

# Being our Best...Together

**Practicum Submitted By:**

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3. Brief Description of the organization I worked with: I chose our restaurant staff as the group to take through Appreciative Inquiry for my certification. It was convenient for me since I am one of the owners of the restaurant and oversee the staff. Also, it was a comfort to use them as my test audience for my first facilitation since I know them so well and I am familiar with all of the issues, strengths and weaknesses. Recently, the staff had gone through a significant transition and it was a perfect time to gather them together to discuss and receive input on the future direction of the restaurant.

4. I had several meetings with our General Manager, Jennifer, to discuss what she thought were the most pressing issues for the team. I also talked with 2 other key employees to gain their input prior to our session. One was Steven, who had been our first hire when we opened the restaurant 4 years ago. Steven created an entirely new and search-engine-optimized website for us. The other was our brand new Kitchen Manager, Nate, who has stepped up into a much bigger responsibility than he's ever had and is settling into his new position after the departure of our Executive Chef a month ago.

5. We chose "Being our Best Together" as our positive topic for our AI session. Our former Executive Chef/GM had been extremely 'prickly', volatile and difficult in his management style. Everyone 'walked on eggshells' around him and the staff felt like it hindered them from being themselves and prevented people from speaking up and voicing new ideas. The method I used to help guide them in choosing the topic was asking 'what do you want more of'? All agreed that for the AI session, what they wanted more of was positive teamwork, open communication and a safe arena for expressing themselves and their ideas for improving our restaurant.

#### 6. Attached Interview Guide

7. Method of Interviews: We started out with face-to-face interviews with people pairing up. However, what evolved (and I'm so glad this happened) was people filled out the interview guide with their own responses and then we went around the circle each shared their responses. It was powerful to hear the actual responses, stories and triumphant recollections of the entire group for every question! We could do this easily since there were only 7 people in the group. It took the majority of our time but was, by far, the most impactful exercise of the entire evening!

8. List of Life-Giving Forces identified: 1. Family feel of the staff and the close, supportive, friendships they have with each other. 2. Versatility & multi-tasking ability of the staff, doing more than is required and knowing multiple positions. 3. Dedication & Longevity 4. Excellent Events. 5. Outstanding Website & web presence. 6. Close relationships with Guests/Extending Genuine Hospitality. 7. Quality of Experience for Guests. 8. Beauty of our space. We did a scatter gram and the top 3 were Excellent Events, Website/Presence/Awareness and Quality of Experience.

9. I was most nervous about facilitating the creating a visual image portion since I consider myself 'creatively challenged'. It went well and people jumped up to the board to draw as well as give verbal images of what they'd defined. Provocative Proposition: 5120 Restaurant & Onyx Bar is an elegant venue for life's most memorable events as well as intimate dinners among friends. We invite people to live, love, laugh and dine in our elegant space and experience our family-like hospitality.

10. Strategic Intentions: What We Want More Of Commitments. 1. Our overall desire was to build awareness of our restaurant and all we have to offer to the public. We realized through the AI process that what we have to offer is special, unique, and beautiful with huge potential to bless people, build a more profitable business and work positively together to enhance our own lives through being our best together and achieving success together. 2. We want better communications that is open, available, inclusive and invited. We will post events well in advance for all to see the scope and details. We will also post a message board where all staff can see it with announcements, achievements, menu changes, goals, etc. 3. We want to build awareness through our advertising. We will do this by implementing a local newspaper campaign to attract more locals and inform them about us. We will also work to get reviews and testimonials from guests to build our brand online. Our website was listed as a real success and strength and we will continue to broaden and build it's reach through the Facebook/Twitter connection, more reviews, more pictures and a continual update on specials, menu changes, event possibilities, etc. Social Media was also a strategy that we will commit to – Facebook content, coupons to our Facebook fans and Twitter followers. Jen and I will also invite her brother to lunch and get his insight and expertise on social media marketing. We will also invite our guests through check-stuffers to get involved with our social media online as well as join our email marketing list to be the first to know about any specials, menu changes, events, coupons, recipes, wine dinners, etc. We will also expand our email marketing campaign by collecting and compiling these addresses from our guests.

11. Impact and Results – attitude, process or structure changes: The attitude change was immediate and very evident as a result of the AI process we went through. The GM said afterwards, "It was amazing to me to see and hear that we are all really on the same page and want the same things moving forward." Also, one of our other staff members said, "we have everything we need right here in this group to achieve excellence." I think it was powerful for this group to come together, both the newer staff (our newest line cook had only been working 3 weeks) and the veterans around a common, positive, open and collaborative mission. Under the old manager, it had been extremely top-down and hierarchical with very little participation and input from others. One member is going to lead our advertising campaign with the local paper. A chalkboard was found from a wine rep and was installed immediately as our message board for better communication.

12. Moving Forward, celebrate, gather stories of success: We will continue to review our PP and Strategic Intentions at every Monday meeting and by keeping it front and center we can make sure we are making progress toward our goals. I want to keep our AI magic alive and build on the great camaraderie, energy, confidence and enthusiasm it created for our group. We will be able to evaluate events as to how they measure up to our PP.

13. My wish for the inquiry: My wish was for this team to come together positively and be able to move forward with new leadership, shared ideas and goals as well as hope in what they can achieve together. I learned and experienced first hand the thrill and joy of watching people come alive, find their positive core and sharing it with others. I was hoping to 'trust the process', see it through all 5 phases and experience it as a facilitator. It was absolutely a high point going through this process with this team of people. When can I do this again and can this be all I do? A real dream of mine and one I'd like to pursue! My personal best experience was hearing the stories that came out of the interview. Our bartender, who is a big hockey hunk, got all choked up when he told us how working here had impacted his life in a positive way. He said he felt truly cared for here and that we all helped him through a rough divorce. Another staff member talked about her high point of meeting a group of Vietnam Vets in the restaurant and becoming friends with them, making a true and lasting human connection with them. Powerful, powerful stories and moments created and now shared together through this AI process. We all became part of those stories and experiences; they joined with our own and created an incredible bond.

1. Theme: **Being Our Best - Together**

2. Inquiry into exceptionally positive moments: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about a time when you felt most alive, most involved, most excited or most proud of your work here at the restaurant.

2. What are things you value deeply?

a. Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself as a human being, friend, relative, worker, etc.

b. When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about it?

c. What do you value most about this organization/restaurant? How has working here contributed positively to your life?

3. What are our strengths as a restaurant?

4. If you had 3 wishes for this restaurant, what would they be?

3. Share the stories and collect themes on the flip chart. From these themes, what do you want to see more of and what would make us be our best together? Dots/scatter gram?

4. Create a visual image and a word image – develop our real possibilities that represent the desired possibilities. Provocative Proposition/stretch goal.

5. How are we going to make this happen as a group and individually? What will each of us commit to doing in order to bring this to life?

What is a commitment that can easily be taken by you without commitment from others? Offer a gift – offer a talent, resource, ability, access to a resource that you control or possess to another. Request – what is something you need from another in the group?

- Tell me about a time when you felt most alive, most involved, most excited or most proud of your work here at the restaurant. What have been your best experiences here?
  
- What are things you value deeply?
  - Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself as a human being, friend, relative, worker, etc.
  
  - When you are feeling best about your work, what do you value about it?
  
  - What do you value most about this organization/restaurant? How has working here contributed positively to your life?
  
- What are our strengths as a restaurant?
  
  
- If you had 3 wishes for this restaurant, what would they be?