



Strengths Focus and Projects

A Generative Approach to Making Projects “Stick”

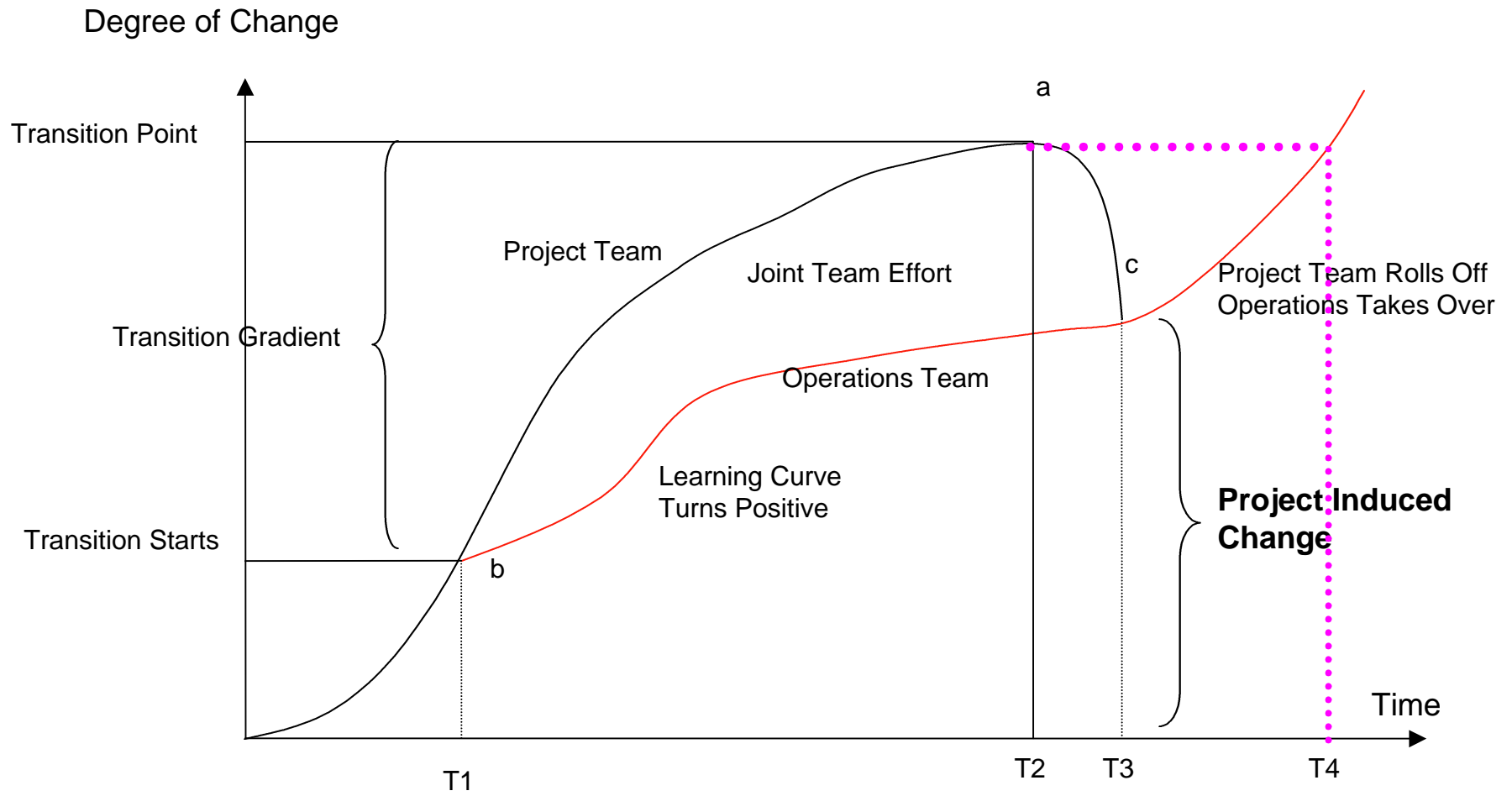
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Agenda

- n Projects and change
- n Choices you can make
- n Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) as a Framework
- n Trying Ai out
- n Concluding summary

Projects: Change and Transition





Choices Available to Us

n We can choose to:

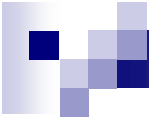
- Improve an organization, team and relationships

Or

- Focus on what is broken, a problem or a frustration

Or

- Focus on “things” that are generative, energizing or valuable to us



Acknowledge Problems: Approach them Differently

- n Finite process: find, fix and return to baseline status
- n Assumption:
 - .. There is an ideal way for things to be
 - .. Any misalignment is a “problem”
 - .. Break up into parts and analyze
 - .. When the broken part is fixed, the system is fixed
- n Social constructions created by dialogue and part of social norms
- n Assumption:
 - .. We built it so we can change it
 - .. Use excellence as the foundation for change
 - .. Use the stories to create an image
 - .. Move the system toward the image



Contrast Change Efforts

n Appreciative Inquiry

Effective on large-scale change

- .. Organization interviews itself
- .. Common image emerges
- .. Processes are changed to align with the image
- .. People learn the processes
- .. Silos are dismantled

n Builds capacity to change course continually

n Traditional change approach

Ineffective on large-scale change

- .. Project team with sample interviews
- .. External people create the image
- .. Sold to management
- .. On-sold to the organization
- .. No-one moves from their comfort zone (Tokenism)

n Big 'jumps' to play 'market catch-up'



What is Ai?

- n It is a Process
- n That Engages people
- n In Building the type of organization
- n That people want to live in



Why Does Ai Work?

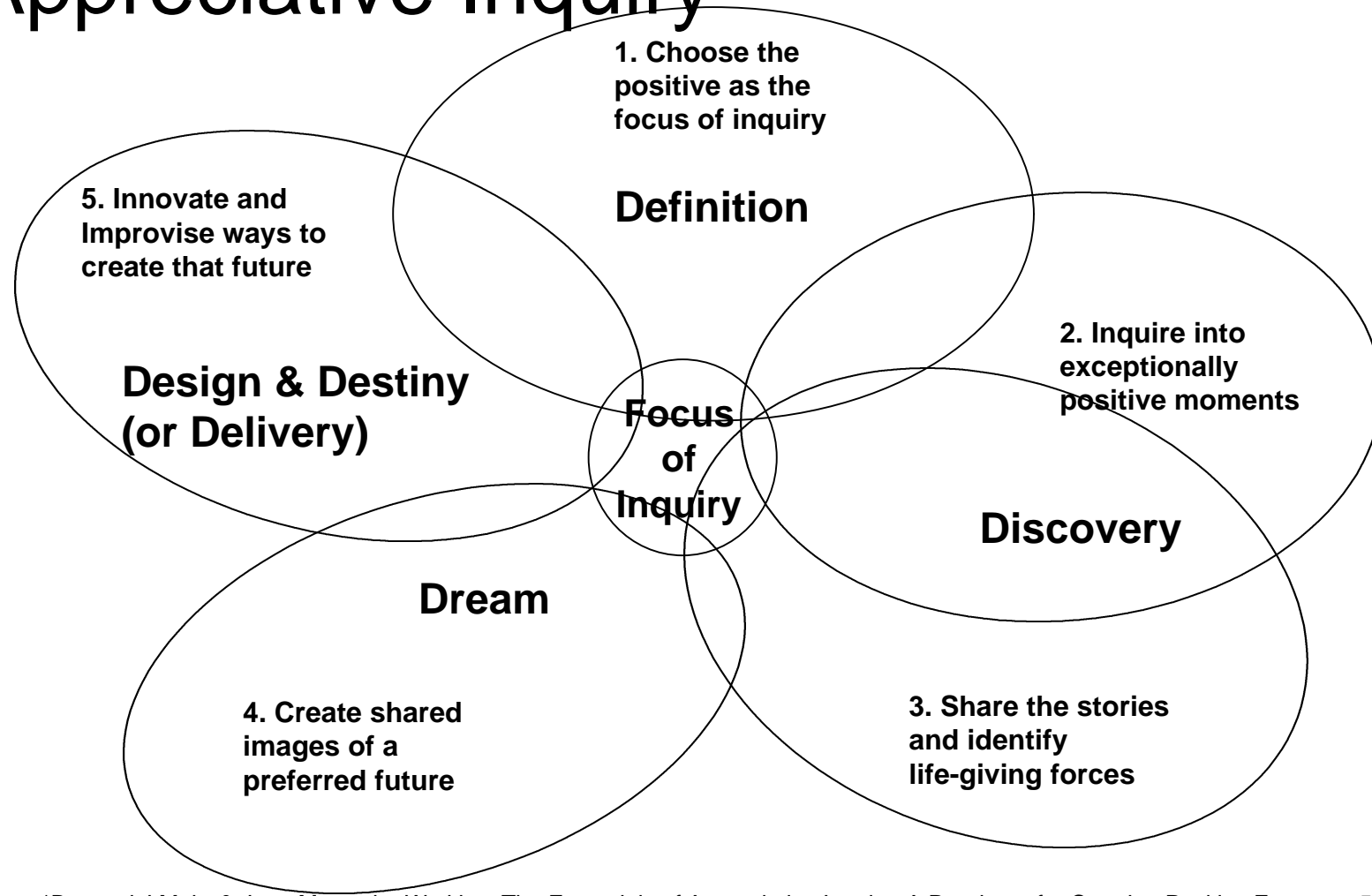
- n Rooted in well-researched human traits
 - .. People take positive images with them when they start something new
 - .. Businesses are people
 - .. Language and social interaction constantly create new images which create new realities
 - .. Images of things we anticipate are a powerful reality
 - .. This reality leads to actions and behaviors
 - .. Projects “stick” and become the accepted “way of doing business round here”



Framing the Question is Vital

- n Each question has an impact on perceived reality.
- n Choice is to shift the issue framing:
 - .. To health from pathology
 - .. From analysis of malfunction to understanding the moments of optimal performance
 - n Example: “what’s keeping us from... “ to “when this really worked, what were the conditions and factors”

Five Generic Processes of Appreciative Inquiry*



*Bernard J Mohr & Jane Magruder Watkins, The Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry: A Roadmap for Creating Positive Futures, p5



And the Benefits are...

- n Develop a learning organization
- n Build capacity to change course continually
- n Purposely choosing to move toward an image of the system at its most creative and innovative
- n A Co-created image which all the individuals own as their own



Focusing Questions

- n** Think about a time when you were really engaged in and excited about your work.
 - Tell me a **story** about that time
 - n** What was happening?
 - n** What were you feeling?
 - n** What made it a great moment?
 - n** What were others doing that contributed to this being a great moment for you?
 - n** What did you contribute to creating this moment?
- n** If you had three wishes for your organization, what would they be?



Let's Try The First Steps Out

- n Pair up into groups of two
- n One person to interview the other for five minutes then switch roles for five
- n Goal of the interviewer:
 - .. Encourage a vivid description of events and help the interviewee tell a very descriptive and detailed story
 - .. Encourage the richness of the story by using phrases like “Tell me more about.....”



Here's the Feedback Process

- n** I will ask a few groups to summarize, in 2 or 3 words:
 - Themes common to you and your partner
- n** Then a general question:
 - How would you describe the experience?
 - What was the energy level for change?



Feedback from the Exercise

- n List common themes from the groups
- n Summarize the experiences
- n Poll the group for energy levels for change
- n Link the process into the analysis cycle of developing 'as-is', 'to-be' and gap models
- n Summarize the session



Summary

- n Projects are all about change
- n You have a *choice* between
 - .. Limited effectiveness
 - .. Significant impact
- n Choose people above process and the people will deal with process
- n Help people stretch themselves