



Creating the future...together
2010-2015

Appreciative Inquiry Facilitation Training Certification Report

Leslie Palson
College of the North Atlantic – Qatar
April 2012

1. Name and Contact Information:

Co facilitator with Rolene Pryor:

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2. Brief description of the organization, group, or community you worked with.

College of the North Atlantic – Qatar (CNA-Q) opened in September 2002 through an agreement between the State of Qatar and College of the North Atlantic (CNA), in Canada. CNA-Q is Qatar's premier comprehensive technical college. With approximately 650 staff and 4500 full and part-time students, CNA-Q is one of Qatar's largest post-secondary institutions.

CNA-Q combines a Canadian curriculum and industry expertise in a number of program areas, including Business Studies, Engineering Technology, Health Sciences, Industrial Trades, Security, and Information Technology. In addition to these schools, there is a Language Studies and Academics department.

All members of the Testing Centre Staff were involved in this Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process. This included five Testing Centre Administrators and three Testing Centre Support Staff.

3. List the names and/or category of stakeholders you included in the Core Group, the cross-section of people that helped you identify the topic and modify the Interview Guide.

Rolene Pryor - Manager Quality Assurance

4. What was the positive topic that the Core Group identified for inquiry? What method did you use to help them identify the topic?

The positive topic focused on the "peak experience" as part of the Testing Centre team. They were asked to talk about their biggest / most memorable success in the CNA-Q Testing Centre.

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- How did you contribute to this success?



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Attach or include the modified Interview Guide they used, i.e., the Generic Interview Guide slightly modified for the positive topic of the inquiry.

See **Appendix A** for modified interview guide.

5. What method of interviews did people use to inquire into exceptionally positive moments, face to face paired interviews, or some other way?

The interview session involved face-to-face paired interviews lasting 30 minutes. 15 minutes was allotted for each partner.

6. Attach or include a list of the High Energy Themes (Life-Giving Forces, what they MOST wanted to create MORE of) that the group identified in the stories they shared.

See **Appendix B** for a list of the High Energy Themes as identified by participants.

7. Attach or include the Provocative Proposition(s) the group or organization created from the LGFs.

The following are the provocative propositions, a.k.a. "Statements of the Preferred Future", that were created from our session.

- 1. The Testing Centre staff are dynamic, interesting, efficient and well trained.***
- 2. The Testing Centre team is efficient, professional and customer focused, the centre is a highly recommended place to work.***

8. Attach or include the organization, group or community's Strategic Intentions and the individual Commitments, Offers, and Requests that were created to realize the Provocative Proposition(s).

The Strategic Intentions were to gather information for future planning and to celebrate past successes.

See **Appendix C** for a list of the individual commitment, offers, and requests as identified by participants.



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9. *Impact or Results: What organizational, group or community attitude, process or structure changes have people already made as they move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? What progress have people made toward their Strategic Intentions or Initiatives or Pilot Projects? What stories of success can you share?*

I witnessed relief and a sense of comfort throughout the AI process. I believe the Testing Centre team was hesitant as they were unsure of what to expect, yet I observed them becoming pleasantly surprised by the process and the outcome. They seemed to feel heard, yet not pressured, and were excited to share ideas. Overall, I believe the team bonded and grew from this planning session along with providing some great very positive ideas on how to move forward to realize their Statements of the Preferred Future. The team was keen to immediately share their strategic intentions and to commit to reviewing them in order to continue to brainstorm for further ideas. Only a few days after the AI session the Testing Centre team began following up on their individual offers, requests and commitments. Additionally, they automatically began to putting together their own requests and commitments. It was decided that further planning sessions would be held as soon as possible and a tentative date was set for the middle of May 2012, just over a month from the original planning session. All results from both sessions, as well as upcoming sessions will be shared openly with all team members and with our Dean so he is fully aware of the Testing Centre's planning priorities.

10. *What will you do to ensure that people continue to move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? How will you help them gather stories of success? How will you help them celebrate? How will you, as the AI Facilitator, support their ongoing success?*

I have offered to compile the AI planning session results and send them out to the Testing Centre team as soon as possible. I will also ensure more time is allocated for continue discussion, review and support of the strategic actions outlined. Furthermore I will immediately encourage the pairing of requests, commitments and offers and start to assist in any way I can. I believe if results are witnessed in a timely manner this will provide the Testing Centre team with additional reasons to celebrate and with continued motivation to move towards further future successes. I will also add the item "Planning" to each and every upcoming staff agenda, ensuring all success stories can be shared regularly in a continuous and more formal way.

11. *What did you wish for in the inquiry? What did you learn from the inquiry about yourself and your facilitation? What was your "personal best" experience related to facilitating the Inquiry?*

What did you wish for in the inquiry?

I wished that the Testing Centre team would find the process rewarding while remaining engaged during the two half-day sessions. I wanted to disperse any fears / hesitations they had about the process and to reinforce the appreciative inquiry model now successfully being used throughout the



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college. I also hoped the Testing Centre team would feel valued as they contribute to the upcoming plans of their Centre. Perhaps just as important, was my wish that this group enjoy a new experience together as a team.

What did you learn from the inquiry about yourself and your facilitation?

This was the first time I was able to experience the appreciative inquiry process from the co-facilitator's perspective. I learnt valuable information about the required organization and preparation of an AI session. I also learnt that even the greatest skeptic can enjoy parts if not all of an AI process, as I witnessed an incredibly skeptical individual open up, engage, and enjoy himself. The importance of flexibility and the consideration of group dynamics when planning and facilitating were reinforced throughout the entire AI process. I very much enjoyed witnessing the Testing Centre group move through all stages of the process and I was excited to share my enthusiasm for AI in a real planning session.

What was your "personal best" experience related to facilitating the Inquiry?

I believe my personal best experience would have been seeing the Testing Centre staff work together in a different way, in doing so I felt they bonded at a new level. Themes such as values and peak experiences do not come up in their typical day to day work environments and so providing them with the opportunity to share personal ideas and stories had great benefits. I believe the AI sessions served as successful team building exercises.

I sincerely hope that other departments within the college take the opportunity to go through the AI process. As CNA-Q follows up on their five year strategic plan and prepares itself for another long term contract with the government of Qatar, it is an ideal time to focus on the positive as clear goals are set for the future.

12. Have you received permission from the "client" or "clients" to tell us their story? In other words, does Company of Experts.net have permission to share this story with others? If not, who would COE.net need to contact to receive permission?

Company of Experts is welcome to share anything that is included in this document.



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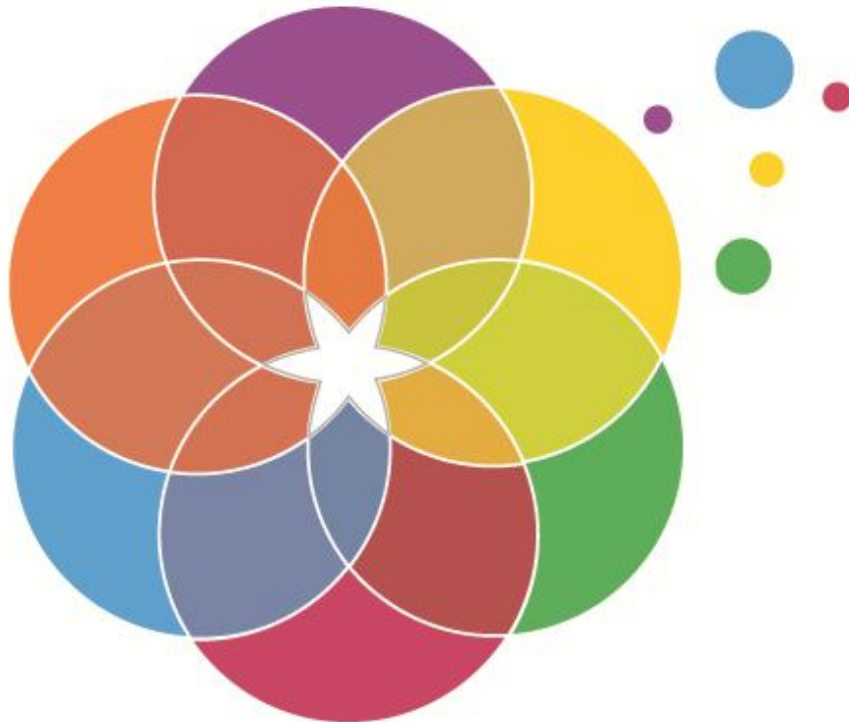
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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

Celebrating Testing Centre Successes



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Interview: Instructions

Using the following questions, interview your partner.

Feel free to ask follow-up questions, particularly if your partner seems excited about a particular topic. Listen carefully; take some notes in the space provided. Try to recall the best *stories* from your interview. Listen for any “quotable quotes”.



Interview: Peak Experience

The CNA-Q Testing Centre has had a very busy couple of years. We have welcomed an additional administrator to the team, successfully moved into renovated offices, started lab reconfigurations, switched IELTS administrative software, began development of our new General Math and English Placement tests and almost completed our Academic English Placement test pilots.

Please tell me about your biggest / most memorable success in the CNA-Q Testing Centre.

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- How did you contribute to this success?



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Interview: Values

What do you value most about the Testing Centre?

- How do you add to these values? What do you contribute?



Interview: Wishes for the future

The Testing Centre has had a number of recent successes. Now, we would like to build on these successes as we move into the future.

What three **(3)** wishes do you have for the future of the Testing Centre? What would you like to see *more* of as the Testing Centre moves forward?



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*“A team is a group of people
who go out of their way to
make each other look good.”*

Bob Farrell



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APPENDIX B: High Energy Themes

Collaboration
Team Work
Positive Workplace
Healthy Work Environment
Professionalism
Balance of professional and personal
High Standards
Quality
Customer Service
Distinctiveness
Recognition
Appreciation
Flexibility

Appendix C

Offers

I offer to use my Excel expertise to help the Testing Centre team in such areas as statistical analysis.
I offer to help with any video or Kiosk ideas to be implemented at the Testing Centre. This sounds like fun.

I offer to work with a partner on the development of an IELTS application completion tutorial.

I offer to continually follow up with HR and our Dean, and to search for alternatives if required, regarding the two pending Testing Centre staffing requests.

I offer to help in the developing a plan to implement a website.

I offer to help Asma in her job on my slowest days.

I offer to seek out and attend other testing working groups.

I offer to assist with the idea of a Test Resource Room.

Commitments

I commit to fill out and submit the operational training request materials for any administrator who wishes to attend the annual IELTS administrator conference.

I commit to take part in College activities outside the testing centre.

I commit to encourage networking of Testing Centre members by informing them of committees, and groups which may be of interest to them.

I commit one hour a week to seek out and review new testing technology and make my findings available to other staff.



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I commit to gaining more knowledge in Excel in order to help me with my job.
I commit to reserving time each week to assist in cross training staff.
I commit to do research for the purchase of a Testing Centre client numbering machine.
I commit to learning the entire CAEL preparation to ensure we are covered if Harry gets sick.

Requests

I request the assistance of the team to request a new and larger computer monitor
I request document /checklists to assist me in cross training the learning of other Testing Centre jobs
I request that our team sit down and discuss how to compile our goldmine of data
I request the collaboration of members of the team to develop and maintain a Test Centre Facebook page.
I request the installation of an intercom system at the Testing Centre.
I request the help of the Testing Centre team for crowd control and picture taking at the registration desk.
I request that we work more collaboratively with the LSA departments so we can continue to offer relevant and accurate placement of students
I request the two outstanding Testing Centre staff positions be filled as soon as possible.
I request the Testing Centre team to have a future formal discussion regarding the Testing Centre customer service Kiosk concept.