Positive Psychology at Work

How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations

Sarah Lewis

WILEY-BLACKWELL

Sarah Lewis is an Associated Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a principal member of the Association of Business Psychologists and the Managing Director of Appreciating Change, where she works as a facilitator and consultant. She is the lead author of *Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management* (2007).

Positive psychology is a rapidly growing branch of psychology focused on ways to enhance human wellbeing, happiness and longevity. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a well-established organizational development methodology that fosters the same attributes.

By drawing together the most up-to-date research from these previously distinct fields, *Positive Psychology at Work* introduces a powerful new approach to achieving organizational excellence while revealing new perspectives on the challenges of leadership. Keeping technical psychology jargon to a minimum, the author provides organizational leaders and managers of all levels with an understanding of positive psychology theory and practice and shows how its techniques can be applied to their specific workplace settings. The book reveals the most recent research and practice findings on such topics as positivity, flourishing organizations, flow, strengths, positive energy networks, transformational collaboration, psychological capital and authentic leadership.

Chapters specifically address: workplaces, relationships, leadership and change, engagement and performance, decision-making, communication and organizational transformation. Brief case studies and a series of helpful practical tips throughout the book illuminate key points and further enhance clarity. Accessible and enlightening, *Positive Psychology at Work* offers ground-breaking insights into the hottest topics in today's rapidly changing business environment.

Positive Psychology at Work

Positive Psychology at Work

How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations

Sarah Lewis

WILEY-BLACKWELL
A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2011
© 2011 Sarah Lewis

Wiley-Blackwell is an imprint of John Wiley & Sons, formed by the merger of Wiley's global Scientific, Technical and Medical business with Blackwell Publishing.

Registered Office
John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

Editorial Offices
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK
350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148–5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Sarah Lewis to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lewis, Sarah, 1957-
Positive psychology at work : how positive leadership and appreciative inquiry create inspiring organizations / Sarah Lewis.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-470-68320-0 (cloth)
1. Leadership. 2. Positive psychology. 3. Organizational change. I. Title.
HD57.7.L49 2011
158.7–dc22 2010039783

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

This book is published in the following electronic formats: ePDF 9781119990406; Wiley Online Library 9781119990390

Set in 10.5/13 pt Minion by Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited

1 2011

To Stewart Smith, my husband,
whose gift of love sustains me

Contents

About the Author **xi**
Book Contributors **xiii**
Preface **xvii**
Acknowledgements **xxi**
The Short Version of This Book **xxiii**

1 Introduction to Positive Psychology **1**
Positive Psychology is Not Positive Thinking 2
How Positive Psychology Differs from Positive Thinking 3
The Ethical Bias of This Book 6
Key Themes of the Book 8

2 Positive Workplaces **11**
Introduction 13
What is a Positive Workplace? 13
How Does Positive Organizational Behaviour Turn into Positive Organizational Performance? 20
Organizational Culture 23
The Organization as a Complex Adaptive System 26
Why is Culture so Hard to Change? 31
How to Create Positive Workplaces 34
Summary 37
Further Reading 38

3 Positive Engagement and Performance **39**
Introduction 40
Active Engagement at Work 42
Strengths and Talents 42

Flow 51
Mindfulness 52
Management Influence on Engagement and Productivity at Work 53
Goal Seeking 54
Goal Setting 56
Goal Setting and Environment Contingencies 58
The Meaningfulness of Work 63
Strategies for Increasing the Meaningfulness of Work 64
Summary 67
Recommended Reading 69

4 Positive Communication and Decision-Making 71
Introduction 71
Communication 72
Connectivity 74
Dynamic Patterns of Communication 76
How to Build Positive Communication and Increase Performance 78
Leadership and Positive Communication 78
Best Self-Feedback 79
Decision-Making 83
Emotions in Decision-Making 86
Micro-Decision-Making 91
Other Factors that Enhance Decision-Making 92
Moving from Decision-Making to Sense-Making 96
Summary 99
Further Reading 100

5 Positive Leadership and Change 101
Introduction 101
Leadership 102
Psychopathic Leaders 107
Organizational Change 124
Approaches to Change 125
Leadership Change Behaviour 130
Effective Leadership Behaviour 131
Developing Strategy 134

Summary 136
Further Reading 137

6 Positive Sustainable Growth 139
Introduction 139
Psychological Capital 142
Appreciative Inquiry 158
Positive Profusion Theory of Growth of the Positive Organization 166
The Three-Circle Strengths Revolution 168
Summary 170
Further Reading 170

7 Positive Relationships at Work 171
Introduction 172
Positive Team Working 174
High Quality Working Relationships 184
Summary 192
Further Reading 193

8 Positive Transformation 195
Introduction 197
Key Processes of Flourishing and Inspiring Workplaces 197
Why Organizations Ignore the Transformative Collaboration Approach to Change 199
Transformative Collaboration 204
Patterns of Organizational Life 204
Transformative Collaboration Approaches 213
Summary 221
Further Reading 227

Other Things You Need to Know 229
How to Live a Happy and Meaningful Life 229
How to Have a Better Quality Old Age 229

References 231
Index 239

About the Author

Sarah Lewis is a fully qualified chartered psychologist, an Associated Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a founder and principal member of the Association of Business Psychologists. She holds a master's degree in occupational and organizational psychology, attained with distinction, and a certificate in systemic consultation. She is a specialist Appreciative Inquiry practitioner and an expert at facilitating large group events.

She is the managing director of Appreciating Change and is an experienced organizational consultant and facilitator. She has been actively involved in helping people and organizations change their behaviour for 25 years. Her clients include local government, central government, not-for-profit organizations and private sector clients, particularly in the manufacturing, financial and educational sectors.

When positive psychology burst onto the scene, Sarah quickly realized that work in this area both chimed with her practice and offered robust theoretical support to Appreciative Inquiry as an approach to organizational change. She integrates these two approaches in her work and is delighted to be able to extend, explore and share this connection in this book.

Sarah has lectured at postgraduate level and continues to be a regular conference presenter in the UK. She writes regularly for publication and is the lead author of *Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management: Using AI to Facilitate Organizational Development*, published by Kogan Page in 2007.

Sarah's work can be viewed on her website (www.appreciatingchange.co.uk) and she can be contacted at ++44 (0)7973782715 or by emailing sarahlewis@appreciatingchange.co.uk

Book Contributors

Alastair J. M. Arnott, Subject Leader of Performing Arts – St Paul's Way Trust School, MSc Applied Positive Psychology postgraduate student, Results Certified Coach Level 1. www.alastairjmarnott.com; alastairarnott@hotmail.co.uk

James Butcher, owner of Work Without Walls. Specializes in appreciative learning – helping people learn from their strengths and successes. www.work-without-walls.co.uk,++44(0)1303863581,++44(0)7976898782. Based in Kent, UK

Wendy Campbell, Founding (1989) and Managing Director of The Glastonbury Company Pty Ltd, Creator of The Resilient Leadership Program for Community Change Leaders. wendy@glastonbury.com.au, ++61 (0)893828071

Kate Coutts is a head teacher in Unst, Shetland, and has background in research. She also works in the private and public sector on leadership development. metasaga.wikispaces.com; katecoutts@shetland.gov.uk

Jane Filby, Director of Planning and Resources, Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham, UK. Expertise in load and financial models in HE, management of HE and reward structures. j.l.filby@aston.ac.uk

Ewa Francis, learning and development professional, specializing in designing and facilitating people development solutions: personal effectiveness workshops, management development, coaching, mentoring. Eva_Francis@postmaster.co.uk; ++44 (0)7800546291. Based in Surrey, UK and Poland

Mario Gastaldi, owner of Brain Team Consulting. Specializes in designing and facilitating spaces and conversations, live and on-line, leading to engaged change and collaboration. mg@mariogastaldi.com; www.mariogastaldi.com, ++39 (0)3489330978

Karena Gomez, C.Psychol. FCIPD. Consultant at KPMG. Specializes in unlocking organization and individual learning to deliver whole-system change. karena.gomez@kpmg.co.uk, ++44 (0)7919808452. Based in Leeds, UK

Helen Higson, Professor of Higher Education Learning and Management and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Aston University, Birmingham, UK. Specializes in employability competences and intercultural learning. h.e.higson@aston.ac.uk, ++44 (0)1212043191

Clive Hutchinson, Company Leader of Cougar Automation. Trained as an engineer and then a manager, Clive now devotes himself to helping people become free to play to their strengths

Louisa Jewell, MAPP, Consultant and Facilitator specializing in creating positive and productive workplaces. www.positivematters.com, louisa@positivematters.com, 1-416-481-8930. Based in Toronto, Canada

Joep C. de Jong, CEO at Van Harte & Lingsma. Co-founder of AI Consultancy and has expertise in the practical, daily use of Appreciative Inquiry, special interest in Appreciative Leadership. joep.dejong@h-l.nl, ++31 (0)715191600; ++31 (0)654396936

Leif Josefsson, Metaspace facilitator, coach, networker. Explorer of new technology and thinking. On a learning journey, whether it's with his two-year-old grandchild or Maasai partner Rafael. www.metaspace.se. Based in Stockholm, Sweden

George Karseras is a chartered occupational psychologist and a Director of Leap Partnership, a boutique consultancy specializing in aligning organizational mindsets to organizational strategy. www.leappartnership.co.uk, ++44 (0)7976789366

Vanessa King, Master Applied Positive Psychology, University of Pennsylvania. Partner, ChangeAble Consulting LLP. Specializing in leadership development, positive change, and creative thinking. www.changeable.org.uk, ++44 (0)7989337083. Based in UK, works internationally

Martin Leavy, Training Development Manager, Dublin City University. Specializes in the design, delivery of training and development interventions together with supporting organizational change. www.dcu.ie, ++353 17005147. Based in Dublin, Ireland

Alex Linley, Founding Director of Capp, the leading people management consultancy specializing in strengths approaches. www.cappeu.com, ++44 (0)2476323363

Liz Martins, strengths-based change, psychosynthesis and open space practitioner, working with individuals, organizations and communities. lizmartins2@gmail.com, ++44 (0)1225858406; ++44 (0)7977932066. Based in Bath, UK

Lesley Moore, Director of MooreInsight Ltd, consultant and facilitator of strengths-based change with individuals, public organizations and community networks. www.mooreinsight.co.uk ++44 (0)7813197657; ++44 (0)1959569980. Based in Kent, UK

Nick Moore, Director of MooreInsight Ltd, specializing in co-creating seismic quality and efficiency enhancements in children's social care, with public and independent organizations. www.mooreinsight.co.uk, ++44 (0)7779082631; ++44 (0)1959569980. Based in Kent, UK

Shannon M. Polly, MAPP, President of Accentuate Consulting, facilitator and consultant specializing in communication/presentation skills and increasing organizational productivity and wellbeing. www.accentuate-consulting.com, spolly@accentuate-consulting.com, 1-917-449-1789. Based in Washington, DC

Ann Shacklady-Smith, Senior Fellow, Manchester Business School, Chair Community Empowerment Network St Helens, thrives doing Appreciative Inquiry research, appreciative coaching and whole-system change. ann.shacklady-smith@mbs.ac.uk; info@censthelens.org.uk, ++44 (0)1744759390

Tim Slack, Co-Director Appreciating People, Appreciative Inquiry and whole system OD practitioners. www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk, ++44 (0)1514271146; ++44 (0)7986515237. Based in Liverpool UK

Stewart Smith, artist and cartoonist. www.darkhorseart.co.uk. stew@darkhorseart.co.uk, ++44 (0)2083051862. Based in London, UK

Ceferi Soler, PhD in Psychology, Barcelona University. Associate Professor ESADE Business School. ceferi.soler@esade.edu

Professor Michael West, Executive Dean, Aston Business School, Birmingham. His areas of research interest are team and organizational

innovation and effectiveness, particularly in relation to the organization of health services

Lesley Wilson, Founder of Dreamcatchers, an organization development consultancy specializing in strengths-based change. Designer of leadership learning journeys and Metasaga guide. dreamcatcherglasgow@hotmail.com, ++44 (0)7980449135

Preface

Every book written I am beginning to realize poses certain questions, the key one being: Who is it for? In this case the answer is that it is written for its author: it is the kind of book I like to read. I like books that tell me about new, exciting ideas and theories in a clear, easily understood way; that are prepared to recount in some detail key interesting research, but don't insist I follow every twist and turn of the academic debate; and that give me ideas about how all this interesting new knowledge might be used in the field.

So this is the book I have attempted to write: the key ideas, research and pragmatics of positive psychology at work drawn together into one reader-facing volume. I have also attempted to illuminate the application of positive psychology in different workplace settings and cultures so that many different readers will find an example that resonates with their workplace or work challenge. My aspiration is that it will be interesting and useful to leaders and managers, students and consultants, and people at work interested in how things could be improved.

I have attempted to make the text lively and interesting as well as informative and scholarly. To achieve this balance I have had to make some choices and I want to say a few words about these.

Accounts

I have chosen to insert short accounts of practice as supplements so that they don't break up the flow of the main chapter narrative and you can read them at a point in your reading that suits you.

Summaries and Key Points

I have chosen occasionally to pull out the key points of the discussion in the text to help readers keep the big picture of the discussion, or a map of the main points, to hand.

Stories

I have included occasional stories from my own experience, some work-based, some more personal, to illuminate arguments in the text. I have done this on the basis that sometimes a story aids understanding and also to leaven the dough of academic exposition. I realize that these are as likely to annoy as to charm. In my defence I can only say I road-tested them with my contributors, and those included passed the squirm test. Feel free to skip them if they are not to your taste.

Cartoons

I have also included some cartoons. My hope is that these will illustrate points in a dramatic way and also that they offer a little light relief.

Referencing

I thought long and hard about the level of referencing in this book. An organizational leader who read an early draft made it clear that too many references really interfered with his pleasure in reading the text. On the other hand, I get really annoyed reading under-referenced books or footnoted texts, where I can't easily see where the information came from.

So my compromise is this: key pieces of research that I explain in some detail are properly referenced as the primary source. Elsewhere I have given as the reference the book, or book chapter, from which I have gleaned the information I am presenting. Further, in a slight departure from best academic practice, I haven't constantly re-referenced my source with 'ibid.'. Instead, unless I introduce a new name or clearly switch to my own observations, you can assume the information continues to come from the same source until told otherwise.

In addition, I have added some further reading at the end of the chapters for those who want to explore a particular area or idea further, with a few notes about the nature of the text. I hope this will help readers find the kind of books they like to read among the ever-growing selection available.

So that's it. I have learnt a huge amount researching and writing this book and have enjoyed the journey tremendously. I can only hope that you buy this pristine volume and rapidly deface it with underlining, exclamation marks, question marks, comments, dog ears and coffee stains. Such, to me, are the signs of a useful book.

Acknowledgements

In 2007, along with my colleagues Jon Passmore and Stefan Cantore, I wrote a book called *Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management*. I enjoyed the experience so much that when Wiley-Blackwell asked me to write a book about positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry I leapt at the chance.

From the beginning my ambition was to comb the ever-widening field of positive psychology research and theory for that most relevant to the challenges of leading, or working in, organizations. I wanted to combine that theory with examples of how it is being put into practice across the world, as people ask 'So what?' and play with 'What happens if … ?' I am blessed that so many colleagues, friends and contacts were kind enough to put pen to paper, and it is the unfailing support of the positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry community that I wish to acknowledge.

Each contribution is clearly acknowledged in the text and details can be found on page xiii. My contributors have all been unfailingly patient with me as my ideas for the book have developed and so my ideas of what I want from them have changed. The text is immeasurably enriched by the generosity of my contributors who come from the UK, Australia, America, Canada, Italy, Poland, Spain, Holland, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland. I thank them all.

I wish also to thank my husband, Stewart Smith, who has provided the cartoons that appear in the text. Working to my very inexact briefs he has somehow managed to produce simple and impactful images that illustrate, with humour and wit, the points I am attempting to make.

My eldest son, Jem, also deserves my thanks for his extensive help with the part of the whole project that I find the hardest: the final detailed checking of text and referencing. He has been diligent in his efforts and any mistakes which remain are entirely my own.

There are a number of people who not only made contributions but who also took the time to read and comment on earlier drafts of various chapters. They are Clive, Martin, Ewa, Shannon, Helen, Mario, Ceferi and Karena. My grateful thanks go to them all.

I wish particularly to thank Clive Hutchinson who alerted me very early on to the danger of writing an over-referenced academic text that was of little interest to active and pragmatic organizational leaders. I hope I have successfully diverted the course of this book to avoid this outcome!

Karen Shield and Darren Reed of Wiley-Blackwell were kind enough to approach me to write this book and have been unstinting in their efforts to help me get it right.

The Short Version of This Book

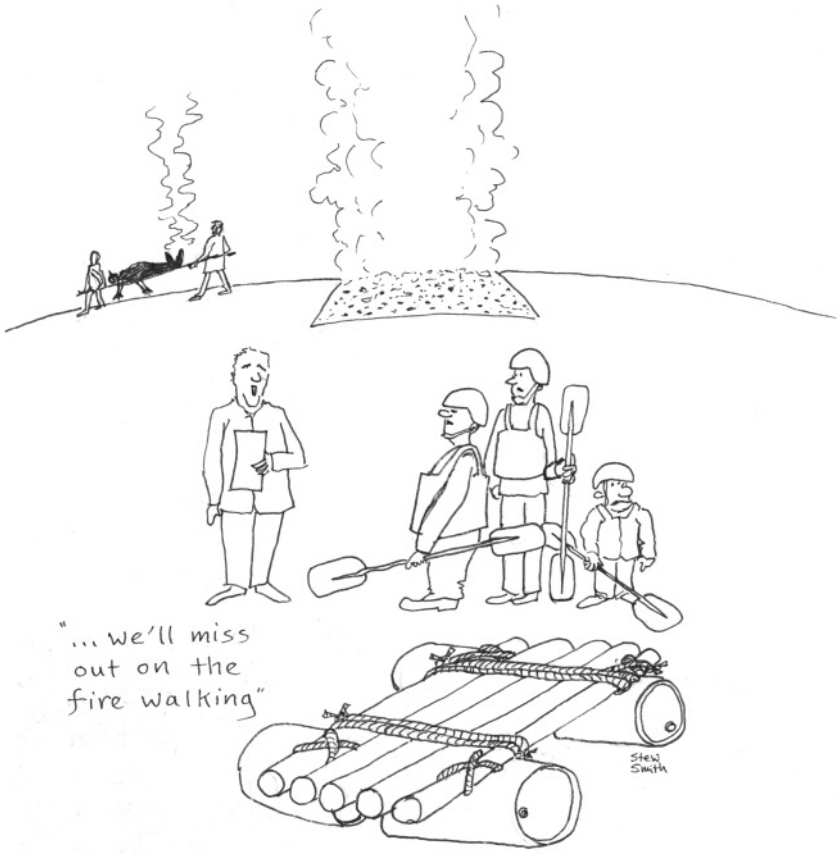
To create positive and inspiring workplaces

1. Create a workplace that feels good.
2. Play to everyone's strengths.
3. Recruit for attitude.
4. Encourage positive deviation.
5. Build social capital.
6. Make sense together.
7. Be an authentic leader.
8. Create conditions for change.
9. Create reward-rich environments.
10. Be appreciative.

To learn how to do these things, read this book.

1

Introduction to Positive Psychology



Positive Psychology at Work: How Positive Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry Create Inspiring Organizations, First Edition. Sarah Lewis.
© 2011 Sarah Lewis. Published 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.