Advanced Audit Interviewing Techniques

Kevin Posey

One problem with ISO audits

AUDIT CHECKLIST
FAIL Audit Satisfactory
FAIL Non-conformances

AUDIT ALL THE THINGS!
One problem with ISO audits

Poor Interviewing Skills!

- Interviewing is a core audit skill, but
  - Limited training opportunities and materials exist
  - Limited practical examples are available

- And let’s face it……
  - Auditors are not typically chosen for their awesome communication skills

But there’s a glimmer of hope!!
Improvement vs. Compliance

Audit Program Goals
Audit Program Goals - enhanced

Continual Improvement

Enhanced with Appreciative Inquiry

Efficiency/Effectiveness

Compliance

Deliver more value

AI Five Essentials

1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
2. Inquire into exceptionally positive moments
3. Share stories and identify life-giving forces
4. Create shared images of a preferred future
5. Innovate and improvise ways to create that future

Benefits of Appreciative Inquiry

- Releases positive conversation in the Organization
- Expanding Web of Inclusion and Positive Relationships
- Self reinforcing learning communities

Appreciative Inquiry “The 4D Model”

- Strategic Focus: Topic Choice
- Discover: “Where are we at our best?” Appreciating
- Destiny (Build): “Making it happen” Sustaining
- Dream (Imagine): “Envisioning what could be” Innovating
- Design: “What should be—the ideal organization” Strategizing

(modified from Cooperrider & Whitney, www.positivechange.org)
Assumptions of AI

• In every society, organization or group, something works.
• What we focus on becomes our reality.
• Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
• The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.

Assumptions of AI

• People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future when they carry forward parts of the past
• The parts of the past we carry forward should be the best parts
• It is important to value differences

And perhaps most importantly

*The language we use creates our reality*
Audit Interviews using AI

• Participants involved should be informed in advance of the appreciative nature
• Ask unconditional positive questions
  – Organizations move in the direction of what they study; don’t study failure
• Constructive conversations with a wide audience
  – focus on the desires and possibilities
• Inclusive; all positive input is welcome

Audit Interviews using AI

• Open ended questions derived from ideal scenarios
• Questions crafted to get a storytelling response, describe an imaginary outcome in which the best of a process is revealed
• Explore both past and future scenarios
Example – Nonconformance process

Leading question: Do you notify management when a nonconformance occurs?
Evidence based: Can you show me evidence that you notify management….
Open ended: What are the reporting requirements for nonconformances?

Nonconformance/Noncompliance

WHAT DO YOU MEAN
WE WERE NON-COMPLIANT?
Example – Nonconformance process

Appreciative Audit: Tell me about a time you discovered a nonconformance that saved the day.

Appreciative Audit Questions

Think of a time in your involvement in (process, area, department, or division) when you have felt most excited, or most engaged.

– What were the forces and factors that made it a great experience?
– What was it about you, others, and your organization that made it a peak experience for you?
– How can we apply this to another (process, area, department, or division)?
Appreciative Audit Questions

• What do you value or enjoy most about (process, area, department, or division)?

• What are your organization's best practices in (process, area, department, or division)?
  – Are they consistently applied across all (process, area, department, or division)?

Success baby likes best practices….
Appreciative Audit Questions

• What are the unique aspects of your culture that most positively affect the effectiveness or continual improvement of (process, area, department, or division) and its work?

• What is the core factor that "gives life" to your (process, area, department, division)?

Appreciative Audit Questions

• Tell me about a time when finding and correcting a problem with the (process, area, department, or division) saved the day.
Summary

• Appreciative inquiry can help us move our organizations up the audit program goal pyramid.

Continual Improvement

Efficiency/Effectiveness

Compliance

Summary

• AI counterbalances weaknesses of conformance based audits; look past establishment and implementation, checklist audits, overkill, to E/E and CI.

Audit Satisfactory

Non-conformances

Audit Checklist

AUDIT

ALL THE

THINGS

FALL

FALL

fail

fail

false
Summary

- AI can help us identify, spread, and carry forward best practices and continual improvement.
- Conformance is not sacrificed.

References for further research

THANK YOU
Success.