



Photo by Barbara Banks

## DAVID COOPERRIDER

Professor of Social Entrepreneurship, Weatherhead School of Management,  
Case Western Reserve University  
Chairman and Founder, Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit  
Cleveland, Ohio

David Cooperrider is best known for his theory and practice of appreciative inquiry as it relates to corporate strategy, change leadership, and positive organizational scholarship. The idea behind the AI method is to help organizations globally through strength-based approaches to multi-stakeholder innovation and sustainable design.

Cooperrider has lectured or taught at many prestigious academic institutions and has authored 14 books and more than 50 articles. Distinctions include receiving ASTD's highest award for "distinguished contribution to the field" for organizational learning in 2004.

### **Q | WHAT IS THE STORY BEHIND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (AI) METHODOLOGY?**

AI burst onto the academic scene with an article from my dissertation that I published with Suresh Srivastva in 1987. It was titled, "Appreciative Inquiry into Organizational Life." It argued that, from the Industrial Era on, we've reached the end of problem-solving as a mode of management inquiry capable of inspiring the growth and development of people, and of creating the cultures of real innovation that are demanded by today's complex and competitive business environments.

Second, it argued that all these deficit-based forms of management analysis—for example, Six Sigma, gap analysis, training needs analysis, and threat analysis—are keeping us locked in our organizations today, and for a simple but radical reason. All the studies in the world of negative states will tell us nothing about the positive preferred state. AI in that early phase, called for a shift. Organizations are centers of human relatedness; they're living systems, alive with infinite imagination and the capacity to connect to a full and rich omnipresence of strengths.



## **Q | WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE FUTURE OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY?**

I think the future is unfolding in an exciting way. One of my good colleagues, Marcus Buckingham, calls it the “strengths revolution in management.” We’re on the verge of seeing three levels to the strengths revolution: the elevation of strengths, the concentration and magnification of strengths, and the refraction of our highest human strengths out into society.

The question we’re working on now is, can the strengths revolution lead us to a point where positive institutions can be defined as places that elevate, magnify, and then extend our higher human strengths into the world? And what we’re seeing is that’s absolutely the case.

## **Q | COULD YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT SUSTAINABLE VALUE CREATION, THE CORE PROPOSITION BEHIND THE CENTER FOR BUSINESS AS AN AGENT OF WORLD BENEFIT?**

The concept of sustainable value creation means creating value for shareholders obviously, but also creating value for society’s many stakeholders, including for the environment and the community.

What we’re noticing is that the top-rated stars in every industry are companies that are emerging as creators of sustainable value. Toyota is 10 business years ahead of GM because of their focus on the environmental contributions, and they’re not just resting on their hybrids. For example, the CEO just announced they’re working on a car that purifies the air as it’s being used.

There is a sustainability revolution, but it’s not the same old philanthropic or charitable reasons; it’s because it’s tremendous business.

## **Q | WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE LIKE DESIGNING AND FACILITATING THE UN SUMMIT ON GLOBAL CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP IN 2004?**

My colleagues and I were called by Kofi Annan’s team at the United Nations and were asked to lead and design an appreciative inquiry summit of business leaders from the biggest multinational corporations in the world in conversation together. We developed it to take them through a process of designing, envisioning, and building strategies to create a whole new level of global corporate citizenship for the 21st century.

What emerged was a discussion that maybe business could be the most powerful force for creating a better world than we’ve ever seen. We had a group of more than 500 CEOs from all over the world planning the next stages of what’s now called the UN Global Compact. It means a global promise for a new vision of business and society in the 21st century. Today there are more than 5,000 corporations, from Wal-Mart to Lafarge, enlisted as a part of this effort.

**MORE /** For an in-depth version of this interview, visit [www.tdmagazine.asted.org](http://www.tdmagazine.asted.org).



YES!

I want to subscribe for only \$99, (\$165 Outside the U.S.) to T+D magazine—12 monthly issues that keep me at the forefront of workplace learning and performance.

TD0833

Order Information

Name: Title: Company: Address: City: State/Province: Zip/Postal Code: Country: Email: Phone: Fax:

Check One: \$99 (USA) \$165 (Outside the US) VISA MasterCard Amex Discover Check (USD) (Payable to T+D)

Card Number: Expiration Date

Signature:

Fax this form to 1.703.683.9591 OR Mail to: T+D, P.O. Box 1567; Merrifield, Virginia, 22116-9812, USA

Order online at store.astd.org Phone: 1.800.628.2783 (1.703.683.8100 outside the US)

Orders processed within three business days. If you have questions, please contact subscriberservice@astd.org

Prices valid through 12/31/2008. If you should wish to cancel your subscription for any reason, you will receive a refund on all unmailed issues. Your subscription to T+D may be a tax deductible business expense. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks to receive your first issue.

T+D is published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)

010859.63250

