

COACHING TIP

*Written in conjunction with the November 2014 Opportunity for Guidance:
The Essential Pair – A Good Story + an Ask*

Possible Coaching Questions (based on Appreciative Inquiry):

- What if your League had more members?
- How would it personally benefit you?
- What would the impact be on the community?
- How do you think we can get more members?
- How has your League used stories to attract new members or volunteers?
- What pieces of the guidance resonate with you?
- What are the smallest elements that could be adopted or amplified that would have the greatest impact on your League?
- What membership goal could we set as individuals? As a League?
- What are the options for achieving that goal (e.g., using stories or other ideas)?
- Which option shall we focus on?
- What are the action items from this call?
- What do you want to revisit next month?

From the Experts:

Scarcity vs. Abundance

As a coach, it is critical to remember our Appreciative Inquiry principles. In addition to using open-ended questions, we are trying to move the conversation on a positive path (i.e., one that focuses on assets vs. deficits).

As is noted in Leadership Plenty: Equipping Citizens to Take Civic Action, there are two paths of outlook that a group or organization can espouse:

1. The first path focuses on the needs, deficiencies and problems of a group or organization. This path is widely more popular and commands a vast majority of financial and human resources. (SCARCITY)
2. The second path insists on beginning with a clear commitment to discovering an organizations capacities and assets and is much less popular because it is less of a natural reaction. (ABUNDANCE)

One of the key elements to achieving an “abundance” outlook is that the members of the group need to be committed to the organization and passionate about the cause. This is great supply in League!

Furthermore, experts believe that groups cannot be created from the outside in, rather the strength needs to come from within. Therefore each group member has to have an optimistic outlook (or at least recognize what is possible) and be confident in the group’s assets and capacities. This comes with a new mindset that focused on group assets, rather that group needs.

It is this last piece that is so critical as coaches. This is where our positive open-ended questions are essential. Using examples such as are listed above, Leagues can begin to assemble their strengths into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of control and new possibilities for success.

Exercise

As was noted above, our usual mindset is to focus on deficits, not strengths. If your local League team is stuck in that mindset, try this quick 5-minute exercise.

Instructions:

- Have each member write down 3 words that describe their personal assets (e.g., what 3 words would be on the top of their resume). This is not a time for modesty!
- Have each person share their 3 words.
- Note the wealth of assets just on this call. Extrapolate out the other assets held by other members of the League – indeed by each of them. Further discuss the assets held in the community (e.g., possible partners, civic leaders, engaged government officials).
- Think about how to leverage these strengths, and if they were leverage, what would the community look like? What would be possible?