



## APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FOR THE BERTONI & LAREO LAW FIRM

Because certain changes had sprung among the staff, the firm wanted to close the year 2002 revamping its operating style. One of the firm's two main partners had traveled to Washington to carry out his function on the Human Rights Commission of the OAS, an appointment that brought him international prestige. The law firm, however, under Mr. Lareo's leadership, carried on with its work at full steam, but the staff had never had the chance to sit down and, together, project the future from this new standpoint.

Mr. Lareo asked Visión Compartida to organize a facilitated session to enable his personnel to work through the new position of the firm. We proposed an appreciative inquiry for the law firm's 12-person team, broken down into two sessions.

At the first session we worked on the positive nucleus. The participants themselves were surprised at how much strength, as well as a firm sense of belonging, had arisen during this phase.

As we moved on to the second phase, that of imagining or dreaming up the firm in ten years' time, another mood became evident. One of the participants confessed that "I cannot do this part of the assignment: I cannot think forward ten years..." With the assistance of another participant, and with a set of new thought-provoking questions, we calmly guided her along.

Frequently someone in the group ponders the impossibility of a given thing, thinking that what he or she wishes is unattainable when confronted with that which he or she "knows" will most definitely happen. Nonetheless, a person's own behavior within a system may very well act as a daily engine of change and even innovation. Our set of mental models on that which is the absolute and irrevocable truth could be crippling. Not in this case however.

When the group was assigned the topic of self-management, we thought that they would need our assistance. But, far from it, the leader of the process-one of the group members-formulated a unique way of recounting his positive experiences. The rest of the participants soon took flight and, with a constructive sense of humor, transformed individual experiences into group experiences in a manner that we, the facilitators, had not even thought of.

After four phases, the firm took on many projects that were proposed as a team. Fifty percent of these projects-taking on international characteristics and partnering with other firms-have already been carried out, a fact that demonstrates a true positive change in the organization.

### *FACILITATING TEAM.*

*Appreciative Inquiry Coordinator: Sergio Abrevaya,*

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