

## APPLYING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY TO ENHANCE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF SALES EXECUTIVE AT S.E. SUPPLY LTD., PART

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### Abstract

This independent study aimed to apply Appreciative Inquiry to enhance the employee engagement to the organization. The objectives of case study for Sales officer of S.E. Supply Limited Partnership were to 1) study the strengths and opportunities for the improvement in an organization by developing the plan 2) study the application of Appreciative Inquiry to increase the employee engagement to organization 3) lead the organization to a better working environment and the employees work together happily. The positive experiences according to Appreciative Inquiry were determined by AI 4 - D model and SOAR analysis. The interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data from the best experience from the employee and analyzed to find the common and outstanding points from each conversation. The results were led to project plans that will be used to increase the employee engagement in the organization of Sales officer for 5 projects; 1) Effective teamwork project 2) Professional Sales project 3) Monitoring and control strategy for excellent service 4) After Sales service project 5) Team building project. The results of the implementation of some projects were found that the employee engagement was increased as the rate of employee turnover and absence was decreased. Moreover, the performance of the employees and sale closing were also improved.

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**Keywords:** Appreciative Inquiry, Employee Engagement, AI 4-D Model, SOAR Analysis, Convergences, Divergence



## Introduction

At the present, the world has been changed a lot. People are aware of the financial stability rather than sentimental value. "Life is happy and has been successful or not, it depends on the development and possession. Thus, all human life is to develop and enhance competitiveness to keep themselves and families possess the materials for the most [1] which success factors are two elements including staff and organizational structure. The key is that employees will be crucial in the management of the organization ". [2]Materialism concept highly impact on the organization because all employees are working with the motivation with the monetary compensation to seek for what they want, not a reason to create work, love the value of work or add value to work more than the expectations of customers and the organization. As a result, the rate of staff turnover is in large quantity because the employee has no loyalty to the organization. On the other hand, if employees are highly engaged, employees are able to work more efficiently which contribute to the performance of the organization improved steadily. "Employee engagement to the organization (Employee Engagement) is a psychological commitment of the employees in the form of entirely dedicated energy and power fully to the work they are assigned affecting the operation of the organization." [3] Two years ago, it was found that S.E. Supply Ltd., Part are facing the high rate of employee turnover (Turnover Rate) of new staff as Generation Y (aged 20 – 35 years), no tolerance for work assignments, dutifully works and no creative work. Due to statistics from 200 employees, 17 of 30 sales people in all territories across the country in two years ago resigned, representing 56.67% of total sales people which was very high record. Sales have decreased and it was unable to close the goals set by the organization.

As mentioned above, this is a great opportunity for independent study using Appreciative Inquiry to develop the human resources to build employee engagement in the organization (Employee Engagement) because if the employees are highly engaged, it will contribute to the better performance of organization by continuing "Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to search for the common point to find the best of people, organization or the world around. This method can be applied to a few individuals, groups or millions of people" [4]

## Objectives

1. To learn about the outstanding points and opportunities for improvement in an organization and bring those information to further plan for the development.
2. To study the application of Appreciative Inquiry to increase the employee engagement in the organization.

## Methodology

The qualitative research was used in the study beginning by asking questions about good experiences about success, pride in work and making people working together happily to discover the good experiences from the answers and consider the dream from the strengths and success experience in the past. The strengths was led to be considered with the organization and

presenting products to define the strategy from the common and outstanding points which is in Design step. After that, the functions are defined in Destiny step. Then do the things to be done immediately and observe the changes that occur. In addition, Activities are inserted in co-creating proposition and questioned by the positive meeting and discussion to find Appreciative Inquiry. Teaching and introducing positive experience were also used to reveal the strengths, so that employees can apply what they have been taught and experienced to develop the potential of sales to achieve the objective, to work happily and enhance the feeling of commitment to the organization.

### **Scope of study Population and Sample**

This study used a sample of 24 people by a salesperson (Sales Executive) from all branches of the S. E. Supply Ltd., Part and its affiliates divided into

1. Operational level (20 Sales Executives)
2. Administration (4 Area Managers)

The qualitative data was collected from interviews with the best experience of the employees to be analyzed to find the common and outstanding points of each conversation in the period from January to March 2015.

### **Instrumentation**

SOAR Analysis and Appreciative Inquiry were used in this study by in-depth interview between the interviewer and the interviewee (Face to Face Interview). Positive questions from Appreciative Inquiry Theory and objectives of this study were brought to create interview questions. Then, the question will be used according to Appreciative Inquiry guideline about the best experience of success, pride in work, and working happiness to collect data in the next sequence, as well as to bring the information from interview to be utilized in organizational development which will make a greater commitment to the organization.

### **Data collection**

The source of data for this study comes from

1. Primary Data by Sales Executive interviews from all branches of S.E. Supply Ltd., Part and its affiliates for 24 people.
2. Secondary Data by gathering the information from academic papers, pamphlets, journals, academic thesis, magazine, research documentation including the various sources of information from the Internet and books to identify data related to this study.

After collecting information from the interview, it was then compiled and analyzed the key issues to implement the next cycle of Appreciative Inquiry.



## Data analysis

Data analysis was a form of descriptive analysis by Appreciative Inquiry which will describe the key issues by discovering Convergences and Divergence acquired from interview. Primary data from interviews and secondary data were analyzed over time to lead to the creation of reflection (Reflection) caused by data collection according to the cycle of AI 4-D to expand its influence and guide the work for salespeople to close a sale successfully and happily work together to enhance employee engagement even more. This will then make a presentation of result and conclusion.

## Results

Result of current situation (following the 1<sup>st</sup> objective) using SOAR Analysis showed the Strengths, Opportunities, What we want to see (Aspirations) and the results we want to see (Results) as follows

### Strategic Inquiry

Strengths, S.E. Supply Ltd., Part have a corporate culture based on the principles of good governance, employee morality and ethics in order to run the business fairly. The employees were given the opportunities to attend the course related to their own skill to improve the performance (at least 3 times per year). It is also an organization that is administered as a relative or family which makes the working atmosphere is not tense, flexible to work, and not too much pressure. Supervisors are friendly and helped the team to fully make it work out well and also to joint activities. For example, company's annual tip and sports for the wellness living and morale to the employees.

Opportunities, in the future, there will be a new document management system to make it work. Retrieval of the system is more convenient and faster. There will be training for the sales staff on techniques for closing sales. Role play for product offering to achieve proficiency in sales skill which leads to the increasing sales volume, the meetings between the departments on a monthly basis to keep employees have intimate and a good coordination between the various departments within the organization, product training and the situation of the competitors.

### Appreciative Intent

Aspirations, employees have morality and ethics in work including the principles of good governance based on corporate policies. Every employee in the organization work together happily. This led to the organization of happiness. Sales are confident in offering goods because they have been training regularly, resulting in closing more sales to the organization, achieve its sales target in the end and offer products at a price based on the mechanism of the market to sell more products.

What we want to see (Results), every employee and every department in an organization are engaged to the company even more. The rate of employee turnover (Turnover) is less than 10%, Absenteeism is less than 5% and sales can also close their sales according to the organization's goals.

### The results from interviews using Appreciative Inquiry (following the 2<sup>nd</sup> objective)

A sample of 24 people by a salesperson (Sales Executive) from all branches of the S. E. Supply Ltd., Part and its affiliates were interviewed to search for the positive experiences of employees related to the engagement to the organization to learn about the outstanding points and opportunities for improving organization, then make a selection of positive experiences and find a common factor (Convergences) and dominant factor (Divergences) to imagine the direction, goals and development of the organization to meet its goals. After finding common points, then bring the 5 issues with most frequency to propose the projects which are as follows; 1) Effective teamwork project 2) Professional Sales project 3) Monitoring and control strategy for excellent service 4) After Sales service project 5) Team building project

### Conclusion

1. In this study, Appreciative Inquiry was applied to enhance employee engagement in the organization, which uses data collected from interviews with sales staff of 24 people. In the past 2 years, S.E. Supply Ltd., Part is facing the highly rate of turnover (Turnover Rate). New staff changes job frequently, works with no tolerance, dutifully work, without new initiatives. The most common reason for change is that the employees can be tempted by high level of salary, materials and compensation more engagement to the organization. Therefore, Revenues (Sales) and a work environment are very important to incentives. If the employees are satisfied with increased salary and happy organization, employees will have more commitment to the organization which make them feel they are a part of organization and work hard with their ability for the benefits of organization and also desire to work in the organization forever.

2. Searching for the positive experience from sales staff at S.E. Supply Ltd., Part and bringing the result to plan for organization development

To achieve the ultimate goal of the organization by increasing more sales and making customer be satisfied in service after the sales is led to “The Organization of Happiness”. The results of Convergence and Divergence are as follows

#### 2.1 Plans were made

2.1.1 Effective Teamwork project

2.1.2 Professional Sales project

#### 2.2 To-do plans

2.2.1 Monitoring and control strategy for excellent service

2.2.2 After Sales service project

2.2.3 Team building project

#### 2.3 Expected Result

If all projects are implemented, the results are expected to gain knowledge, sales presentation skills of employees, confidence in sale, the closing of the sale is greater, more revenue, all employees work together happily and gave employees a greater engagement to the organization.



## 2.4 Actual Result

When operating the project under clause 2.1, the result showed that sales staff can close the sales more than 52% from the first and second quarter (representing 57,970,000 baht), the target set in 2015 was to increase sales volume more than 40 per cent compared to 2014, which exceeded the target set by 12 per cent (representing 13,634,544 baht)

From observations of the study, it was found that salespeople enjoy challenging work. There were also a consultation with a supervisor, new creation about new jobs and self-planning to make it work successfully resulted in the closing of the sale continuously and work happily because sales have increased, every person earns more income which is in line with the objective of the study.

### Suggestions

The study using Appreciative Inquiry approach is very good for concepts and practices because it is bringing the great and success stories and extending the results. When adjusted or applied to the work, it makes the work easier because you have modified the way but the final result is the completion of work for the purpose of the set goals. With the time constraints of this study, the increase in sales may be seen obviously. Therefore, if those who want to expand their results, it is essential to take the time to learn more to ensure that data from the study will be useful as well.

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