

The 5 D's of Appreciative Inquiry Integrated in Individual Life Coaching

Practicum Submitted By: Michelle De Ceuninck
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With gratitude to Ezelle Theunissen, a wonderful being, both as person as as AI trainer.

Thanks to my friend, who gave me hospitality of his house and the peace of mind to write this scription.

Since 9 years I am imagecoach, meaning that I coach both individuals and companies into a succesful image, linking the inside on the outside. The first impression they both make, must tell you at once, who they are, at their very best, authentical and true. The appearance is the businesscard.

I love my job, with the same passion as in the first days, eager to learn to increase my know-how and change for the better my way of working.

Outside changes need depth and roots, so I trained also to be a life-coach.

Discovering A.I. by the tip of my mentor, it got all my interest. Immediately I saw many possibilities to integrate the process of A.I. into my way of (image)coaching, as there are many similarities :

- the power of questioning,
- the reframing,
- starting the whole journey together in a appreciative way
- and last but not least : working with people who discover their potential, learn to enjoy it and use it for a better future.

After the AIFT I went through a (too) quick AI process in a shop with a staff of 15 persons, a interesting experience but not well enough for a scription.

I use the mindset of A.I. since AIFT, all over, in groupactivities (e.g. girl's night !), teaching, teambuildings, workshops, etc... but wanted for the scription to integrate it in an individual coaching session, **showing its value evenso on one single person.** I am convinced that applying A.I. into coaching individuals can make a difference.

My client is Diana, an independant business woman. Her company does the coordination for a businesscenter, rather small companies, gathered in one place, taking care of their common interests, like security, trafic marks, meetings, insurances, yearly events, etc... She is in her mid forties, divorced, 2 sons.

We went about a year ago, through the process of imagecoaching :

- she discovered what shades of colours suited her best,
- which were the strong parts of her body, to show and put accents on,
- what was the style of clothing that really corresponded to her personallity, and how to adapt it to different circumstances, from high end business meetings to walking with her dogs on the sea,
- what hairstyle flattered her face most,
- what make-up could make her eyes shine
- what accessories gave her a well groomed and professional appearance.
- She learnt how to shop efficiently, getting a maximum result with a minimum of clothes.

This time she asked for 1 life-coaching session. It took between 3 and 4 hours.

My preparation was :

- the translation of the generic interview and the modified one
- Rehearsal of the de 5 D's, writing them down again and wondering how they would be filled in ... I like the way of presenting the 5 D's in the form of a daisy, like MacGruder Watkins did, using each petal of the daisy for each D of the A.I. process

I explained her what A.I. contains, the meaning of both the words "appreciative" and "inquiry", how it works, that we would go through 5 D's. She told me she had done some brainstorming before coming.

I considered this conversation as an intake was enough to start the real AI process.

DEFINITION

In about half an hour 3 themes were described :

1. She wanted to lose weight
2. She wanted a different new job in which she could get appreciation
3. She wanted more balance in her life between work and leisure.

At the end, we selected the most significant theme : "I want to find the right energybalance between life and work." meaning I want to find it because I don't have it now.

GENERIC INTERVIEW

1best moment : recently I made a powerpoint for my son's music band.

It felt new, as I never had done anything like that before.

I felt creative, it gave me energy

I was so excited because it was future-oriented :

- where am I going to get ?
- will it (not) work ?

Value of that moment : a good feeling
to believe in it
evolution
"real corn on the mill"
(= work that really suited me)

To feel at her best at work : to puzzle and find a solution
be challenged and know I find a way out
"an egg is dropped"
(= a realisation)

Contribution of your work to yourself :

I got where I am now, able to raise my children, let them study what they want, paying for 1 house and 1 apartment.

Contribution of your work to the World :

- clients = companies satisfied
- the groups as such function well, get more members
- all by myself I got a considerable amount of governmental input for them for a period of 3 à 4 years

1 Wish : to find a balance between realisations and what I've got as talents.

This includes that up till now she had not been able to use all her talents (having done studies to become an translator she is strongly verbal, and a very good Sales person. In the past as an employee she had had more professional satisfaction then now)

DISCOVERY

I wanted to be sure and go into depth, so after that we went into :

MODIFIED GENERIC INTERVIEW

Asking the same questions as in the generic interview, insisting and looking for eventual different answers :

1. tell me about one moment of topenergy, where you felt most alive ...
2. what values are most important for you, your company ?
without being humble, what do you appreciate most about yourself ?
when do you feel at your best at work ?
3. wishes

I wanted to give her the opportunity to choose another best moment. She kept as best moment the powerpoint for her son, like in the generic interview.

Diana had a similar reaction, as with the generic interview, and bodylanguage never lies, her cheeks getting a little red, eyes shining, relaxed expression on her face. So I felt assured this was right.

Best moment : the powerpoint of her son

Values : motivation, energy, being creative, building my own story

Personal : dynamic : full of energy = key to success

If you miss dynamic = flow and strenght, you miss business

People tell me "one would like to buy your courage"

When are you at your best : when people I meet at new companies say : "it is clear what you are talking about "(security insurances etc...) meaning they believe that she knows well what she's talking about and that they fully understand, "and I am interested" meaning they are going to suscribe.

Such a situation makes her feel at her best also when it is in a private context : people who respect her and show interest in what she's saying.

3 wishes :

1. Not to survive my children.

I asked to redefine in a positive way :

"to die happily because children are happy and in balance with work, partner, family"

2. A motivating job as long as I can work, till I am 80, with appreciation, extra value for myself and dignity

3. To keep a good health : staying active, find the courage to accept physical limitations due to age.

I realised this could be said more positively, but it was a detail so I left it.

DREAM

I explained that there is no trip without a Pole Star.

And that A.I. should reach something realistic, touchable.

Therefore we needed her provocative proposition to go for.

So I gave examples like the one of British Airways in the AIFT and fictional ones like :

"we at (name of a local company) want to serve each of our clients at our best".

I told her it was time to think of her own one.

PROVOCATIVE PROPOSITION

At first :

"I, Diana, want a motivating job to get a comfortable living".

She wanted "the job" to be more stressed, and the freedom of choice, so she decided to end her provocative proposition, applying the grammar rule, that what comes last is the most important part of the sentence.

So it became :

" I, Diana, want a comfortable living through a motivating job that I shall define myself"

I invited her to write the provocative proposition on paper and give it her personal accents.

She started underlining "comfortable" and 'motivating".

At the end she agreed to colour and draw. (see picture)

She told me that as a little girl, she always had had troubles, to colour within the lines, or cut with scissors along the lines.

I replied saying that all human beings can draw and if she had been able to draw at Kindergarten, she still could. Her inner child was feeling comfortable, without any pressure, so she took her time to make her drawing.

Her explanation :

Heart : what I do, I do it with love

I like to do what I do

Pink : what I do is in a soft feminine way

Lines : flow : like the sea, eternal movement, change, improvement,
difference,

lamp : it is an ecolamp and I choose to draw it instead of brains.

Stands for ideas, future-oriented, intelligent, realistic, "green"

because related to environment, my big concern.

FUTURE :

I insisted on looking again to her provocative proposition.

The conclusion concerning her work :

1. I want a job that keeps me challenged,
2. I want a job that allows me to use my expertise (being verbal and a good Sales person)
3. I fear to be "out" : I asked to rephrase this conclusion positively : I want to go on being "up to date".

Then I asked Diana where she wanted to be :

End 2012 :

1. I want to find balance between the quantity workcharge and my capacity of workload = in the past she has worked so hard that now she's close to a burn-out. Now after 2 days hard work she is ½ day in bed. A few months ago she used to cry a lot, for anything, and only get up when she had to.
2. I don't want to "fall out" : rephrased : I want to be as a sewing machine, running fine , fluently.
3. I want to find a balance in my private life as my son is leaving our house to study at university. This will give me a lot of sorrow.

I agreed that children leaving the house is somehow to be cut off and that it was but normal that it should cause her sorrow.

I also insisted on the fact that there is a balance in a coin by its 2 sides, negative and positive.

In order to get Diana back on the positive track, I invited her to make a list with the positive aspects of her eldest son leaving the house :

FOR THE SON

- A step forward in his personal evolution
- A step forward towards independence
- He will have to solve his problems
- He will have to be strong
- He will have to manage his life, himself

- He will have to find the place for his own interest, family, profession etc...

I am perfectly aware that in this individual coaching the transition between DREAM and DESIGN is by far not that sharp as it should be, but I caught the opportunity to let her talk and get her in a more positive way. Maybe the part of DESIGN only starts really after "end 2013" see next page ...

DESIGN

FOR DIANA. It was necessary to let her visualize herself, feeling how she would be, how she would live, walk around, etc.... to make it really sharp.

Her answers were :

- More time for myself
- More time for my youngest son
- Getting closer to my youngest son
- Less care for the eldest because not knowing what he does
- Knowing that he is walking on his own path
- Present for myself : succeeded so far, passing on the tools for his own life, strongly armed to be independant

End 2013 again she went through visualization

Her answers were :

- < 12 kg
- at least < 2 sizes of clothes
- lighter, more dynamic, happier, more success, more determined, more selfconfident

To fix this image I asked her to get something touchable. She knew she had in her house a picture of herself at the previous work about 10 years earlier.

We agreed that she would hang it in a visible place, and even make a copy and hang it also in another visible place of the house.

Desired situation :

- A job in which she can build up things/ideas

- A job in which she can realise projects.

She diminished her capacities by saying that she was not able to do big projects because she works on her own.

Again I insisted on the fact that sending positive messages to herself appealed more to her potential.

- A nice = comfortable income
- House and appartement paid
- House = home
- House in which "office" and "home" are clearly separated spaces
- Sons and I happy : my sons like to come home
 - My sons have found a appropriate partner
 - My sons have found balance in life
 - My sons know they are always welcome home
- Redecorate my appartement into a permanent living instead of a holiday residence.
- Grandchildren ? Having them "at home" in my appartement at the sea shore
- Getting on well with daughters in law
- A good understanding between all members of my family
- A personal balance, with or without a (new) partner
- A solution for my desire for nature
 - My dream is a farm for children, where they learn that pots of yoghurt are not hanging in the trees.
 - Bed and breakfast ???

It would be ideal to find a farm big enough to house all my family, sons and daughters in law and grandchildren, and hire the rooms when they are not there.

I want to help people, especially children, giving them freedom to play around, at the farm, with the animals, breathing clean air.

I would like my farm to have a barn where my son could give concerts, or organise them for other artists.

DELIVER

I asked Diana to write down the whole dream, in every detail.

At once she came up by thinking of a businessplan and agreed to write it down.

In order to REALISE her dream in the future I asked her what were her plans.

1. Make invoices the next morning, so income is assured
2. Live healthy : start again the "start to run"-program.

She mentioned that there was an extra motivation because of the fact that she couldn't run without music and that being busy on putting music on the mp3 was a hobby of her.

The resistance for running was the next theme.

We went into this more deeply because she kept her resistance. So I asked her to make the 2 lists :

RUNNING

+

-

NO RUNNING

+

-

She filled in and of course the list of RUNNING + was the longest, The only more or less serious argument of NO RUNNING + was saving time for what ??? She could only answer "working" and afterwards, she realised she was looking for excuses.

So we imagined her in the RUNNING +.

She saw herself as :

- Proud
- More then happy
- Getting appreciation from others
- Defining the limits of her body
- "take me as an example"
- Light
- Satisfied
- Airy

After this SINGLE session of 3 h. I asked her to frame promises :

1. Businessplan and to write down the detailed dream
2. Start running again, 2 times a week instead of 3 (too hard practically to persist).
I showed her that this means 1 x during the weekend and only 1 x during the week
3. continuing the training about nature she is following
4. Following next year the training about natureguiding

Feedback of Diana after the session :

- Happy with the framing. She knew my way of working and got it again as expected.
- Motivation found again
- Stimulated
- Clear vision : direction
The compass has its needle back on North

Diana was determined to make invoices and go running on Sunday. She was going to mail me her businessplan/dream and the progresses she had made running and losing weight.

PERSONAL CONCLUSIONS :

1. 1 session is far too short, exhausting for both the coachee and the coach and at the end concentration is hard.
2. If 1 session is far too short, 2 would be perfect. The break gives new Information, and a varied point of view on the facts.
Total : 4 to 5 h. estimation
3. Most satisfactory as way of coaching, so in the future I go for it !!!

PERSONAL WISHES :

To practice as much as possible. For myself I want to work more smoothly and relaxed, which can only grow by doing it over and over again and the thinking and checking on the process should become natural and integrated