Appreciative Inquiry to Enhance Well-being within Organizations

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Stress has been rising over the past five years in the workplace (Scandura, 2018) and is estimated to cost organizations close to $300 billion a year (Smith, 2012). Given the global impact and rising cost of organizational stress, it may be wise for businesses to implement preventative stress management and wellness programs that promote positive thinking and work-related attitudes.

Inspired by positive psychology, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a framework that focuses on positives and strengths rather than problems (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). This working concept demonstrates the leadership and change strategies to improve well-being within organizations.

Abstract
Stress has been rising over the past five years in the workplace (Scandura, 2018) and is estimated to cost organizations close to $300 billion a year (Smith, 2012). Given the global impact and rising cost of organizational stress, it may be wise for businesses to implement preventative stress management and wellness programs that promote positive thinking and work-related attitudes.

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Background
- Stress impacts organizational performance in a multitude of ways.
- Organizational stress harms employees’ health and well-being.
- Organizational stress reduces productivity, increases potential accidents, and leads to job burnout and withdrawal (Scandura, 2018).
- When employees feel job burnout, they have negative work attitudes, low job satisfaction, low organizational commitment, and high frustration (Scandura, 2018).

4-D Model
Discover
Focuses on reflecting and appreciating peak experiences from the past
- Leaders ask employees what has worked in the past in terms of enhancing their positive affect and well-being

Dream
Focuses on the future and imagining “what might be”
- Leaders ask employees to use the positive memories to help them visualize the potential.

Design
Consists of leaders synthesizing employees’ thoughts and feedback
- Leaders discuss what they learned and what can be changed.

Destiny
Encourages leaders to deliver and commit to actions
- Leaders develop a plan and share commitment to employees.

Statistics
The “Stress in America” survey evaluated 1,950 adults’ levels of stress and found:
- 42% of adults’ report that their stress level has increased over the past five years, 0 and 36% say their stress level has stayed the same.
- 61% of adults say that managing stress is very important, 0 but only 35% report they are doing a very good job at this.
- 44% of adults say they are not doing enough (or are not sure how) to manage their stress, 0 but 19% say they never engage in stress management activities.
- Money (71%), work (69%), and the economy (59%) continue to be the most commonly reported sources of stress (APA, 2014, p. 31).

Key Terms
- Stress – the discrepancy between the demands placed on an individual and his/her ability to manage those demands and reach his/her goals (Quick, Quick, Nelson, & Hurrell, 1997).
- Organizational stress – when greater psychological job demands are combined with lower job control (Karasek, 1979).
- Preventative stress management – a set of methods that promote health at the workplace and avoid distress (Scandura, 2018).
- Employee well-being – the lack of “emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, and physical health symptoms” (Scandura, 2018, p.14).

References