaras Catsambas (2006) problems are not ignored using AI, but faced in a different way. In our empirical findings some respondents mentioned that communication sometimes has to be about what is wrong within the organization, as they meant people become frustrated if they are not allowed to speak about what is negative. Here we do not observe coherence in our theory and empirical findings, and we perceive it as these comments are misinterpretations of how AI actually intends to work. Although, we have gotten the perception that most respondents have understood AI correctly and that the

comments questioning AI represent deviant cases. Most respondents seem to have understood that AI does not ignore problems.

According to Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003), the freedom to be heard is characterized by compassionate, curious and emphatic listening. The respondents perceive the organizational culture to be more encouraging and appreciative after the implementation of AI, because information is confirmed more often and in a more constructive way. As earlier mentioned, Harlow (1962) & Bowlby (1952) state that people need to be noticed, talked to and get love and attention. We find it likely that when getting feedback on what the employees are doing well, they feel good and satisfied as human beings. Once again we want to mention that Maslow (1954) states that when people get appreciated they become motivated. We therefore perceive it as when communication is directed towards what is positive and appreciated, people become motivated. As people need to get attention to grow, we experience and increase in giving appreciation to be a simple way for people to make people feel good and fulfilled as human beings. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2003) say that the freedom to act with support is present when large numbers of people care and know about the work of others. They also feel they become valued and commented on in a more appreciative way than before. Furthermore, the respondents did not experience the communication to depend on structures or positions since the implementation of AI. Because of the minor focus on power and authority, we can see that the freedom to be known in relationship is apparent (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

## **5.8 Discussion of analysis**

There is currently not a lot of research done, about how AI affects employees or organizations. During the interviews we found out that Appreciative Inquiry has not been implemented at Abba Seafood for more than one year. When we heard of the short time of implementation, we questioned if this study would provide any useable results. Remarkably, we soon realized that the respondents experienced that great changes had happened during this short period of time.

In our analysis we have been able to connect our empirical findings to the Six Freedoms. Thereby our empirical findings confirm that AI is experienced to work at Abba Seafood. The

Six Freedoms exist to a different extent in the organization, and even though they cannot be seen everywhere, we find them to indicate that AI has affected the organization.

The western world lives in a culture of criticism, where the world is viewed as a problem to be solved. As organizations have adopted the same mentality as the society, and also focus on problems, an overwhelming focus on the organizational problems can divert focus from what is good. The society is mainly focused on problems and things that are not as we want them to be, and we tend to forget what is actually good. People need to get attention and love in order to grow, and have to be appreciated for what they do well. Although it is possible that other approaches of change aim to appreciate people, AI initially focuses on appreciation. We apprehend that humans have a need for appreciation, and therefore should not always focus on solving problems. We perceive appreciation to create self-fulfillment and self-esteem. Therefore we draw the conclusion that AI facilitates the fulfillment of the higher levels of needs in Maslow's pyramid. These are needs that every human being has to fulfill to feel satisfied and to become motivated. Change is often associated with negative emotions, as it tends to be related to negative experiences. We experience that people do not feel good when only focusing on problems, weaknesses and what they do not do well, because it creates negative emotions. People need confirmation and to be reminded about the positive aspects of every challenge instead of doing the opposite, criticising and focusing on weaknesses. People are an organizations most important asset, and when the employees are appreciated for their contributions and seen for their strengths, they begin to enjoy going to work and feel motivated to perform. As organizations consist of human beings, they benefit when their employees are feeling good. AI is therefore experienced different from traditional processes of changes.

Even though the general perception of AI is positive, we have noticed that people are accepting AI to a different extent, as there are some respondents who are not yet convinced about its value. We experience that these people do not yet understand AI's fundamentals. Depending on the initial attitude of the employees, we have understood that it takes different amount of time to accept this philosophy. Some people have mentioned that AI mostly is for fun, and we believe that also these respondents are not totally familiar with the fundamentals. We perceive it as they have not yet understood that AI has a deeper meaning. The respondents

who are strongly supporting AI have strong arguments, and we feel that these people have understood its fundamentals and that AI is more than just for fun.

We perceive the management team to be an important reason for why AI has been implemented as strong as it has been. Without their initiative, AI would not perform in the strong sense it has done. Even though the organization can consist of individuals acting in an AI-way, it would not have had such an impact as when the company decides to integrate the whole office. Furthermore, the management team is the reason for what kind of changes a company chooses to implement. The involvement of the management team is not unique for AI as an OD-process, as every OD process begins with the interest of the management team.

## 6. Conclusion

*In this chapter we present the conclusion to our main question: How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood? and our sub question: How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced compared to previous processes on change?*

*How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced by the employees at Abba Seafood?*

Appreciative Inquiry is experienced to create positive emotions. We conclude that positive emotions are a result of that AI is experienced to: create a greater focus on strengths, create an increase in confidence, vision future possibilities, create a greater engagement, be applicable in private life, and to change the communication.

*How is Appreciative Inquiry experienced compared to previous processes on change?*

AI is experienced to create positive emotions and a change towards a positive mindset, as the employees learn to see possibilities instead of problems. While traditional methods are experienced to analyze problems and focus on weaknesses, AI is experienced to focus on possibilities and strengths. The employees experience a greater confidence when using AI, and dare to take risks and make faults to a larger extent than before. Since the implementation of AI, the employees experience that they have become more future-oriented, as they now focus on what they want to achieve instead of what they want to avoid. Today the respondents feel a greater engagement, as AI is experienced to include everyone more than before. Furthermore, AI can be applied in private life, which the respondents experience as unique for a process on change. Another difference is found in the communication, as AI focuses on communicating about what is good rather than the opposite.

When focusing on what the organization wants to achieve instead of what it wants to avoid, and when not taking time to analyze the negative aspects of the past, the possibility to reach the desired future increase. Since the beginning of the implementation a year ago, great changes are experienced to have happened at Abba Seafood. AI is a powerful approach that is experienced to change an organization at a fast pace, only with the use of the right words. Attention and time is concentrated on matters that are usually not in focus for development,

i.e. the positive aspects and strengths. AI is experienced to give more positive results than traditional methods do.

Instead of appreciating what we already got, we choose to focus on what we do not have. When focusing on strengths and what is positive, people feel energized, good and appreciated for the unique individuals they are. When creating an environment where people feel appreciated, human needs become satisfied and motivation is created. We have experienced that AI creates a culture where the employees feel happy about going to work and where they feel a great commitment and joy performing their jobs, tasks and projects. When people feel good, they become less depressed and more effective. As organizations are human constructions, we therefore conclude that AI creates a win-win situation for both the organization and the individual, where both parts benefit from positive emotions.

People who have been working with AI, also choose to live AI in their private lives. AI is a contrast to the western world's surrounding environment, which is characterized by criticism. We perceive that the desire to live AI is a result of the search for something that is not criticizing. People strive for appreciation, as it makes them feel good.

Every method for change strives for the same goal; development. The great difference using AI is that it strives to reach the desired goals right away. Therefore AI is an incredibly powerful tool that society can benefit from. After all, the advantages and skills are there, they just need to be discovered. This study has shown that the approach used, actually determines what we find.

*"There's a reason why the windshield is larger than the rear view mirror"*

- *Unknown*

## **6.1 Recommendations for further research**

This thesis has concluded that AI is experienced to be a powerful and effective way of going through change. This thesis emphasizes the importance of positive emotions.

Our thesis contributes to further research in the field of AI, which until this day has been

examined to a narrow extent. A recommendation for future research is to examine the further implementation at Abba Seafood. A field of study could concern the examination of how AI is perceived in the production, which at this point has not yet begun the implementation. An alternative could be to see how AI develops at the head office, and to examine if AI makes any long term changes in the organization. Another interesting theme could be to examine how AI is experienced at other companies, to see if they also experience it to be powerful.

Furthermore, we find our thesis to leave a contribution to Abba Seafood and the consultants at Styrkebaserad, as it evaluates their work with AI this far. The thesis could also be of interest for other stakeholders who wish to immerse in the field of AI. It can for example be interesting for executives considering implementing AI, the society that can benefit from positive emotions as well as students who want to learn more about AI.

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## **Interviewees**

### **Abba Seafood**

Anette Hansson, Accounting Manager, 2011-12-05  
Ann-Charlotte Gregorius, Customer & Sales Support, 2011-12-05  
Christian Elofsson, Chief Financial Officer, 2011-12-15  
Eva Berglie, Communications Manager, 2011-12-20  
Håkan Larsson, Foodservice Manager, 2011-12-06  
Håkan Johansson, Operative Sales Manager, 2011-12-15  
Jeanette Persson, Business Manager, 2011-12-06  
Kerstin Sandin, CEO- and Human Resource Assistant, 2011-12-02  
Krishan Kent, Purchasing Manager, 2011-12-06  
Lotta Gunolf, Human Resources, 2011-12-12  
Linda Olsson, Accounting Assistant, 2011-12-12  
Marie Friberg, Product Group Manager, Food Service 2011-12-15  
Maria Åberg, Product Developer / Specialist, 2011-12-06  
Marija Alexandrovskaja, Purchasing Assistant, 2011-12-06  
Markus Pregmark, Human Resources Director, 2011-11-02 and 2011-12-07  
Patrik Stockelid, Strategic Sales Manager, 2011-12-02  
Peter Colliander, Export Manager, 2011-12-05  
Peter Unosson, Business Manager, 2011-12-07

### **Styrkebaserad**

Daniel Richardsson, AI consultant, 2011-11-08



## Appendix A – Interview template

*Appreciative Inquiry is said to be one of the more significant organization development innovations in recent years. Nevertheless, there is still little research in how it affects organizations. Think about the time when you have been working with AI. What has AI meant to you and what have you experienced?*

*Please describe as thorough as possible. Use emotions and occasions that have been prominent when working with AI. Describe how it was before implementing AI and how it is now.*

1. Have you been affected by earlier work of change at Abba Seafood?
2. Have you been affected by work of change at other companies?
3. Are you familiar with AI?
4. From your perspective, what is your perception of AI?
5. Do you feel that AI has changed anything in the organization? If yes, please develop.
6. What do you think of AI as a perspective on change?
7. What does “bästsökare” (best finder/strength finder) mean to you?
8. When AI was introduced, how did you think you would be affected before the implementation took place?
9. Do you feel you have experienced a similar way of working/similar change in the past?
10. How did you feel earlier when someone said that something was going to change?  
How do you feel now?
11. How do you perceive AI compared to previous processes of change?
12. Do you feel that you have been affected by AI? If yes, how?
13. Do you think AI will affect you in the future? Do you think you will continue thinking and working according to AI in the future?
14. How do you think that AI is perceived by your colleagues? Those who are familiar with AI and those who are not as familiar? Do you notice the work of AI in the rest of the organization? Please explain!
15. Have you experienced a change in the organization and among the employees now compared to before you started with AI? If yes, what do you think this depends on?
16. What do you think Abba Seafood wants to achieve with the implementation of AI?



## Appendix B – Complete empirical findings

### Positive emotions

*“I have definitely been affected from working with AI. Most of all, I think it’s evident when relating to people who have a negative and pessimistic attitude. Those people could irritate me earlier and I rarely thought about their way of acting in an analytical way. Now I often wonder if I can change their attitude, which is a fun challenge. I also think I have become much better not putting energy on people when I feel I can’t change them and when I feel they take my energy” – Rose*

*“Before implementing AI I had a positive attitude towards it, but I also have to say that I perceived it as if you should ignore the problems. Now I have understood that it’s not about ignoring the problems” - Harry*

*“The great difference to other change methods is that AI is more pleasurable to work with. I believe though that other methods will come, everything else would surprise me. But I think other things affects our results as well”- Harry*

*“I think you become focused in a good way working with AI, as there are no negative thoughts. It’s strange that people tend to focus on what is negative and nowadays we do the opposite. If people ask you questions that are positive in its orientation, it’s impossible to answer something negative. They have to say what is good or what they’re proud of. If we would apply this to sports and the employees were football players, they wouldn’t complain about what’s not going to work, shoes being too small or about another team being better than them. Everyone knows that’s not the right mental attitude”- Bart*

*“It’s the good things that drives us and makes us create value for the company. That doesn’t happen when we focus on bad things. I can see that in my sales team, they have achieved many good things lately and they think it’s fun working with AI” - Bart*

*”We are not talking about the fact that we are going through a change this time. It just happens! This kind of change has no phase of crisis or negativity and that’s a big difference from previous changes”- Mary*

*“Many new questions arise with AI. It’s easy to find ways out of negative situations because it’s easy to ask questions about what is best for this current situation. It creates a positive setting in meetings and discussions! I don’t think AI alone represents why we have this change at Abba right now, but I do think it has a significant power in founding changes” - John*

*“I think it’s exciting to work with AI, but it’s difficult at the same time. It’s about changing your mindset and to think in another way than you are used to do. People are trained in finding sources of error, causes and black sheep. Now it’s about turning your mind in an opposite direction. It’s difficult but in the same time a whole lot of fun” - Hugh*

*“I experience AI as positive; it’s a fun kind of change” – Steven*

*“The employees believe in AI. Everyone feel there is something positive happening in the organization. In the beginning, people thought of it as something funny but it has actually began to leave its’ mark in the organization. That is cool!” - Lisa*

*“I think AI is positive. In the beginning you may experience some questioning of what AI actually is about. There was some joking, where people wondered if they should go around and be happy ignoring problems. But that’s not the case. The difference is that AI is tremendously focused on the strengths in every one of us. It’s not about ignoring problem areas. I would rather say it’s about determining them and focusing on the desirable location. When people are aware of this way of thinking, they eventually spread it without really considering that they do. Change within organizations always puts motions in speculation, that’s the way people react when they hear the word change. If things are changing and you’ll be affected, you begin to speculate and it can be negative and create anxiousness. But if you have a management team who always emphasize to have a dialogue in the organization from creative conditions, then it actually works to go from a problem to find conditions in them as well. I would say that that is what AI does, it focuses on strengths and possibilities, it’s a very creative inquiry” – John*

*“I have no doubt that AI will follow me into my future career. It is the best approach to motivate people and to create energy and power that I have ever seen” - Lisa*

*“I think I have become more positive as a human being and I focus on things that I do well. Mostly there is something good in everything. I also think AI has made me more open to my coworkers and what they do well” – Mark*

*“I have been affected in a positive way by AI, and I have noticed a positive change with my colleagues. They have responded to this change with humor and also with seriousness because they know this is good for our company. I also think there was some skepticism when people first thought that AI was all about not being negative and not talking about problems” – Steven*

*“I think AI is a great tool to strengthen the confidence within Abba. During a period of time we have not created a result that is good enough. I think AI is a great tool because it increases the energy and the confidence to achieve good results”- Ron*

*“This far I think AI has mainly affected the management team as well as the middle managers, then I see that we’ve elicited a positive spirit and power of thoughts in many people. Generally I think AI has been perceived as very positive for the organization. Then naturally, it’s not 100% every day, but it has contributed very much to a change. I think it’s good with different kind of feelings and it should be allowed to feel frustration if it’s for a good reason. The essence lies in minimizing the time that you are frustrated, because it rubs off on other people and in the end, you won’t be productive if you become occupied by negative feelings”- William*

*“I think there are a lot of positive things in AI. AI is actually so much more than only a tool for organizational change. It’s about the attitude you have towards life, how we think of our past, our environment and our future. The step from the traditional methodology of problem solving to AI is therefore closely linked with ones’ private beliefs. In that way it’s a pretty personal and intimate tool. Personally I haven’t perceived it as a big change but rather a quite natural one. For others it might be like talking the language of another galaxy. However, I believe one should embrace the parts they feel they believe in and those they feel they can master. I think it’s the same as with most other theories, practices and religions” - Rose*

*“AI feels exiting, fun and logic to do” - Bart*

*"You notice that the level of energy has risen in the organization. The more I can use my strengths and what I do good, the more fun my workday will be" - Mary*

*"Here at the office people have more energy, people want more, are happier, think in a more positive way, laugh a bit more and also dare to do more"- Mary*

*"When I was told about AI my first reaction was that it seemed exciting"- Steven*

*"AI is not about being "positive like crazy", but about treating everyone with respect. It means you should always try to do your best and what's best for the organization"- Steven*

*"I see more possibilities and potential now than I did before as well as something positive in any situation, even though the situation can be negative in itself. I think that AI will continue to be an important change for me in the future" - Hugh*

*"I think AI is perceived as positive in the organization, but everyone is not equally far in the implementation. I think those who have come far have understood its' power more than those who haven't been as much involved" – Hugh*

*"I think AI has created a positive spirit and energy in the organization. I think people have become more open and receptive for change and other ways of thinking" - Hugh*

*"I experience a lot of personal joy from working with AI, it's a positive experience. After interviewing employees at Abba Seafood about leadership style, a student told me "You seem to have so much fun! You seem to have positive energy in your team". That's how it is" - Harry*

*"In the short term I can see that people feel much better at work and they enjoy their work more than before. I think AI contributes to create a great place to work"- Harry*

*"I think AI is experienced as very positive. I hear people asking questions according to AI when I walk by. We are thinking in a different way and use a different focus"- Adriana*

*"Usually, people are very good at whining and complaining. Now it's easier and more fun even if you sometimes exaggerate and joke about AI. I think AI is good, but it should not go to the extremes. Sometimes it can't be forbidden to consider things as hard, and I think it's*

*important to find a balance and not to complain when it's unnecessary. It's about becoming more constructive. It's important to find continuity with AI and that you work with it all the time, not only when the management tell you to"- Louise*

*"It can feel liberating not to dig into problems all the time, and not to look for scapegoats or faults. That's a pretty good feeling" – Mary*

*"Working with AI is not about taking things easy or ignoring challenges. It's about using another attitude and inspiring energy" – Victoria*

*"AI is a good way to reach your goals, because it is very targeted. It makes you focus on the right things, your dreams and the way reaching them" - Jennifer*

*"I think it takes some time to learn about AI. Everyone is not equally far in using AI and sometimes you fall back in your old routine, but it's all about practice" - Hugh*

*"What I find differs AI from other processes on change is that it gives a lot of energy and that quick. Other processes haven't given that much energy and not the engagement of the size of AI"- Ron*

*"AI is easy to commit to and I think that most of the employees are positive to AI. But I also think it is a bit too early to say what it will lead to in the future"- Ron*

*"I have never experienced a similar change before. I see myself as positive by nature and therefore AI has come quite easy to me. It has helped me to structure my way of thinking"- Adriana*

*"AI is not about rocket science. Everyone understands their part in this change which I believe makes it a strong kind of process of change. It's also a positive kind of change that is easy to be a part of"- Mary*

*"I have never experienced change as something positive before, and generally it's not positive for anyone. We have had a smart implementation process where we from the beginning got the impression that this change was positive, and it wasn't a change that revolutionized the whole workday"- Steven*

*“Generally I think people are not very fond of changes, they prefer working as they used to do because they feel secure and comfortable doing so. AI doesn’t change our way of working, but it changes us mentally as we reflect about our problems and try to solve them with a positive approach” – Mark*

*“I believe that I have been affected by the change AI brings, especially concerning my way of thinking”- Harry*

*“AI gives energy. You feel strengthened and you want to move forward. There is an ambition to move forward in AI” – Lisa*

*“My experience of AI is above all positive. It has been and it is a joyful process to work with AI. It gives proudness and energy in the organization to focus on what already works and on things we do best. I would also say we have made progress in our relations at work, AI has brought us closer on a personal level” - Rose*

*“I have made a trip personally in thinking differently. And I have also changed the way of thinking in my private life”- Louise*

*“It’s difficult to think of negative things when your department is energized and encouraging” – Kate*

### **Focus on strengths**

*“I have never noticed this way of working before. It is wonderful not to focus on what is wrong in the organization, but to focus on solutions and what already is good. Earlier, when working in other organizations we have had discussions about what went wrong and whose fault it was. Previously we have been focusing on solving problems instead of finding solutions, which is more important. Now it doesn’t matter whose fault it is. I have been affected by the change of AI, for example I have noticed a change in my way of confronting problems. Now I see solutions and when I tell someone about a problem or situation that I want to change, I also give solutions to the problem and don’t stop by complaining” – Jennifer*

*"I have never been working in a similar way before. What differs most obviously from previous changes is the way of asking questions and where you put your focus. AI highlights, confirms and gives strength to what's already good in an organization, instead of starting to ask about what doesn't work"- Victoria*

*"AI has turned out really well. It began a bit blurry and it took me a while to get a hang of it. But now I like working with AI because it focuses on what's good. I'm positive towards it! We are focusing on successful experiences and our strengths, I like that"- Adriana*

*"The biggest different when comparing AI to other processes of change is that AI seeks to find the best of what is. Many people view change as something negative, but now we all can see that it doesn't have to be negative and that you actually can enjoy a change from the beginning. I don't know why you always think in a negative way. The thing that distinguishes AI the most is that it doesn't have to make things worse. For example you can view a change as something that can increase your salary or change your day at work into something positive. As I said before, a change doesn't have to be something bad"- Louise*

*"I think that AI is partly controversial, which is strange. We are used to finding the problem, the weak spot, the bottleneck or whatever you want to call it. Then the fault is about to be fixed, eliminated or at least to be improved. That is the way I have always done, especially in times of studying or doing research as I have an academical background. But I must say it's a fun and positive method to work with. It's so much more satisfying to focus on what you do good, things you feel you're meant to do. It's a fun challenge, and I think we attract what we think and focus upon. If we focus on our strengths we become stronger and our weaknesses are automatically minimized" - Rose*

*"A lot of people are fault-seekers and always looking for faults. I used to have a relative who was like that. When everyone else was praising your good work, he always had something to criticize. AI is about digging further into the details that reflect what's good. This can be seen in sports as well. A person who is about to kick a free kick is of course practicing that and not throw-ins" – Bart*

*"A best-finder for me is about finding solutions instead of problems, it's about looking forward in relation to what you want to achieve." - Kate*

*“I think there are a lot of good things in AI, and the most important is that you work with your strengths. With AI we look back on successes and help each other to become aware of and develop our good sides. AI is about finding the good sides and to use them” - Jack*

*“We have many sports interested people in the organization, and you can explain AI using metaphors. My last experience happened yesterday when I was talking to a colleague about what he should work with in the future, speaking of what he’s good at. He pointed out things he doesn’t do very well but I told him to think of his strengths instead. I told him to imagine Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who is extremely talented in scoring goals and playing offensive. There is no idea to train Zlatan extensively on the defensive part because that wouldn’t improve the game. It’s much better to train and keep him for what he’s good at, which is scoring goals. I said that I felt the same thing about him and that we should use him for what he does best, leaving the rest to someone else. He became extremely happy about this way of thinking. People become obsessed with their flaws and tend to forget about their strengths”- Melissa*

*“I experience that AI creates honesty and people realize what they’re good and less good at. Once I was appointed to represent our company at an event, but I cancelled my participation. At first people at Abba didn’t understand why. I asked my colleague who is good at performing at events to go instead. In the end it turned out really well because my colleague made a fantastic job. So it’s about using what you’ve got and optimize that”- Melissa*

*“AI is about what you can do better and how you can think differently for things to be better. It’s mostly about thoughts and about working with yourself and how you act towards other people. It’s about focusing on what you’re good at instead of what you’re less good at, to focus on your strengths”- Louise*

### **Creates courage**

*“I think we’ve always been proud of working at Abba, but previously we’ve been afraid of doing wrong and we didn’t dare to take responsibility for neither successes nor failures. That has changed a lot! Today I feel that we have a greater individual pride. AI has made us dare to take responsibility for failures and we also celebrate successes more than before” – Lisa*



*“I think Abba wants to achieve a positive way of thinking by using AI. That way of thinking can in turn generate greater courage within the organization because it creates a belief in the individuals, making them believe in themselves and what they do” – Hugh*

*“I have been affected in my way of thinking, and I try to be positive all the time and whine less. I have also become better at being less prestigious and in asking other people for help. I think people who ask other people for help are brave. Otherwise I don't think I have changed that much” - Louise*

*“I've definitely been affected by AI. Indirectly, when it's not allowed to make faults, it's not allowed to try anything. When using AI mistakes are not a big deal. Now no one thinks that anything is impossible, I think it has meant a lot to me personally” - Melissa*

*“I dare to do more after being introduced to AI. You receive a greater confidence when people in your environment tell you what you are doing well. We have obtained more courage and greater compassion for each other” – Lisa*

### **Visioning future possibilities**

*“You can compare AI with what athletes do before a game. It's about visioning how it's like to win the competition and stand on the podium. It's not like professional skiers will be last in a big race” - Harry*

*“AI is a good tool if you want to create change. It's about visioning what you want to achieve, not about visioning what you want to avoid. What distinguishes AI from other kind of changes is that it represents a more future-oriented way of thinking. It focuses on what results we want to achieve, which is a smart methodology” - William*

*“I think it's a creative process, thinking in different ways and designing your future” - William*

*“We work a lot with the desirable situation. It's simple to think about a situation when things worked. What should we do to make it work this time? For example I had a sales meeting recently concerning the launching of a new product. When beginning the meeting, I asked the*

*employees to think about successful campaigns at Abba Seafood from the past and what happened at that time and why. What can we do to achieve similar results and experiences like those times, what good experiences can we bring from the past in order to make this experience just as good? When you do this, it's difficult to talk about negative and impossible things during the rest of the meeting, as you focus the energy on what is good during the first 20 minutes"- Harry*

*"I think that I will bring AI with me into the future, as it focuses on strengths. You can clearly see that it changes people and what they do. For example it's easy to get somewhere in a discussion or in a negotiation if you sell in and talk about desirable situations instead of basing your arguments on what isn't good. Generally, I think that AI is positive and easy to grasp" - John*

*"It's nice that we go back to good things that happened before and compare these happenings to what we dream of is going to happen"- Rose*

*"My daughter was going to a job interview and was thinking about the worst thing that could happen. My thought was that she was thinking about the situation in a way that was totally wrong. I told her to change her way of thinking and instead consider what would be the best thing that could happen. She got the job and I believe that was a lot about having the right mental attitude"- Louise*

*"AI is about changing the way of viewing problems, from being just problems to a desirable situation. It's not about not being allowed to talk about problems, but about how you handle the situation when the problem is identified" - Victoria*

*"You look back on times when you succeeded, like a good activity or a productive meeting, and try to remember what made us perform that well at that time. Then you think about how we can use that experience to perform just as well or even better this time? It's important that we don't try to reinvent the wheel again, because it's unnecessary. If you think of it, you already know what works. Furthermore I think you can apply best-finding into any situation, it doesn't only have to concern your work" - Mark*

## **Creates engagement**

*“We were in an extreme vacuum after several CEO-changes and it didn’t happen much within the organization. It felt like we had reached the bottom. There were no common meetings, no contact with middle managers, line managers and so on. That’s why it felt good when AI was introduced. It led to a completely different engagement when people met for internal training and so on. You miss a lot when there’s no kind of meetings, and in this sense AI made a great difference. It shapes relations and it’s easy to engage in AI”- Melissa*

*”I have never gone through a similar change before, and we have never been working with our organizational culture in such a structured way as now”- Lisa*

*”By working with AI we have changed our organizational culture. One thing that differs AI from other processes of change is that all stakeholders are involved and that no one is cut out. We are less hierarchical now when working with AI and we are trying to involve more people in for example decision-making. AI has made us work more together in teams. The strength working together in teams becomes much greater as you involve everyone in a different way”- Lisa*

*“It feels great using AI, we have a greater commitment even though we sometimes go through hard times. For example we had a product launch of a concept called “Middagsklart” that was challenging from the beginning, but people felt a great responsibility and motivation which made it turn out well”- Harry*

*“AI is simple and not complicated, but targeted and clear. It feels like everyone can follow and understand AI“- Jennifer*

*”To create long-term profitability in an organization the most important thing is to have co-workers who feel they are a part of the team and filled with energy and pride” – Victoria*

*“I think it’s good if AI can permeate a whole organization to look for the best instead of finding faults. On the contrary, it takes a lot of energy to focus on a lot of small negative things. I think AI is becoming something big in our organization and that is very good for the individual employees, they become more engaged. It’s about giving more than taking, that’s the difference AI brings” - Bart*

*“I have never seen this kind of work where you have been working with changing the organizational culture in a way this outspoken. I think that Abba wants to create self-confidence within the organization as well as to develop the organizational culture”- Ron*

*”AI is a process of change that I find easy for everyone to understand. It’s not about models, processes, analysis or clichés. Furthermore, it’s always easier to work with and accept things that are positive” - Steven*

*“I think it works to change using AI. It’s an easy process, so I think that it’s important and a good opportunity to work based on AI”- Mark*

*“In the bottom line, I think that AI has been very easy for people to understand and to use” - William*

*“I can feel that the output in certain meetings has become better. I think it depends on that we begin meetings with thinking back on times when things went well. We consider positive and good actions and we often work two-by-two or in small groups. This makes everyone participative as each couple or every group get to present what was good in their case. By doing this we don’t risk that one single person sets the whole agenda. The input is increased in our discussions, therefore I think that these meetings has gained most output for us” - Mark*

*“AI is about performance, happy and committed employees. It’s about highlighting what we are good at, and what we want to do more of. An eight hour workday is spent on thinking about what we should do more of, instead of what we should do less. That produces a great power and I think it leads to better results, which in turn leads to a better work environment. I think the employees knows that AI creates a united team”- William*

*”This far AI has helped our management team to become more connected, partly because we have educations together. AI has been really good for our organizational network”- Steven*

*“I have experienced a change in the organization since we began working with AI. Especially, I think you can see a change in the management team, as we have been trained in AI for a long period of time. We are more positive and optimistic about the future and we spend less time on things we cannot affect. I am actually surprised about what an attendance*

*this method has achieved. It feels like we, in an unspoken way, have agreed upon that this is the right way to go. In the same time a big part of coworkers haven't got any education in AI, who of natural reasons have been skeptical about it. I think it mostly concerns our coworkers in the manufactory in Kungshamn. They only hear excerpts from and stories about the method and of course they wonder what will change in the future and what will be expected of them. I think it will be a challenge to get everyone on the train" – Rose*

*"Speaking of experiencing differences in the organization, I see that there is less whining today. I experience that the sales and marketing departments have become closer, we work better together and the cooperation has been strengthened. When we've reached the best results, we've achieved them together most of the time"- Harry*

*"You get to know other people when asking questions in the personal way AI does, both within the organization and customers" - Victoria*

*"AI creates a feeling of collective belonging where everyone is aiming for the same future goals. My experience is that it solves problems easier than other approaches. For example I've been able to use AI successfully in situations of conflicts" -Victoria*

*"I know that when we have been using AI at meetings, it creates a feeling of participation and openness. The employees understand where we are going as a company and why we are going there" - Victoria*

*"What distinguishes AI from the traditional way of thinking is that it gives energy, you become empowered, energized and it's because you focus on what is positive and good. That in turn ensures that people strive for their aims in a faster pace. The output becomes greater, people feel better and they also become happier. Per definition you do more things right and less things wrong, which is great. This in combination with our result meetings, where people talk about what they've done right individually and collectively creates a cocktail where one plus one becomes a little more than two"- Melissa*

*"AI is a good way to create a great engagement in group meetings. With AI I always make sure that every employee's voice is being heard. I begin meetings by letting everyone write post-it notes, which makes it easier for everyone to tell their point of view later on. It also sets*

*a good mood on the meeting and people feel engaged by telling about their previous good experiences” - Adriana*

*“I think AI makes people engaged very quickly in their work. It builds a lot on the individuals’ thoughts and what that individuals can do” – Bart*

### **You live AI**

*“I don’t think you only can put on the “AI-hat” when you come to work at Abba. I think you always have to live AI, even when you’re with your family. It’s about creating a change in the fundamental behavior” - Mark*

*”AI is the only method this far that has not only affected my work life, but also the way I am with my family. I use AI in my private life when I raise my children, because it induces something positive and gives results very quickly. I use it with my son when formulating questions and it works because he has begun formulating the same questions to me. When I ask him what the best about his day was, he ask me the same thing every now and then“ – Lisa*

*“I think that all changes begin with yourself, and here it might be a little bit harder. You have to become AI as a person, you can’t just be an AI-person at work. You can’t close the door at 5 p.m. when you’re going home“ – Bart*

*”I believe AI will affect me in the future, because I find it positive. It has become a part of me. A lot of people tell me that I have become a best-finder” – Jennifer*

*“I definitely think I will bring parts of AI with me into the future. As I initially have an optimistic attitude, I think I already practiced it in many ways before the implementation of AI at Abba. But as an inveterate academic, the methodology of problem solving is after all a spinal behavior and I think I can take advantage of AI in seeing beyond the problem and in focusing on the solution and what works well or the best. I will certainly have use of using AI-questions in order to find the desirable situation and the path moving there, both privately and at work” – Rose*

*"I think I will take AI with me into the future. It is by far the best way of creating energy and power within an organization which gives me no reason to work in another way" – Victoria*

*"I definitely think that AI will affect me in the future. Why should you go back to your old way of thinking? You notice that this works so much better! For that reason I think it works in the long run as well. Even though you would stop talking about AI, I think it stays in your mind." - Kate*

*"I think very much depends on the CEO and the fact that he and the management team believes in this change. They didn't buy the concept straight from the consultants, but already lived according to the way AI provides"- William*

*"I think best-finding is synonymous with finding the best practice. You look back on times when you succeeded, like a good activity or a productive meeting, and try to remember what made us perform that well at that time. Then you think about how we can use that experience to perform just as well or even better this time. It's important that we don't try to reinvent the wheel again, because it's unnecessary. If you think of it, you already know what works. Furthermore I think you can apply best-finding into any situation, it doesn't only have to concern your work" - Mark*

*"I think that AI is mostly apparent in our plans for the future as well as in our way of being, and it's becoming subconscious. When I am with my family I can begin discussing what the best thing about a certain situation was. When practicing AI, it eventually comes naturally" – Hugh*

*"I have been affected of AI, also in my private life. My husband sees right through me, but sometimes it works on my children. I ask my children what the best thing that happened during their day was instead of asking them more generally about their day"- Adriana*

*"I have used AI at home with my children. I hope I will take this with me into the future which I believe I will. It would be stupid to stop thinking according to AI. Maybe it would be hard to continue with AI if I changed place of work and this place would be problem focused"- Mary*

*"This kind of understanding will never go away. When you get this "disease", it'll be chronic, I'm totally convinced about that. You can compare AI to learning how to ride a bike. If you've*

*learnt it once, you'll always know how to do it and you will keep that balance until you're very, very old. I think that AI works in the same way! I think it's applicable to any situation, also in your private life. It creates miracles, especially when you exercise it on people you haven't met before. If you for example meet a person who is mediocresly service-minded and you give that person some appreciation, he or she will move a mile in his or hers way of being which is incredible"- Melissa*

### **Change in communication**

*"AI is weird, new, fun and exciting at the same time. It does not yet come natural for me to frame questions in the AI-way" – Steven*

*"I think the whole headquarter has been affected of AI. Everyone knows about AI. From my perspective I can see that my subordinates have been affected as we put emphasis on the best in the meetings, the e-mails and the letters. We talk a lot about the best pictures, the best result and things like that" - Harry*

*"We are trying to think from an AI-perspective even when we have meetings and communicate with customers. In that way we are also trying to communicate AI outside of our organization"- Lisa*

*"The framing of questions is the base when working with AI" – Lisa*

*"AI creates a focus in discussions and conversations through the use of wise questions which makes it a creative process. This because of the questions being asked always looks for the best of what have been, but also because it broadens framing the questions forward" – Lisa*

*"I try to give feedback and confirm other people, ask if I can help and encourage people to keep up the good work and positive spirit"- Louise*

*"AI gives more energy, a greater faith in other people, you dare to challenge yourself more than before, you listen and ask questions with a greater and more genuine interest than before" - Victoria*



*“I think AI brings a stimulating perspective considering change. It’s a different approach and a way of working that is fun at the same time. The attitude and the positive power distinguish AI. Because of AI, you encounter a certain question with even more questions than you did before. You consider questions like why and how you want the situation to be more often. That is why I think it brings a complete different energy of how you do things in practice” – Hugh*

*“Best-finding for me began with finding what is best in every situation. Now it’s more about finding an approach on questions, rather than viewing it all as simply great. I think many people are afraid of not being able to complain and not being allowed to think of some things as bad. But this approach gives you a repertoire to work with questions, as mostly there are actually two sides of any situation” – Hugh*

*“I can imagine that many people think AI is a bit ”too much” when hearing about it. We are taught to identify problems and oriented towards problem-solving. Starting to talk of what to be proud of can take time. Many questions about AI needs time to prepare before being asked. It doesn’t come natural from the beginning”- Lisa*

*“Those who have tried AI say that when they are going to meetings, they go with a different way of thinking. It is much more solving-oriented even if that word isn’t strong enough. You notice that we have begun to work with AI through fewer explanations, error-analysis and less blaming of each other. You enter discussions more quickly about how you want things to be” - Victoria*

*“One can see that the society is structured to look at what doesn’t work. I think AI is about finding an approach, not about sweeping the problems under the carpet. For example, we have learned about the five-to-one-rule. If you take ten minutes talking about the problem, then you should take 50 minutes to talk about what actually works. My experience is that you have to face the fact and admit that there is a problem but then you have to move on and focus on how to make it work in order to get somewhere” - Harry*

*“The commitment and dialogue is enhanced. AI is not about hiding the problems, but to avoid unnecessary problem talking. We don’t ignore problems if it’s necessary to speak about them in order to move on” - William*

*“I think today, there is a great difference in how we encounter any kind of situation, compared to before the implementation of AI. I perceive that the old way of thinking was emphasizing questions like “who is responsible for this”, “who is responsible for that”, more than it is today. Today it’s less important to discuss the problem and who might be responsible for the problem. We rather try to encourage the people who try to solve the problems and find the solution” - William*

*“At some levels of the organization, especially when it comes to technical matters, it can be relevant to see things in black or white. But when it comes to relations, communication or working together, there is a great difference. With AI we are talking a lot about being proud and by doing so we are really creating pride. This is fun in our Swedish society of “Jantelagen” – Victoria*

*“The greatest thing that has happened to us is that AI has made our organization more positive. It has changed our way of confronting problems, starting to find opportunities and changed our way of talking to each other”- Steven*

*“There is a power in AI, a special technique for asking questions. It’s about making employees think in a different way and not to focus too much on problem areas. Of course there are problem areas that have to be considered as well, but with AI you approach them in a different way. You focus on what works and the desired situation rather than what doesn’t work and what you haven’t succeeded doing. I think AI is a mental approach which makes you realize that you have the power to change in a positive way” - Mark*

*“AI is a tool that transforms words into action. Working with AI creates changes in the moment, when you otherwise just talk about doing changes. It’s when you talk, in that moment, the change happens. That’s really cool! Everyone has time to work with AI. Other changes can be said to take too much time, but AI is only a matter of changing the way of asking questions. Everyone has got the time to do that” – Victoria*

*“I experience AI as a simple method. By using small changes and twisting the way of asking questions you can get a totally different value out of the question. AI gives energy. It’s fascinating”- Mary*

*“The managers have been educated in AI and that can be noticed in the way they are talking to coworkers. Now everyone is giving more feedback and also in a different way. They are more constructive and information is confirmed more often”- Steven*

*“I experience AI as very energy-giving, and by giving positive feedback a positive meeting is created. It is important though, to be honest when giving positive feedback and not only give feedback without a reason. It is a way of getting closer to everyone, and I experience the meeting to be the core of AI. It’s fun to get to know each other better”- Ron*

*“The conversation and the kind of interaction that AI brought soon got evident. It felt like a revealing way of talking. It’s not a common way to communicate, and usually we communicate from structures or positions when you talk with your colleagues. AI is a pretty human way to have a dialogue of what you actually want to achieve and what you have achieved. So at first AI felt a little bit uncomfortable because this way of talking was so personal” – William*

*“My perception is that even though you search for the best, you have to find the rock that is at risk for tipping over the entire wagon and remove it, aerate it or however you wish to handle the question. People get frustrated if they’re not allowed to speak about what’s negative or things that don’t work. If that is not allowed, there’s a risk it’ll all become superficial. I’m a bit allergic to if it comes to that level when it all feels like a game, I’m not very fond of it”- Melissa*

*“With AI we are not trying to identify or search for problems. That’s the greatest difference compared to other processes of change. Now we are focusing more on strengths and try to find the best in any situation which makes the conversations more powerful and dynamic!”- Lisa*

*“I used AI in a phone meeting where we started off in a bad way. I succeeded to turn the negative path into a more positive conversation where I found a new track. Maybe it would have happened without AI but this time I was more focused in finding possibilities and a solution. I have also become more concrete when it comes to knowing what I want to achieve with a meeting. I think you have set out desirable situations and activities, the only challenge is to get the customer on the same track”- John*

*“I have never experienced a change this big before. Now everyone is a part of it and we are using it when writing letters, emails and when writing on our intranet. We talk about AI all the time” - Louise*

*“I think the key is that AI not advanced. It’s not high-score rocket science, but something logical. The only thing you need to do is to remind yourself of what questions you ask. You can exercise it in your everyday life, and it’s easy to apply in any situation. If you talk to a relative or family member, no one would see that you’ve actually been trained in using AI”- John*

*“I believe that AI has mainly affected our communication. We will still do the same things as before and have the same goals, but our way towards reaching them is different”- Steven*

*“In my role as a manager I have become better at coaching because of AI. I used to be more operative, but have become better at framing the right questions and I have a different focus to get employees engaged and motivated than” – Lisa*

*“AI is simply about framing of questions. You can make a small change without great means. I have also tried to ask these questions to my children and it really works”- Harry*

*“I thought AI felt like an interesting approach, but then again we have to train ourselves. Training needs to be done in asking these clever questions. I see what is positive in AI and I work with AI continuously. It’s a lot about the questions we ask to make the coworkers engaged and our dialogue productive and creative, but if we would keep asking questions of “why” all the time, there’s a risk we lose the energy. So it’s important to find a balance when it suits to ask according to AI”- Mark*

*“I can’t use AI when someone comes to me and is not feeling well. You can’t ask someone about the best things of feeling bad. Then you might have to use a more traditional way of leadership, but of course you can use AI by asking the person how he or she wants the situation to be in the future” - Adriana*

*“For me AI is very challenging, because sometimes it is hard for me to express in words how I feel. But everyone should challenge themselves, which makes it very fun. It takes energy to teach, but it also gives a lot of energy”- Jennifer*

*“AI gives strengths. The way of moving perspective and twisting questions is very close to how I think and work as a human being. That’s why I think it is very usable” - Victoria*

*“I have been strengthened using AI. Many of my own behaviors have been strengthened. I have also become better in expressing myself” - Adriana*

*“What differs AI from other processes of change is that AI is more of a methodology, the way you ask questions and the way you get the best out of people. Nowadays you analyze what’s done good more often and ask why good things happen to find a pattern” - Adriana*

*“I think AI is perceived differently among the employees. It may happen that you hear us joke about it sometimes, like “What’s the best about me forgetting my sales folder today”. But a change has happened and you notice it in the way of speaking during conferences and team meetings as people think about the good things” - Bart*

*“I think AI is noticed in the communication. It can be seen in conferences, meetings, e-mails and other kind of communication” - Bart*

*”I try to think about the way I ask questions. I try to make everyone find what’s best in them and not dig into problem-solving” - Mary*