

# An Overview of Appreciative Coaching

*Look with favour upon a bold beginning.*

*Virgil (70–19 B.C.), Roman epic poet*

The best place to start, most often, is at the beginning. Although there were many beginnings to developing our Appreciative Coaching process together and many beginnings to the work we will describe here, Alan's story seemed just right to introduce you to what this book is all about.

## Alan's Story

*It started for me when I realized that despite all of my best efforts, I was not making any progress in obtaining enough billable client work to sustain my business. My frustrations and concerns grew to the point that I was beyond worrying about the potential embarrassment of admitting my struggles to friends and colleagues. And then one day it came to me . . . I needed to get some coaching—an objective, outside look into what I was doing, how I was doing it, and how I was being a barrier to my own success. The face of a good friend and colleague popped into my thoughts. I can't explain exactly why she came to mind, other than that the many conversations we've had over the last seven years have led me to respect her thinking, her compassion, and her integrity very much.*

Alan's coach also remembers the beginning:

*One day in the fall, Alan called to ask if I would meet with him to discuss something of a personal nature. We decided to meet at a local coffee shop, where he told me that he was feeling demoralized because he was unable to make an adequate living doing the work he loved. His situation had become so critical that he would soon be faced with making decisions he did not want to make. He said he worked very hard and gave away a great deal to local community groups and businesses in an effort to make his work known, but the financial benefit was not coming back to him as he had hoped. The situation was serious, if not quite desperate. He was looking to me to see if I could give him some information that might yield insight and ideas for action on his part to change his situation. He did not want to move away from the work he loved and did so well. His clients valued him, his work, and the results they were able to produce because of his interactions with them.*

*Alan is an organization development consultant in the Detroit area—an area that has been severely depressed economically since the 9/11 attacks. It is an automotive city where the Big Three—General Motors, Ford Motor Company, and DaimlerChrysler—have their corporate headquarters. The economy is dependent on these giants, as many businesses support them through the supply of parts, direct support, and indirect services. When the Big Three do not do well, everyone in Detroit suffers, especially the small service providers like Alan.*

*Alan and I agreed to an Appreciative Coaching relationship and to meet weekly for an hour. We agreed that the topic for coaching was “making money doing the work he loves.”*

## **Discovery**

Alan remembers getting started with his coach:

*Within a few hours of our agreeing to a process and a start date, she e-mailed me a couple of forms. One was her Client Information Form and the other was a Coaching Prep Form, both of which she asked me to complete before our first session. These forms were an indicator to me that the approach she was using, and the opportunities I would see as a*

result, were both different from any other I had experienced and very special. These were some of the questions:

- Describe your three greatest accomplishments to date.
- What made these accomplishments stand out for you?
- What have you incorporated into your current actions from your past accomplishments?
- How could you use what you've learned from these accomplishments to assist you in making future changes?
- Who are, or have been, your major role models?
- What attributes of these role models do you admire and most appreciate?
- What are the five most positive things in your life?
- Who are the key supportive people in your life, and what do they provide for you?
- List five adjectives that describe you at your best.
- What energizes you?
- What would you like to contribute to the world?
- What are you most wanting to achieve in the next three years?

These are not the usual sort of questions I see. There was no asking about problems or concerns or issues or anything that was negative. Instead the questions were framed in a positive manner, and as I thought about them, I felt a growing sense of energy and optimism inside myself. I felt good about myself as I answered these questions . . . and even better about the possibility of good things happening for me as a result of the upcoming coaching. This positive energy carried over into our first actual coaching session. I looked forward to the beginning session with great hope

*and optimism. I was predisposed to believe that I would find great insights about myself as a result of the questions my coach had already asked and those she would be asking throughout the coaching process. The more I thought about things, the better I felt, and the higher my hopes and expectations soared. The last comment I wrote on my prep form before the initial session was “. . . sort of like I've gotten an injection of positive vibes or something like that.”*

The first coaching session with Alan was in person. His coach describes it here:

*We went through the four appreciative questions we ask in the first session. Throughout our first meeting, Alan maintained a positive demeanor. Occasionally, the sadness and concern about his business came through, but in general, the questions elicited responses that showed he held great joy in his work. His answers were descriptive and provided rich detail. I believed in his passion for his work and that he made meaningful connections with his clients, serving them well. Even through the positive responses, however, I observed that Alan gave a lot to friends, colleagues, and clients and made very few requests of them. So I asked Alan to consider the flow of giving in each of the stories he told; that is, I asked him to think about the direction of giving and receiving. I was very careful to ask this question in a neutral way. His own startled observation was that the flow was mostly unidirectional, from him to others. I thought about asking him to identify situations where he had made requests that had worked out well, but decided to wait because we needed to take the process at Alan's tempo. He needed time to consider what was clearly a new learning for him. He left our meeting energized by the work we had done and eager to move forward with the coaching process. After this session, I reflected on how important it was to be in a learning mode with our clients, to allow the client to reveal the possibilities for us.*

As Alan reports here, the meeting exceeded his already high expectations:

*My coach walked me through the Client Information Form by asking probing, positive questions. Partway through this first session, she mentioned that she was seeing something of a trend in my way of being*

*with clients and potential clients, and she asked me a couple of great questions that helped me see the same thing. The insights for me from this first conversation included the following:*

- *I tend to do a lot of giving to others but not much asking for myself. And, without asking, there isn't much for the universe to work with.*
- *I was habitually taking on more than 100 percent responsibility for professional relationships.<sup>1</sup>*
- *I was much more successful in past situations when I only took on 100 percent and made direct requests of others to do the same.*
- *I should probably be clearer about what I need regarding my requests of others (and the universe).*

*This was a very powerful and liberating set of learnings for me, and they immediately began having a positive impact on my conscious thinking and behavior. These insights both pushed and pulled me onto a more energized and successful path.*

Over the next few sessions, Alan and his coach continued to focus on the issue of taking responsibility and making requests. As they did so, Alan gained even more insights into his own potential. He describes his experience:

*The insights gained from our third and fourth sessions were just as amazing and just as valuable for me: whenever I am bold and centered and make requests that benefit both parties, I am more successful. What can I learn from my reflections regarding requests, trends, balance points, feelings, and so on? How can I use this learning to become centered and even more powerful in my behaviors?*

*My coach continued to ask me very positive, very probing, very challenging questions around all these issues, all the while helping me feel more positive about taking new actions that could achieve more successful outcomes for each issue. Every question, and every agreed-on action, was*

*geared toward trying something that fit with my strengths, values, and vision and that would lead to positive outcomes.*

Alan shared his insights with his coach. She reports:

*By our third session, Alan had a clear and strong understanding of what balance of responsibility felt like and why it was important to him. He shared that realizing how making requests was beneficial both to him and the other party was a turning point for him. He felt great; making clear requests was something that he knew he could do because he had already demonstrated he could. It was not unfamiliar territory.*

## **Dream**

As his coach continued to work with Alan, they shifted their focus from immediate awareness of how Alan was changing in his business to how he wanted to *change* his business. The coach started moving Alan toward a new dream or vision for his business:

*Once the discoveries were well under way, Alan and I shifted to his dream for his business. He started documenting his business life: mission, vision, value, colleagues, clients, revenue, reputation. The list was quite complete and the descriptions very rich.*

Alan realized there was a major disconnect between his vision and his behavior in his business partnership. He describes his situation this way:

*One example of how this appreciative approach played out for me is the relationship with my business partner. One of the insights I gained from working with my coach is that my vision won't be achieved if I continue to behave in the way I've been behaving with respect to the partnership issue and process. I am not addressing the situation for some reason(s). She began by asking me what I needed and wanted in a business partner. She asked me to create a list. She also coached me through developing a request for my business partner to create his own list around the same question. My business partner and I then shared our respective lists with each other. Our lists were very different, and this prompted us to have a long conversation about those differences, or mismatches. It was one of the best conversations I've had with my business partner in*

*several years . . . very healthy, very personal, very revealing . . . and a relief for both of us to realize that we had been feeling many of the same less-than-happy things related to the professional relationship.*

*My coach then asked me to review my vision for the business, taking into account the new realizations about the mismatches with my business partner. The resulting vision was much more personal and much more vibrant and full of possibilities than it had been only a few weeks before. She applied the same basic process as she had with the partner needs list . . . she asked me to develop a request for my business partner to create his vision for the business. Again, we shared our respective visions with each other, and discovered even more mismatches. Clearly we were both learning a great deal of extremely critical information about ourselves, our hopes and dreams, and our potential for continuing in a collective business.*

*In the end, my business partner and I collectively, through reasonable conversation, came to the conclusion that we did not want the same things from and for the business, and that we should not continue on as partners in the business. We parted as professional partners, but remained good friends. I really believe that the partnership would have ended eventually, but without the good feelings and intact friendship. I know that my business partner and I would have ended up in some sort of major conflict had my coach not helped me take only 100 percent responsibility and make reasonable requests of my business partner to do the same. Her questions helped me frame the situation in a very different and very positive light . . . something I had not been able to do for over three years previously.*

Alan's coach was proud of the way he moved forward with a new dream for himself:

*In painting his future picture, Alan came to realize that the relationship with his business partner was not of the type he dreamed about, but he felt unsure about how to bring this up with him. Following the principles and practices of Appreciative Coaching, Alan decided that it would be ideal for him to engage his partner in his own dream for the business. He felt very capable and eager to lead this discussion. Perhaps*

*not surprisingly, both partners discovered that they were not suited to one another. Happily this process of conversation allowed them to disengage amicably and productively.*

## **Design**

Over several months, Alan and his coach crafted a strategy using his strengths and expertise to build his business, being mindful of the balance between his giving to and receiving from his clients. His coach reports:

*The coaching meetings were held over the telephone. Each time, Alan provided me with a summary of our coaching conversation, his learnings, and a list of assignments for the coming week. Prior to each session, Alan sent me his Coaching Prep Form and any assignments that were in written form. Alan took coaching very seriously and did everything he could to make the most of it. Together we created an economic exchange process as an application of his new learnings to marketing and sales. It was a process that felt comfortable to him and one that he was eager to try out. In parallel with creating this process, Alan and I also spoke about practical marketing efforts that he could make in the present. We enhanced the implementation of what he already did well with new understanding and experimenting.*

*During this time, Alan told me several stories of pivotal moments when he came to recognize that the work with his clients was not shared in an appropriate manner. Whenever he raised this concern with a client, they were able to develop a better way to move forward. Relationships improved as well. Alan and I looked at these moments frame by frame, and that careful inspection led to interesting insights. Alan recognized that in each instance he had taken on more than 100 percent responsibility and had made a clear request to the other individual to change it to 100 percent. The juxtaposition of these two elements (balanced responsibility and making requests) was exciting to him. It gave him much to consider between meetings with me.*

As a result of experimenting and thinking of new ways of moving forward, Alan reported that he took some specific action steps:



*I began looking over a list of community pro bono projects and seeing what items could possibly be let go as a means of helping me see where I was preventing space for billable client projects. I started thinking about a specific request I could make of the participants in my upcoming workshop at the Chamber of Commerce that would help create a positive call to action that in turn would add value to the clients and connect them back with me for other potential billable work.*

## **Destiny**

Once Alan could clearly envision his dream for his business, he went about designing and building that dream. As the coaching relationship drew toward completion, Alan was able to reflect:

*To bring this story back to the beginning and to close the loop I've created, let me explain the real-world, tangible outcomes and benefits I've realized as a result of the coaching I received:*

- *At the beginning of our coaching sessions, I had only one billable project.*

*Less than three months into the coaching, I had four additional paying clients.*

- *At the beginning of our coaching sessions, I had no positive prospects for future billable work.*

*Less than three months into the coaching, I had over a dozen potential future billable clients.*

- *At the beginning of our coaching sessions, I was great at networking and marketing, but lousy at closing the sale.*

*Less than three months into the coaching, I was consciously using a real-time economic exchange process that was resulting in the aforementioned contracts and potential clients.*

- *At the beginning of our coaching sessions, I was not at all sure I would have any success at selling enough billable work to sustain the business.*

*Less than three months into the coaching, I had already sold enough work to sustain the business for the next twelve months, and was looking forward to a hugely successful year . . . perhaps the best in the last five years in terms of sales and income.*

*I credit my coach, and her positive questions, with helping me understand more about myself and how to leverage my own natural strengths and to create more and better possibilities for myself and my business. I now have a real-time capacity for creating a mutually beneficial economic exchange that allows both my clients and me to be much more successful. I have a much more positive awareness and much higher energy around my own strengths, and I know how to leverage them. My vision is now firmly within my grasp, and tangible results have already occurred. What can I say? The appreciative approach worked miracles for me.*

Alan's coach observes:

*His new status as sole proprietor in the business gave Alan the impetus and power to dream big. It gave him new energy to enter into areas that were his personal passion. With renewed energy and his newly discovered skills in marketing and sales, he found opportunity after opportunity open to him. Using the economic exchange process we had developed together, Alan was able to ask for payment for his services where he would have given them away in the past. After three months of coaching, Alan had booked enough business and was bringing in enough money to cover all his anticipated expenses for the coming year! We are now ready to move on to our next cycle of coaching, in which Alan will create an explicit vision of how he can market and sell the services that are integral to his business and natural to his style. He is already well on his way.*

## **Reflection**

This story represents the best of what we hope to offer coaches, potential coaches, and managers who coach. It describes how Appreciative Coaching works, and we hope that you will come

to share our own passion for Appreciative Inquiry, our core philosophy, and the application of this core philosophy to coaching relationships.

Alan, because of his work in organization development and change, knew more about the work of coaching than most. He knew, as he stated without much enthusiasm, that the most common way to approach change was to address an organization's or individual's weaknesses. This deficit approach has been the most heavily trodden path to personal and professional change. Now, however, there are a wide variety of positive approaches that use strengths, past achievements, and visioning, and suggest that people can change without the frustration of trying to improve things for which they had neither genuine enthusiasm nor unquestioned expertise. The traditional notions of change and development came out of a worldview that people were infinitely perfectible. Change resulted from addressing problems and overcoming resistance gradually, over time. Newer philosophies claim that if people manage their strengths and past accomplishments wisely, they can achieve far greater benefits than if they toil away at incremental improvements to their weaknesses.

Not so long ago, people saw themselves and their world as machinelike; like gears, they had to mesh with other parts to ensure a well-operating whole company or family. Now people see life much more as their own construction, one that incorporates their professional, religious, familial, or cultural background, but does not use that history to put boundaries around what they might be.

The rapid rise of coaching as a profession is a direct response to this desire for self-construction. The proliferation of coaching schools, Internet sites, conferences, and professional associations speaks to the need among new and experienced coaches for networking and education in evidence-based methods. Certification increasingly seeks to bring rigor and consistent quality to coaching. Today there are a multitude of coaching programs, models, and approaches to choose from. Some of them are based on the

principles of a problem-solving approach, and some of them incorporate many of the ideas, concepts, and principles that underlie Appreciative Coaching.

## **The Basic Structure of the Appreciative Approach**

The purpose of this book is to offer coaches and clients an engaging and concrete process for change, based not on traditional “fix your weaknesses” methods but on the positive philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry. AI is a powerful, highly successful process for change in the arena of organizational development that has been widely and enthusiastically embraced by corporations, nonprofits, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations worldwide over the past twenty years. We authors apply this well-documented group method to the environment of one-on-one coaching. Inherent in an appreciative approach to change are certain elements that we deal with in detail in different chapters of the book. These include the use of appreciative questions, the five principles of Appreciative Coaching, and the four stages of Appreciative Coaching.

### **Loving the Questions**

One of the fundamental premises of an appreciative approach is the incredible power inherent in asking the “right” questions. These are not just any questions, but questions that are carefully crafted to create a joyfully focused state of mind as the client considers and answers them. Alan noted that even his coach’s initial written questions evoked anticipation and enthusiasm. In our own experience, we’ve noticed how some questions can send us off on a mental magic carpet. These are the questions someone asks us or we ask ourselves that transport us mentally because we are so entranced with the images the questions raise. These grab our attention because our motivation to explore them supersedes whatever is going on in the moment. They do this in a way that a statement or another kind of question does not.

We asked ourselves, Can we think of a recent question that did this for us? Here's an example that engages us every time: "What gives you energy in your life right now?" This question makes us curious about ourselves. It helps us focus on what we most enjoy, get wrapped up in, lose ourselves in, look forward to. We can journal about this or talk to a friend or colleague about it for hours. In contrast, if someone asks us to list the five most important work goals we have for the next year, we know this is important, but the question just doesn't engage us in the same way.

What is it about questions, positive questions, questions that engage people in thinking about their own best selves, that puts them into what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow"?<sup>2</sup> Poet Rainer Maria Rilke recommended to his younger poet friend that we all embrace these kinds of questions and begin living them without trying to figure out too quickly what the answers might be.<sup>3</sup>

This book is also about loving the questions—not just any questions, but the questions that cause us to say yes to life, exploration, and experimentation, and yes to change. The appreciative approach assumes that the questions people ask affect the way they think about their past, present, and potential future. We will describe our experience working with this method and offer templates, exercises, and, of course, sample questions, to allow any practicing or potential coaches or managers to incorporate Appreciative Coaching into their existing practice.

### **The Five Principles of Appreciative Coaching**

Underlying the appreciative approach are five basic principles that have been tested and established as the core philosophy for Appreciative Coaching.<sup>4</sup> We present the five principles in greater detail in Chapters Three and Four. For now, we introduce them to set our stage.

#### *Principle One: The Constructionist Principle*

The Constructionist Principle posits that knowing and becoming are interwoven. Many believe that as the world gets more and

more complex, the relevance of empirical truths diminishes. This implies that there are, in reality, not very many generalizations people can make, or sure predictors of repeatable interactions. However, we are sure that the recognition and acknowledgment of who a person is now and how she became who she is now is a strong predictor of who she can and will become. Furthermore, it is not a matter of fate or predestination. In other words, a person's future is an extension of what she knows and doesn't know, both as coach and as client. A person's actions (what she is doing and has done) contribute to her current reality and put boundaries around what she believes she can be. By inquiring about clients' past successes, we determine what clients know and how we can apply what they know to a desirable future. We can often expand clients' boundaries through our active application of this principle.

As you recall in Alan's story, the coach began working with Alan by methodically inquiring into his abilities, talents, past successes, and unmet desires. She repeatedly questioned him on his perceptions of himself, which resulted in a number of significant insights for him: that he often took more than 100 percent responsibility, that he was more successful in past situations when he made direct requests of others, and that when he combined both 100 percent responsibility with making clear requests of others, things worked very well for him and his clients. Alan began to see that, consciously or not, he was constructing much of the reality he experienced.

### *Principle Two: The Positive Principle*

Positive attitudes, actions, and connections influence long-term change. The more positive all these elements remain, the longer lasting the change will be. The Positive Principle is an overarching principle for our Appreciative Coaching practice. It suggests that when both the coach and the client are connected as partners in the positive pursuit of a dream and when they both retain (mostly) positive attitudes and act toward the change they want, the change will happen positively. It may happen even faster if clients (even

the very negative clients) change in ways that allow them to perceive themselves as effective actors on their own behalf.

The Positive Principle may be the one most obviously present in all the coaching we do. It is visible in the positive bonding between Alan and his coach, in Alan's repeated wonder at their positive conversations in which they built on each other's ideas, and in Alan's positive affect throughout their formal relationship together.

### *Principle Three: The Simultaneity Principle*

Inquiry and change happen in the same moment according to the Simultaneity Principle. To put it another way, the future happens in and as a result of the present. We sow the seeds of change with the very first questions we ask. The kinds of questions we ask set change in motion in a particular direction. If our questions are negative or focused on troubles, the client may defend himself against change or become depressed at the prospect of marginally improving weaknesses. Perhaps the mandate is even to improve weaknesses the client cares little about improving. Careful questions create the foundations for what the coach and client discover, and those discoveries become the foundations for dreaming and designing clients' destinies. For coaches and clients, this is often slow and sometimes painful. Eventually, however, our insistence on framing stories positively engages clients in their own dreams.

Alan was a client who responded quickly and positively to the appreciative questions being asked by his coach. Even in completing the Coaching Prep Forms before the first session, Alan felt as though he had gotten "an injection of positive vibes." Just asking him positive questions prompted new thinking and awareness on his part, so that the inquiry immediately elicited change.

### *Principle Four: The Poetic Principle*

The Poetic Principle suggests that life stories can be rewritten to better fit how clients see themselves in their present or future.

Any number of new realities can flow from a reinterpretation of one's life story, just as there are any number of potential interpretations of a poem. Not all coaching clients come with positive life stories. The Poetic Principle reminds the coach and client that a story can be reframed, reimagined, and refocused to enable more hopeful and joyful action toward a desired change. For example, Alan's coach helped him see that although his recent experiences with his business growth were not positive, he had the potential to see himself differently in the future.

*Principle Five: The Anticipatory Principle*

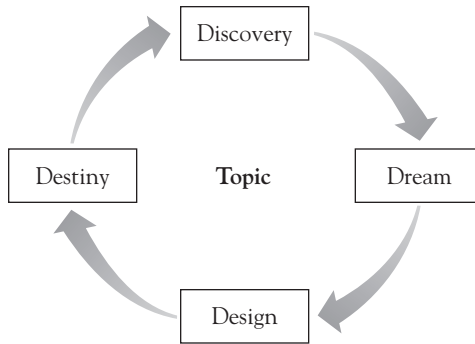
The Anticipatory Principle states that a particular dream of the future can guide current behavior in the direction of that future. Focusing clients on their particular vision or dream enables them to take clearer action in the present toward that dream. The Anticipatory Principle is akin to affirmations that are stated positively in the present and that relate to some desired future state.

In the case of Alan, after helping him discover insights about his past behaviors and current potential, his coach intentionally moved Alan toward talking about a new dream for his business. She knew that recognizing his past successes and identifying his current strengths and abilities were not enough to cause change if Alan had no picture of where he wanted to be.

As Alan's story illustrates, our Appreciative Coaching model (Figure 1.1) begins with the choice of a topic for the coaching relationship and then progresses through four related stages. In Chapters Six through Nine, we feature the stages in greater detail to help you understand the intricacies of the Appreciative Coaching approach. We also share what has happened for us and our clients in each stage, and what our experience and research lead us to anticipate happening for you. For now, a brief introduction to the stages will give you the beginning vocabulary of Appreciative Coaching (AC).



**Figure 1.1. The Appreciative Coaching Model**



### Choosing the Topic

The core process of AC begins with the selection of a topic. In Alan’s case, he and his coach agreed that the topic for their coaching would be “making money doing the work he loves.” Instead of beginning the coaching relationship with his frustrations that he was “not obtaining enough billable client work to sustain business” or with his “feeling demoralized because he was not able to make an adequate living doing the work he loved,” his coach helped Alan reframe his problem into a more positive topic statement.

Much of the language describing the appreciative approach is intentionally positive, or at the very least neutral. This is true of the first word used in every appreciative process, namely, *topic*. For most of us, “topic” means something we’ll investigate. It doesn’t have effort or possible failure attached to it, as the word *goal* might. At the outset of the coaching relationship, the topic choice is fluid. Core questions explore the client’s strengths, her past successes, her work and personal values, and the one or two things she longs to have more of or to have be different in her life. From the answers to these questions come the tools for learning and change.

### **Stage One: Discovery**

In the Discovery Stage, the coach begins exploration by asking specific core questions that move the client in a positive direction:

1. What gives life to you now?
2. Describe a high point or peak experience in your life or work up to now.
3. What do you most value about yourself, your relationships, and the nature of your work?
4. What one or two things do you want more of?

The answers to the questions focus attention on the client's positive history, strengths, and deepest successes. Even when clients come to coaching with a problem to be solved, they may be able to let go of the problem in the Discovery Stage. We saw that this was the case with Alan. He became energized by the positive language and intent and was able to allow his coach to help him explore examples of past successes and current abilities that he could leverage in his current situation. Trust begins to build in the coaching relationship when clients can experience some positive feelings about themselves and their situation.

### **Stage Two: Dream**

In the Dream Stage, client and coach come together to make sense of the answers to the core questions so that they may apply these answers to the topic. When we are in the Dream Stage, we are using the client's proudest accomplishments, core skills and strengths, and deepest values to create something with which we can explore and experiment. Alan could see for himself that there was a disconnect between his current situation and where he truly wanted to be with his business. By taking the time to describe a new vision, Alan felt much more "vibrant and full of possibilities" than he had just a few weeks before. He was able to discuss this with his partner

and achieve an amicable separation—something he had thought about but not acted on for over three years.

### **Stage Three: Design**

Once clients bring their dream into clear view, it is time to design a plan for the dream. The Design Stage relates to the ongoing dance between coach and client of defining, performing, and assessing experiments. What might the client do that leads in the direction of the dream? Again the language is deliberate in its positive or neutral emphasis. Design implies a plan or an impression or a mock-up of some future reality. When children play with building blocks, they will often knock down an initial design just for fun. There is no assumption that an initial design is the final design. Experimentation is the order of the day. The ultimate design incorporates as many of the skills and strengths of the client as is possible or appropriate. Over the course of Alan's coaching relationship, once he had identified a new process with which to experiment (the economic exchange process), he began applying his new learnings to marketing and sales. He began to integrate his current insights with what had worked successfully for him in the past. He was literally able to renegotiate with his own clients on the spot when he realized that his work with them was not shared appropriately.

### **Stage Four: Destiny**

Clients step into the Destiny Stage once they have begun to implement the concrete actions and practices they identified and designed in the previous stage for realizing their desired future. The Destiny Stage is a time for clients to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments they are making in either moving toward or actually realizing their dream. At the conclusion of this fourth stage, clients usually have two choices: they may signal the successful completion of the coaching relationship, or they may choose to move to a second cycle of Appreciative Coaching by expanding on other elements of their dream or creating a new dream. In either

case, it is an opportunity for coaches to help clients reflect on the work they have done and appreciate the results they have achieved.

Alan had no difficulty identifying the real-world, tangible outcomes and benefits he realized from his coaching. He experienced significant increases in billable projects and positive prospects and was looking forward to a very successful year. Although not all clients enjoy such dramatic, positive results, all our coaching research subjects and coaching clients report positive results from engaging in an Appreciative Coaching process. This process of emphasizing the positive seems (in most cases) to generate positive feelings, increased energy, and a deeper connection to oneself. Exploring one's innermost desires turns out to be a pleasurable experience!

## Summary

In this chapter, we presented an Appreciative Coaching case study and brought in the perspectives of both the client and the coach as they moved through the four stages of our coaching model. We also briefly introduced the five principles underlying our approach and sought to demonstrate their presence during the different stages. Our intent was to give you a feeling for the basic Appreciative Coaching method that we have found to be so successful.

Subsequent chapters will focus in more detail on the elements of our appreciative approach and will offer a repertoire of tools for your own toolbox. But first, we will give you some of the history and background of four positive methodologies, including AI, that inform the practice of Appreciative Coaching.