



Harlene Anderson, Ph.D.

APPRECIATIVE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

What is Appreciative Collaborative Leadership?

Appreciative collaborative leadership is a philosophy of leadership: a way of being entailing the way that a leader thinks, relates, responds, and creates with the people they lead. When put into action it gives rise to success throughout an organization. Its premise is simple, yet profound. Instead of focusing on top-down, problem-solving leading it focuses on acknowledging, inviting and respecting the strengths and talents of the members of an organization. Instead of focusing on solving problems and what's wrong in the workplace, it focuses on and learning about and building upon what works.

It involves a belief in, and a relational capacity to mobilize, the creative potential of others through collaboration. This includes

- **a belief in the value of the ideas and actions of others,**
- **the ability to invite others' contributions into the problem-solving process, and**
- **the ability to help others discover and utilize their best strengths, talents and creativity.**

It sets the tone for

- **thinking outside the box and**
- **engaging members in an organization in creative problem-solving and forward thinking.**

It is a belief that once put into action it can become

- **the essential element of creativity, harmony, and innovation and**
- **contagious.**

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SIX TIPS FOR APPRECIATIVE COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP INTO ACTION*

1. ***Be curious and do not “know” the answer or solution ahead of time.***
 - Do not begin a discussion with pre-formed conclusions or with the end-result in mind. Give the other person the full space to express themselves.
 - Do not begin a discussion with an authoritative statement.
 - Do not discount any contribution
2. ***Listen Positively.***
 - Be attentive and respectful; convey in your words and actions that you believe the other has something worthy to say.
 - Allow the other person(s) the space and time to express their views without premature interruption.
 - Offer positive rather than judging comments or questions.
 - Attempt to fully hear; listening and hearing are not the same thing.
 - Listening positively encourages reciprocity; it encourages the other to listen to us positively.
3. ***Try to understand the other.***
 - Genuinely try to understand the other and avoid mis-assumptions.
 - Ask questions and paraphrase to check out if you have heard what the other wanted you to hear.
4. ***Be tentative.***
 - Model that they are always possible “gray areas.”
 - "Here might be one way of looking at the issue.”
 - “Are there other ways to understand this?”
 - “Help me think through this.”
 - “Can we send out a trial balloon?”
5. ***Use Collective Language.***
 - Using the collective language of “we” is subtle but it makes a big difference.
 - It is inclusive, team language.
 - There is great value in sharing stories about what we have accomplished, about how we have faced a challenge together.
 - “We” language encourages the bond between us, and it encourages hope and purpose.
6. ***Develop “Ba”.***
 - “Ba” is a Japanese word/concept. It means an environment – a platform – a framework – where you can hear the other’s ideas. It is not necessary to agree, hearing is not agreeing.

*Article appears in *Houston Business Journal*, September, 2011.