



Cooperrider Center
FOR APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry:

A Strengths-Based Approach to Change that Sticks

Dr. Lindsey Godwin



Familiarity with Appreciative Inquiry?

Level 0: Wait, What?

AI? I thought we were here to learn about artificial intelligence.

Level 1: AI-Curious

I've heard of it, and I'm here to find out what all the buzz is about.

Level 2: AI-Friendly

I know the basics and I've started to use some of it in my work.

Level 3: AI-Enthusiast

I use it regularly and I'm ready to go deeper.

Our Flow

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

3 Core Ideas & How to put them into practice

Appreciative Inquiry's 5-D framework for leading change that sticks

Reflections & Questions



Across roles, industries,
and teams—we're all
working to **create value**
and make meaningful
contributions.



Problem-Solving Creates value by...

Helping us see what's
missing, broken, or at risk.

Pointing to what
needs fixed.

Telling us **what to avoid**—
but not what to grow.



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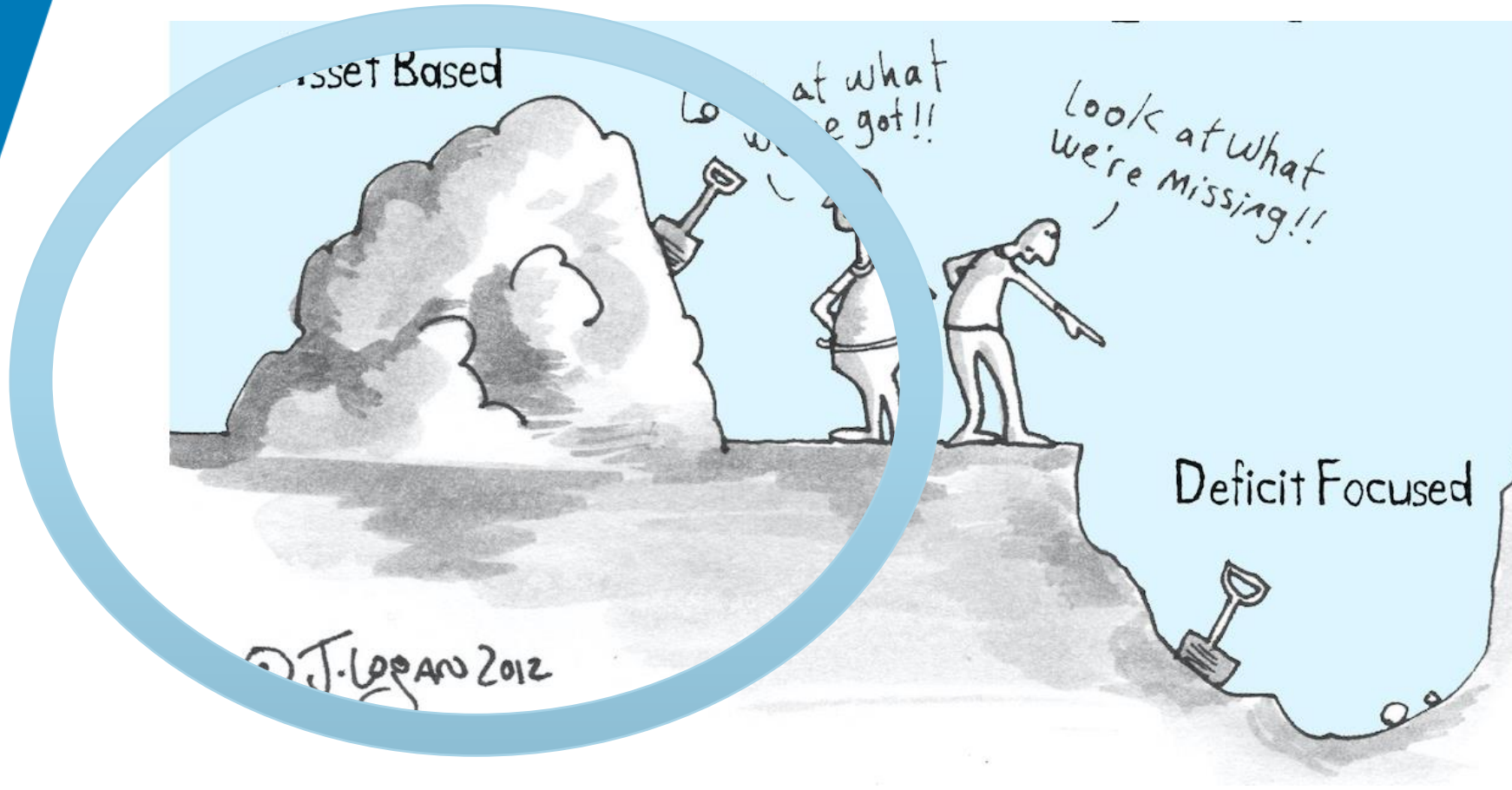
Appreciative Inquiry Creates value by...

Helping us see what's
working, energizing, and
full of potential—
and what we can grow.

Not ignoring problems, but
starting by building on
assets and strengths.



Both Add Value in Different Ways



appreciatively inquiring

verb //i-**pree**-shee-AY-tiv-lee in-kwahyuh-**ing**/

1. The act of asking questions that focus on strengths, values, and possibilities rather than deficits or problems.
2. Intentionally exploring what gives life, energy, and meaning to people, teams, and systems.

*When have we
been at our best,
and what made
it possible?*

40+ Years of Impact around the Globe



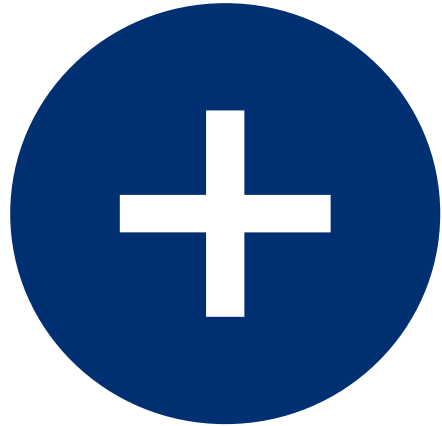
The Global Hub for Appreciative Inquiry





- It's just positive thinking
- We can't talk about problems
- It's one specific method that always looks the same

Appreciative Inquiry's 3 Core Ideas



**Every system has
something that's
working**



**Asking questions create
change**



**We move in the
direction of what we
focus on**

Core Idea #1

Every System Has Something that is Working

Our Deficit Default & the Alternative

**If you were to shine a spotlight on
something that's working in your team or
work life right now, even in the midst of
complexity, what would it be?**

A professional stage spotlight is positioned on the right side of the frame, casting a bright, circular beam of light. The beam illuminates a thick, white plume of smoke that rises from the bottom and spreads across the center of the image. The background is a deep, solid black, which makes the light and smoke stand out prominently. The overall mood is dramatic and focused, symbolizing the act of highlighting a specific point of interest.

What is working?



Success is not an accident;
it's something we have to
create on purpose.

Carrie Green

“quotezancy”

Our Unwritten Rule

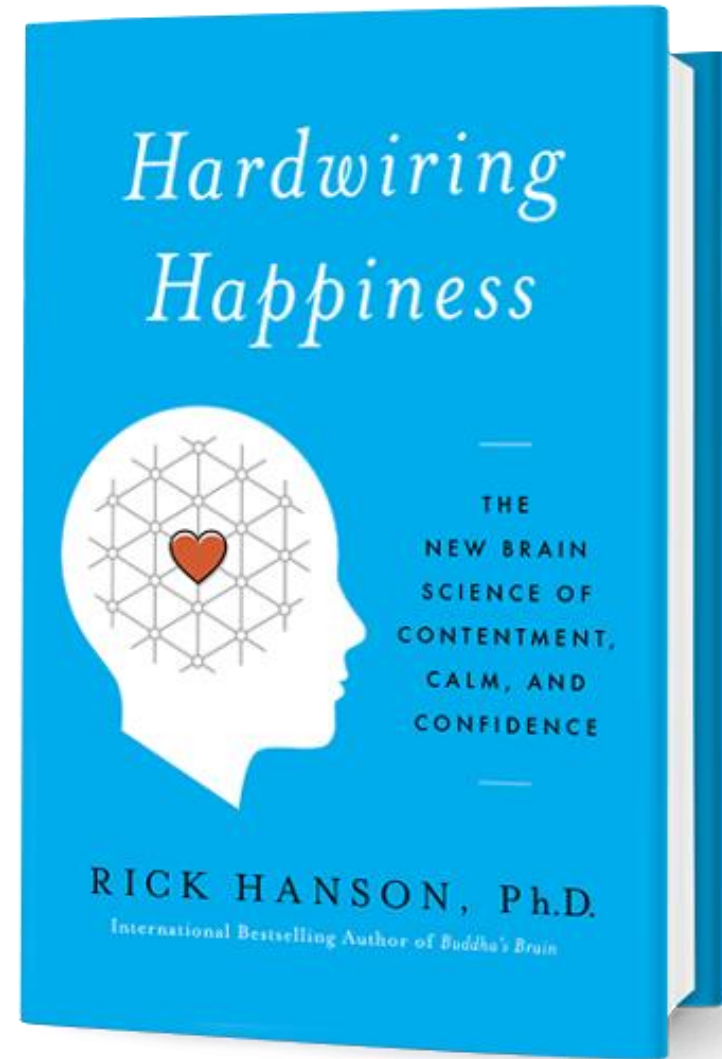


**“Fix what’s wrong.
The rest will take care of
itself.”**

Research, media and even our meetings reinforce a **deficit mindset** spotlighting problems instead of possibilities.

**“The mind is like
Velcro for **negative**
experiences and
Teflon for **positive**
ones.”**

~ Dr. Rick Hanson



Why?

**And Why
Does It
Matter?**



Once upon a time... *Same data. Two rooms.*



The first room: What's broken? The second room: What's working?





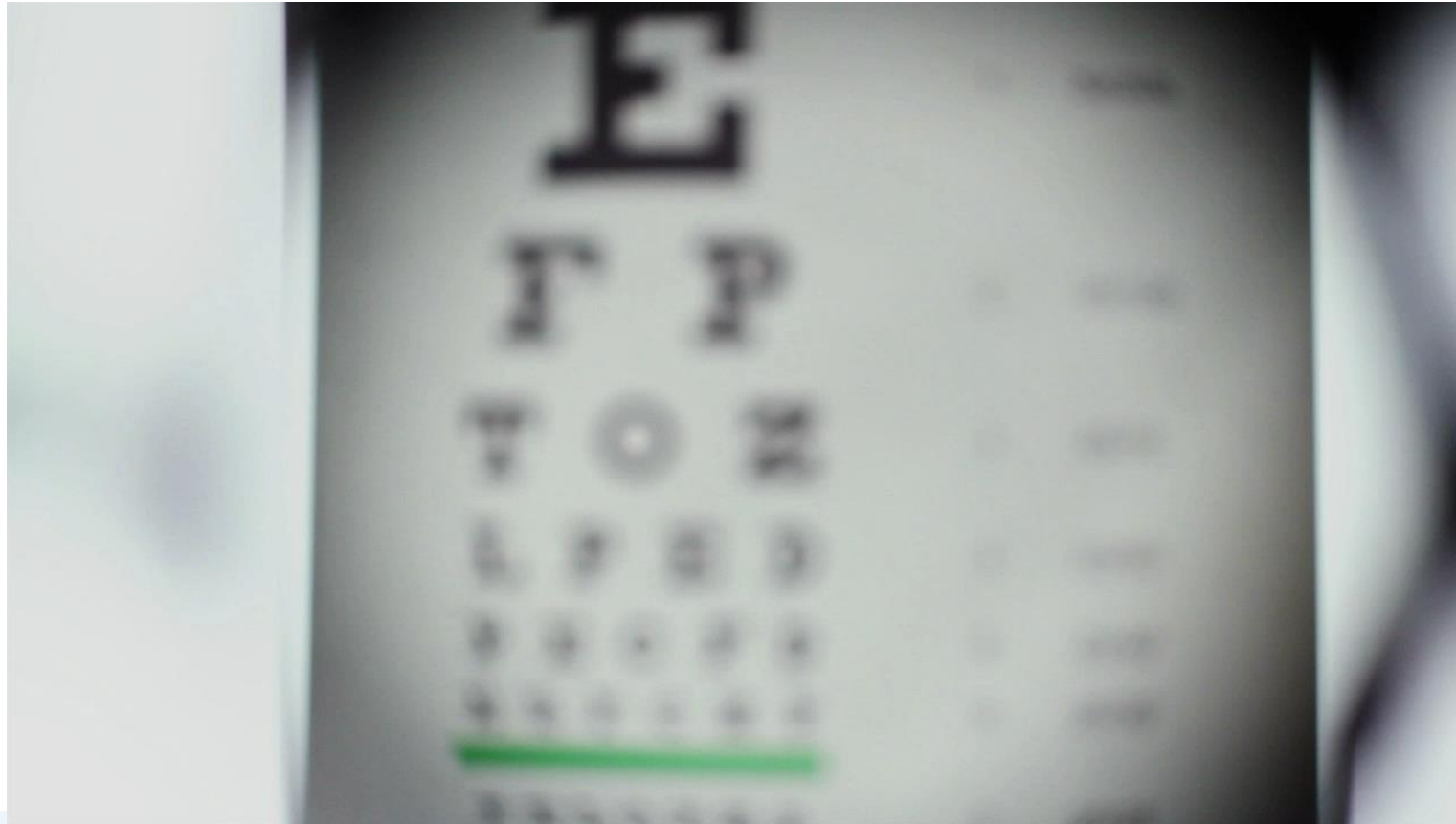
*How are you so upbeat?
Did you see this data?*



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Every system has something that's working.
The question is whether you're looking for it.



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Implication for your work

Starting with what's already working isn't ignoring the hard stuff.

It's finding the foundation you can actually build on.



Core Idea #2: Asking Questions Creates Change

Our Most Underestimated Leadership Tool

What are you going to eat for dinner?





QUESTIONS
HIJACK OUR BRAINS

Under the Hood in our Head...

“Questions trigger a mental reflex known as **instinctive elaboration**.

When a question is posed, it takes over the brain's thought process. And when your brain is thinking about the answer to a question, it can't contemplate anything else.”



Not All Questions Are Created Equal



The Tale of Two Managers

Manager B asks: *“What strengths do you bring to this project? Where do you want to stretch and grow? And how can I support you?”*



The team member feels seen. They speak up more, take initiative, and look for growth opportunities. Performance improves—and the leader’s belief is confirmed.



Generative Questions
“Open” our Lens

✗ Questions That Often Close Down

“What’s our weakest performing area?”

“Who’s to blame for this?”

“Why aren’t we where we should be?”

“Do you really think we can pull this off?”

“What’s keeping people from showing up?”

✓ Questions That Open Up

“Where do we have the most room for growth and learning?”

“What can we learn from this to do better next time?”

“Where have we made progress—and how can we build on it?”

“What strengths do we have that make this possible?”

“When are people most engaged—and how do we invite more of that?”



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Every Question Points Us in a
Direction

**If Every
Question is an
Intervention,
Ask What You
Want...**

More of (not less of)?

To start (not stop)?

To create (not remove)?

To support (not prevent)?

To reinforce (not weaken)?

To APPRECIATE in VALUE

From Jackie Kelm: Appreciative Engagement

Questions Point the Way



The questions you're already asking are already **changing things**.



The only question is — in which direction?



Exit interview

vs.

stay conversation.



Why is there resistance?

vs.

Where have we seen this work?



What's not working on this team?

vs.

When has this team surprised you?



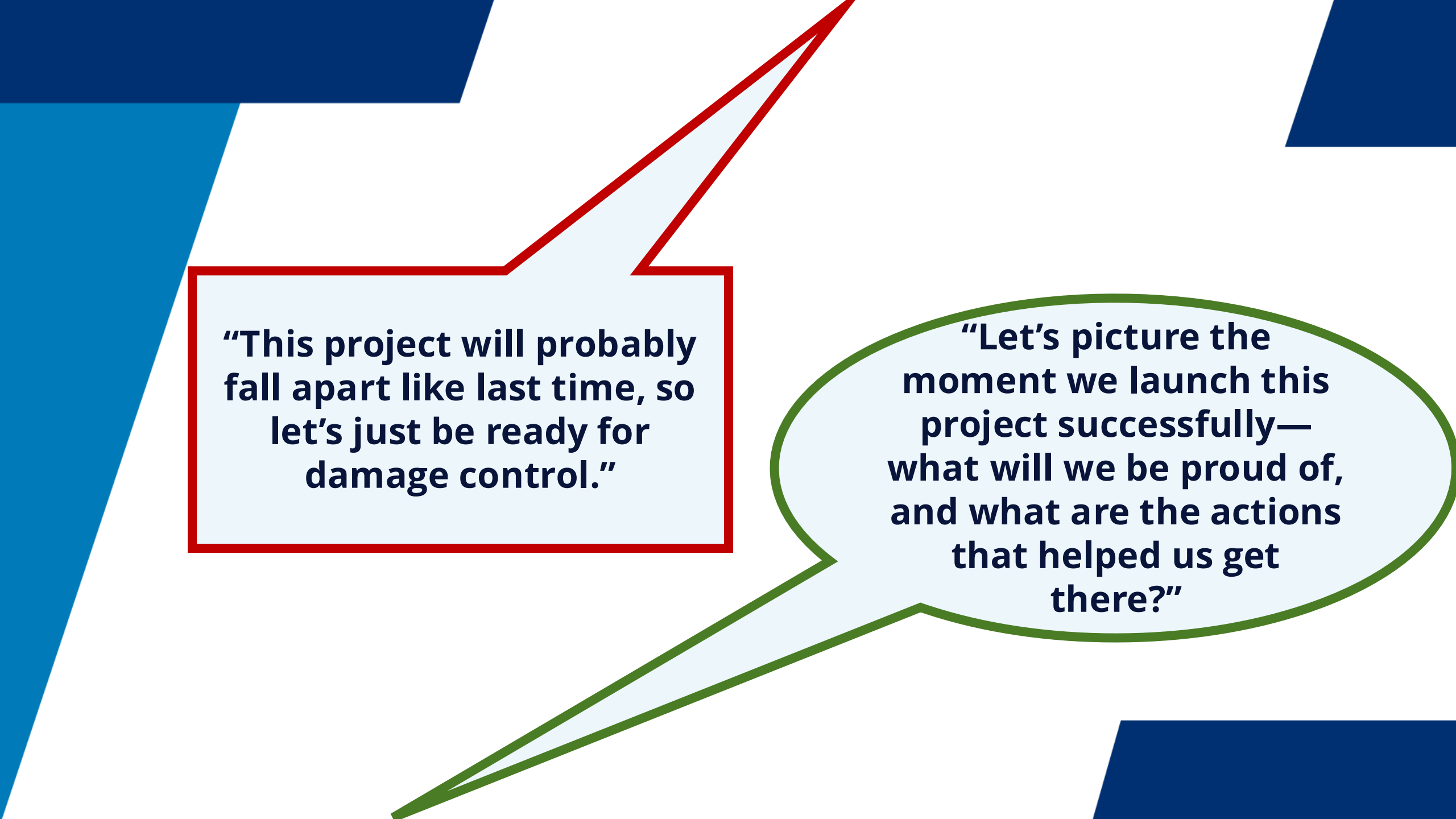
Same situation. **Different question. Completely different conversation.**

Core Idea #3: **We Move in the Direction We** **Focus On**

Energy Follows Attention

"Don't Hit It Into the Woods"





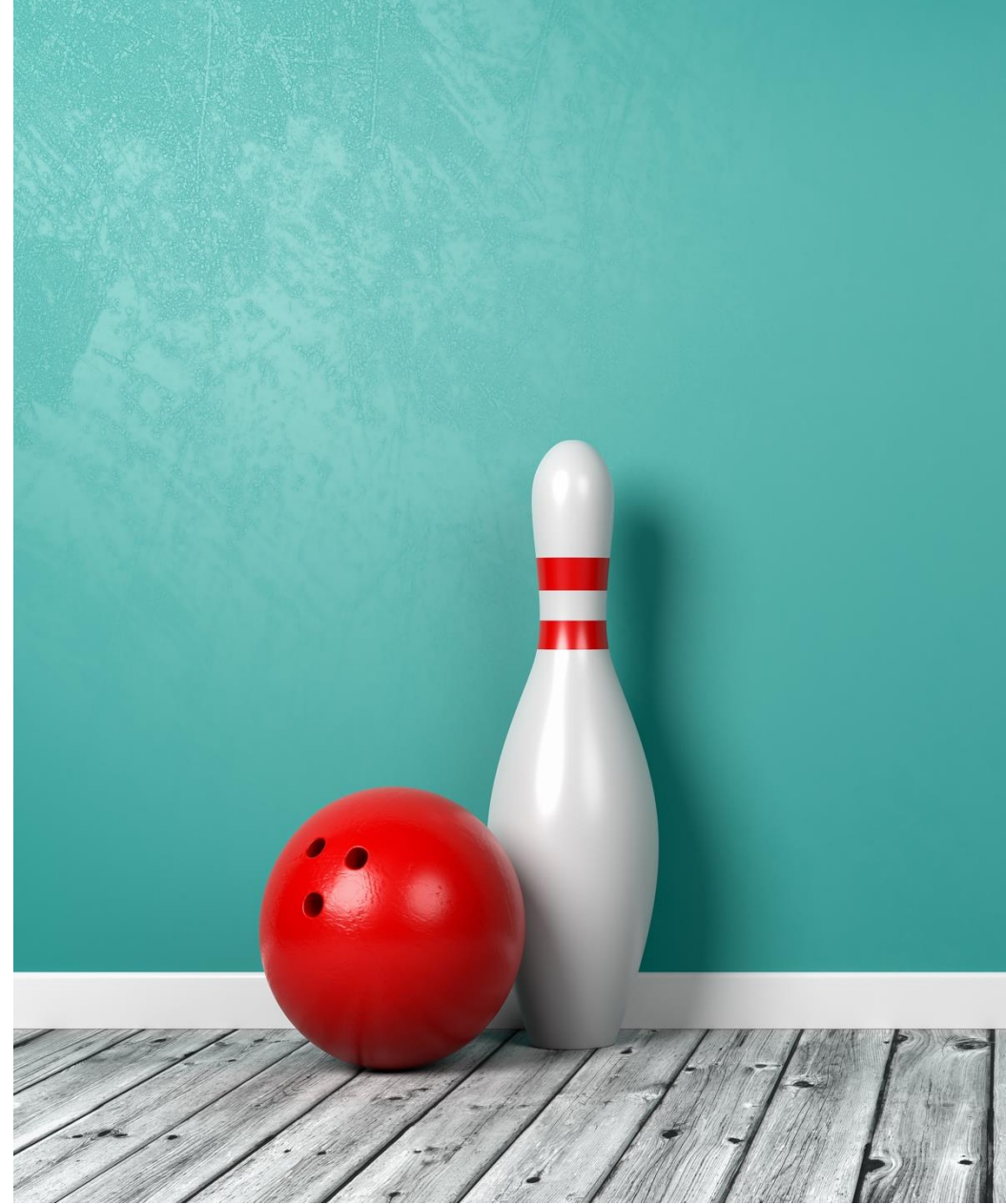
“This project will probably fall apart like last time, so let’s just be ready for damage control.”

“Let’s picture the moment we launch this project successfully—what will we be proud of, and what are the actions that helped us get there?”

What Can a Bowling Study Tell Us About Change Leadership?

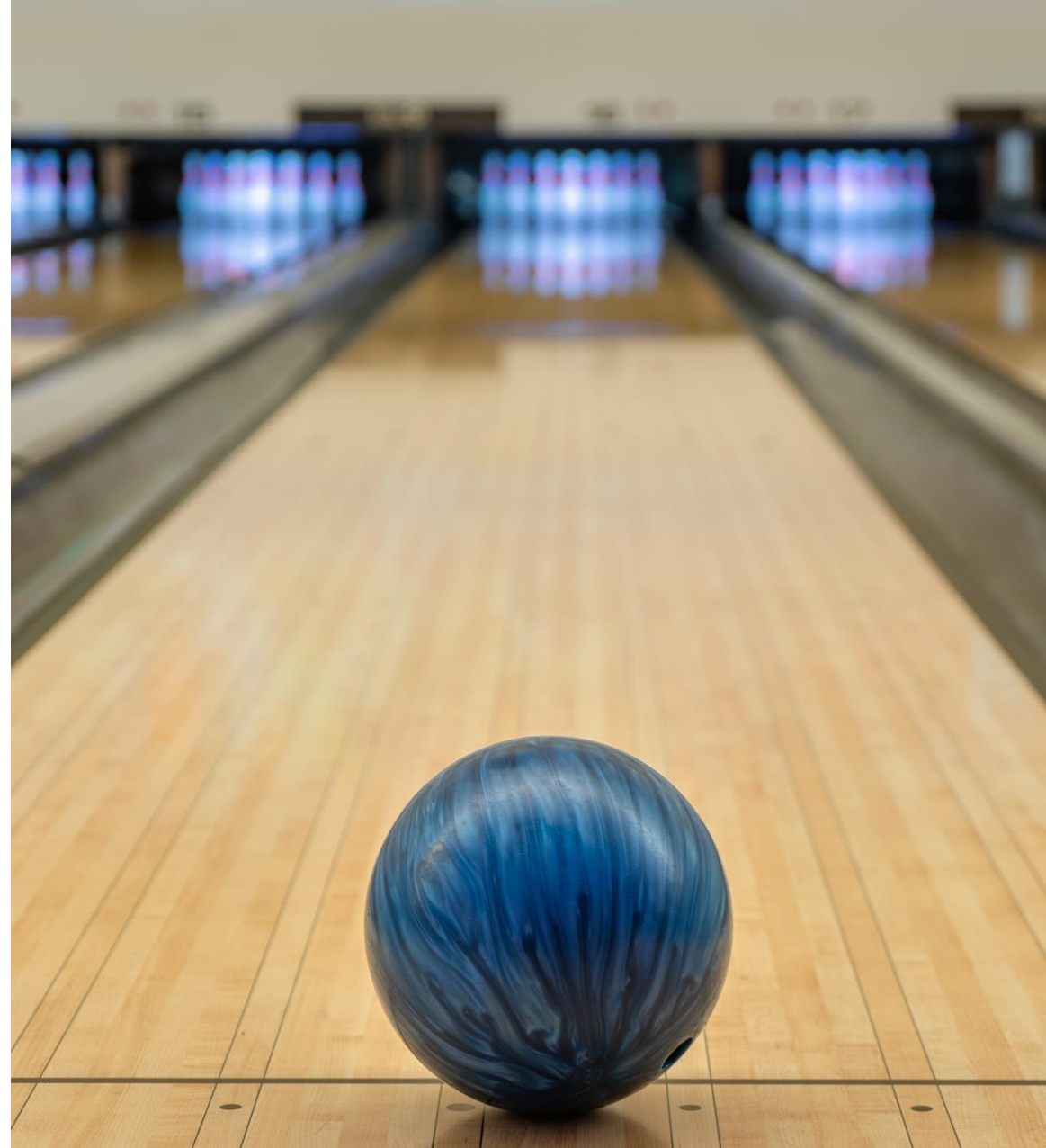
- One Group Got Feedback on their “Progress Moments”
- One Group Got Feedback on their “Mistakes”

Who Improved? By How Much?

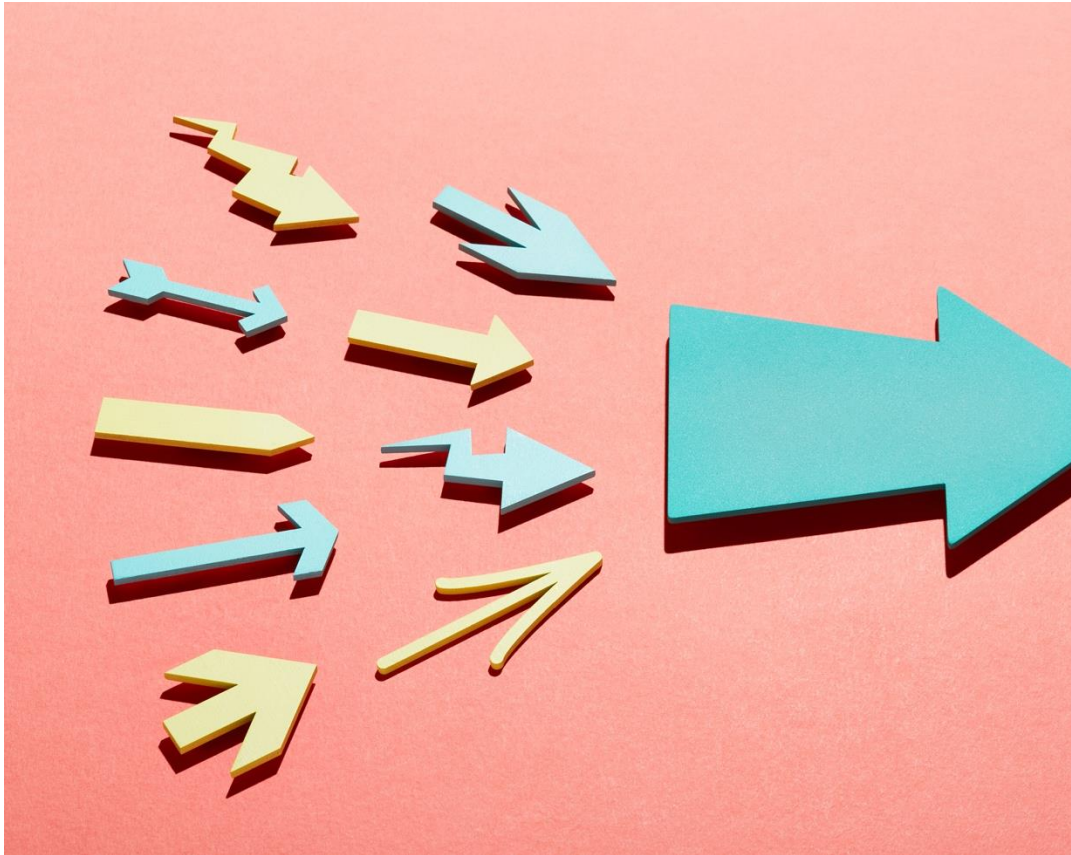


Both Groups Improved...

But the “positive feedback” group improved **100%** more than the “negative” group.

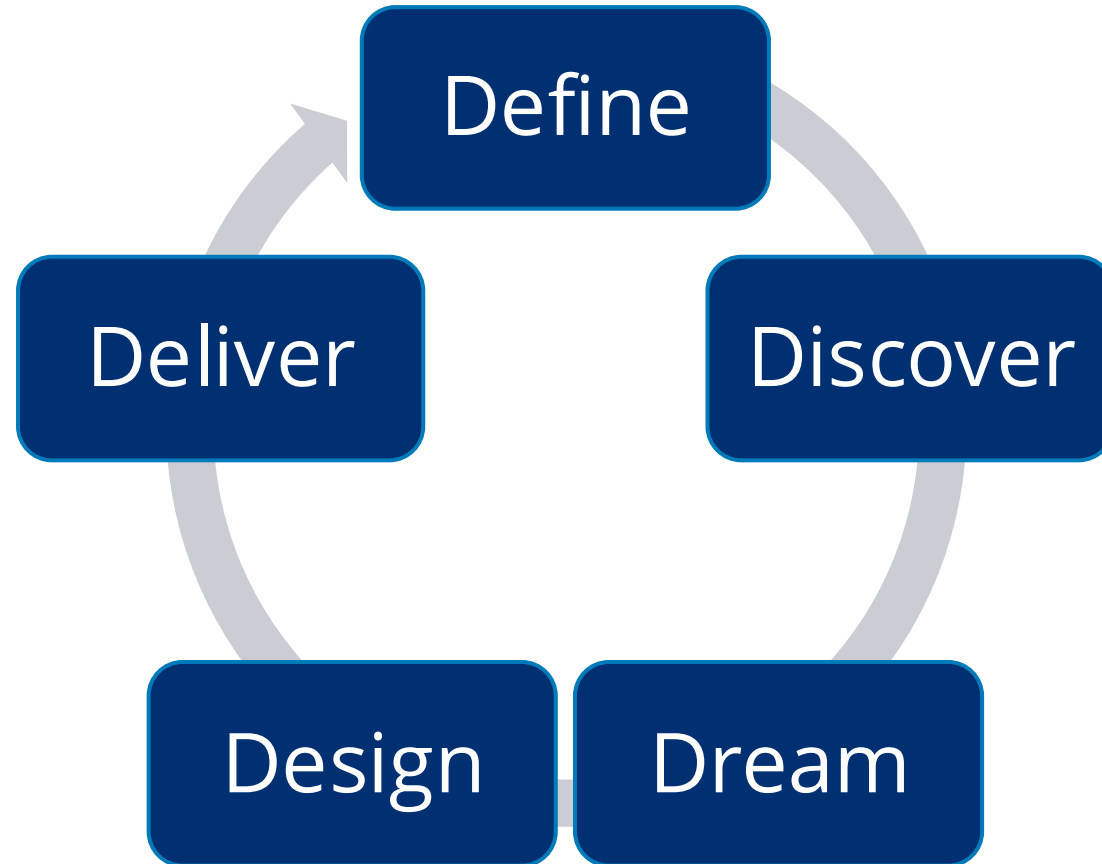


Implication for your work

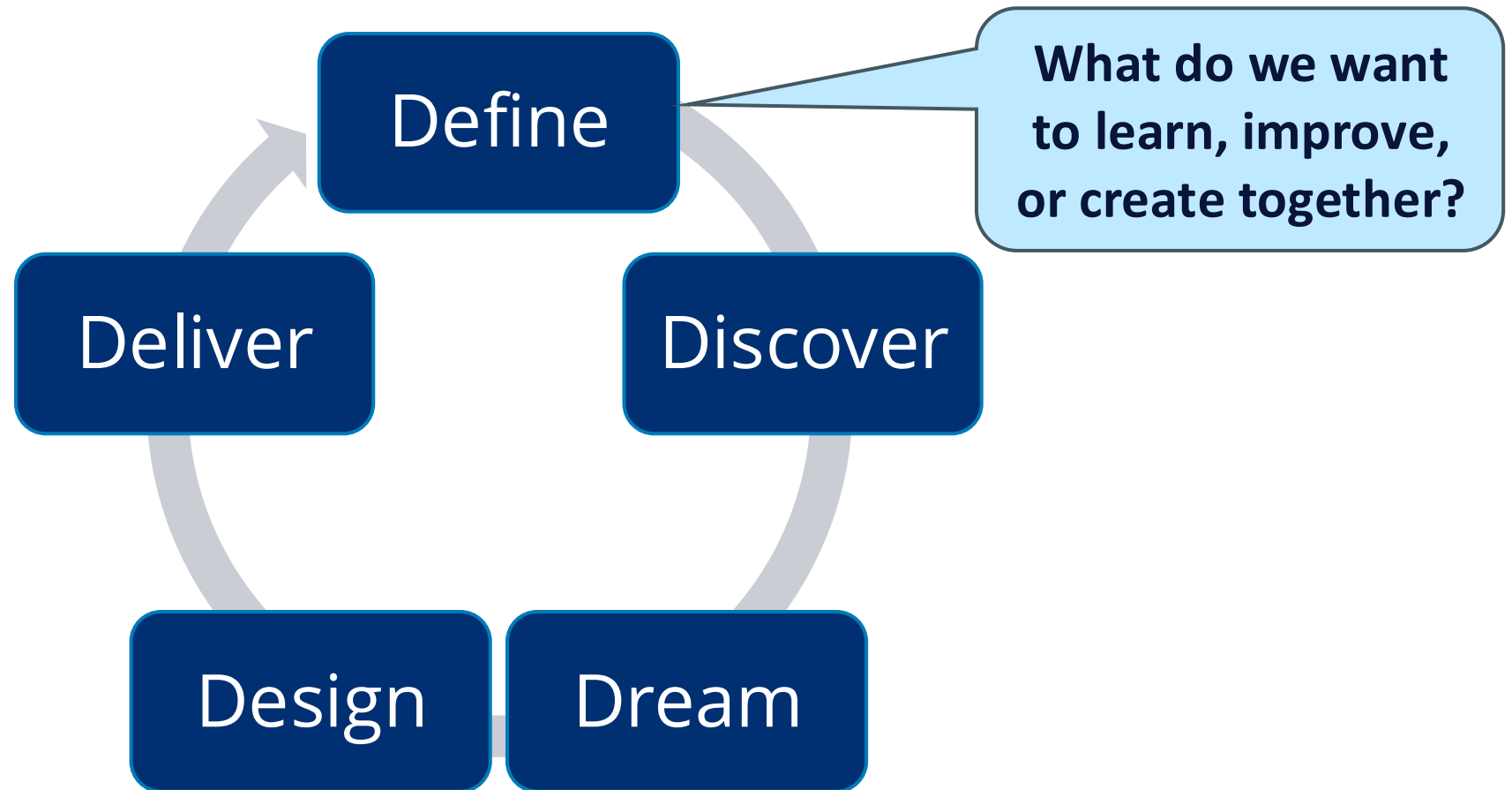


What gets airtime
becomes the
story.

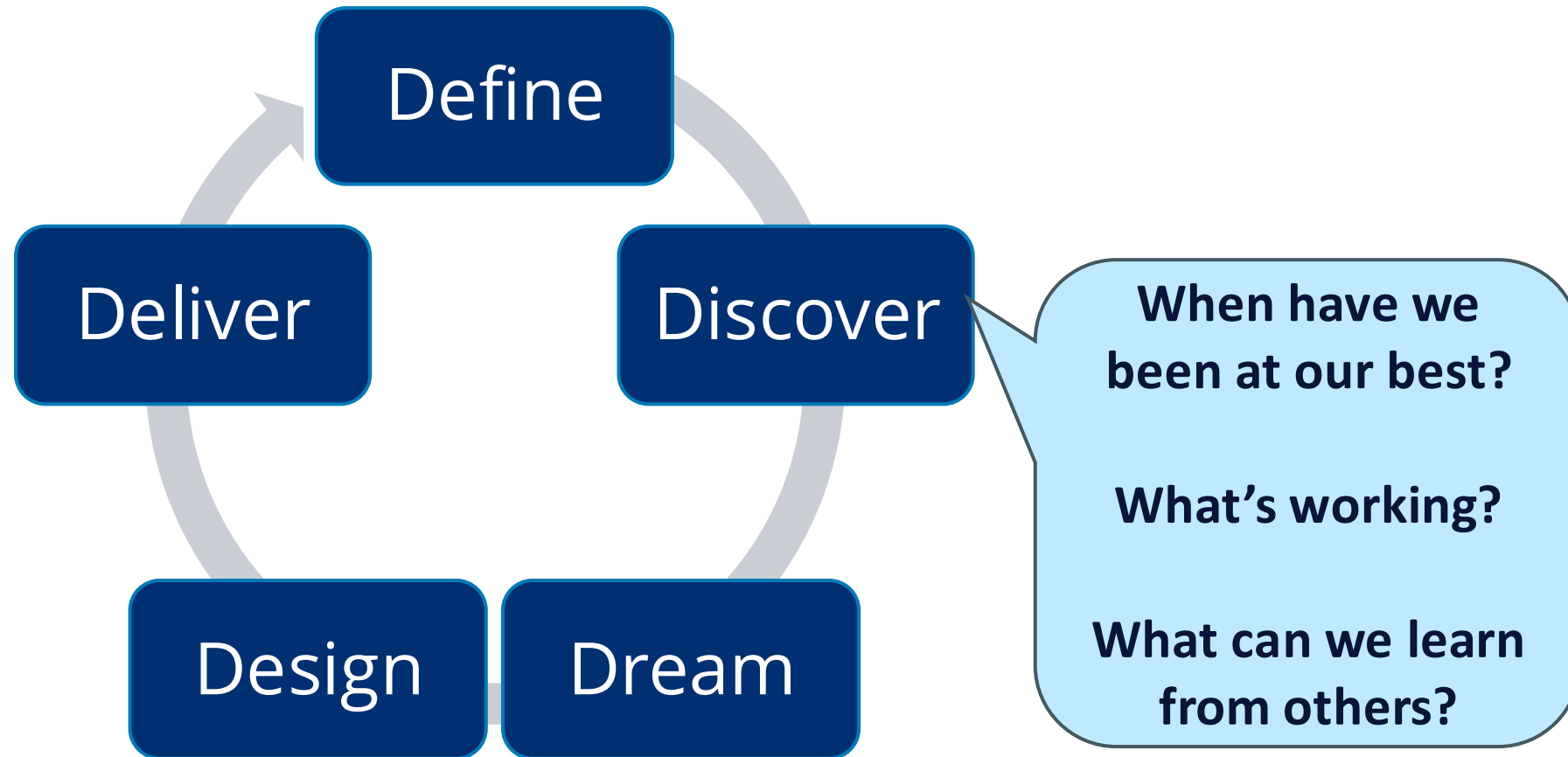
The 5-Ds: A Framework for Change



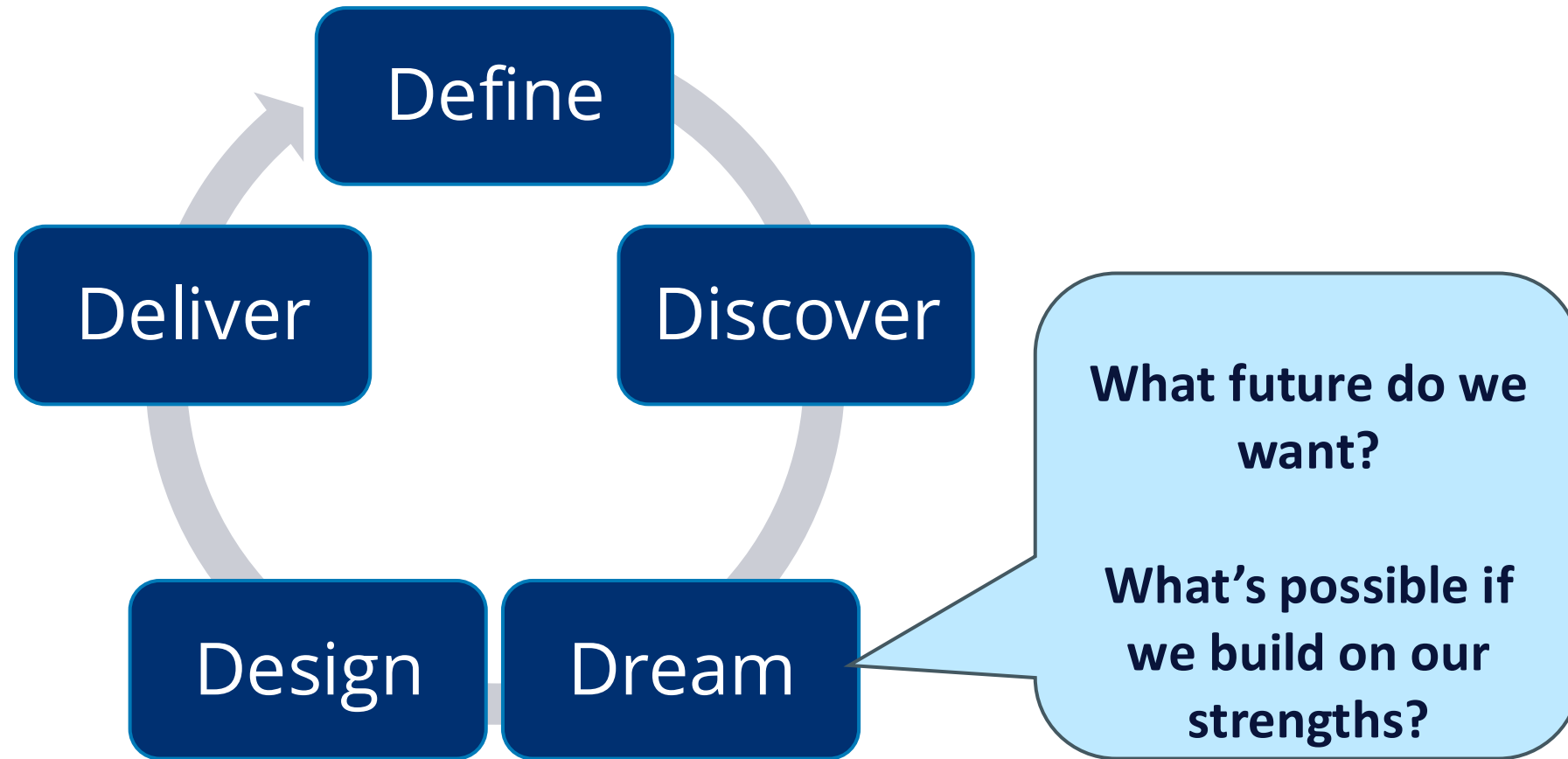
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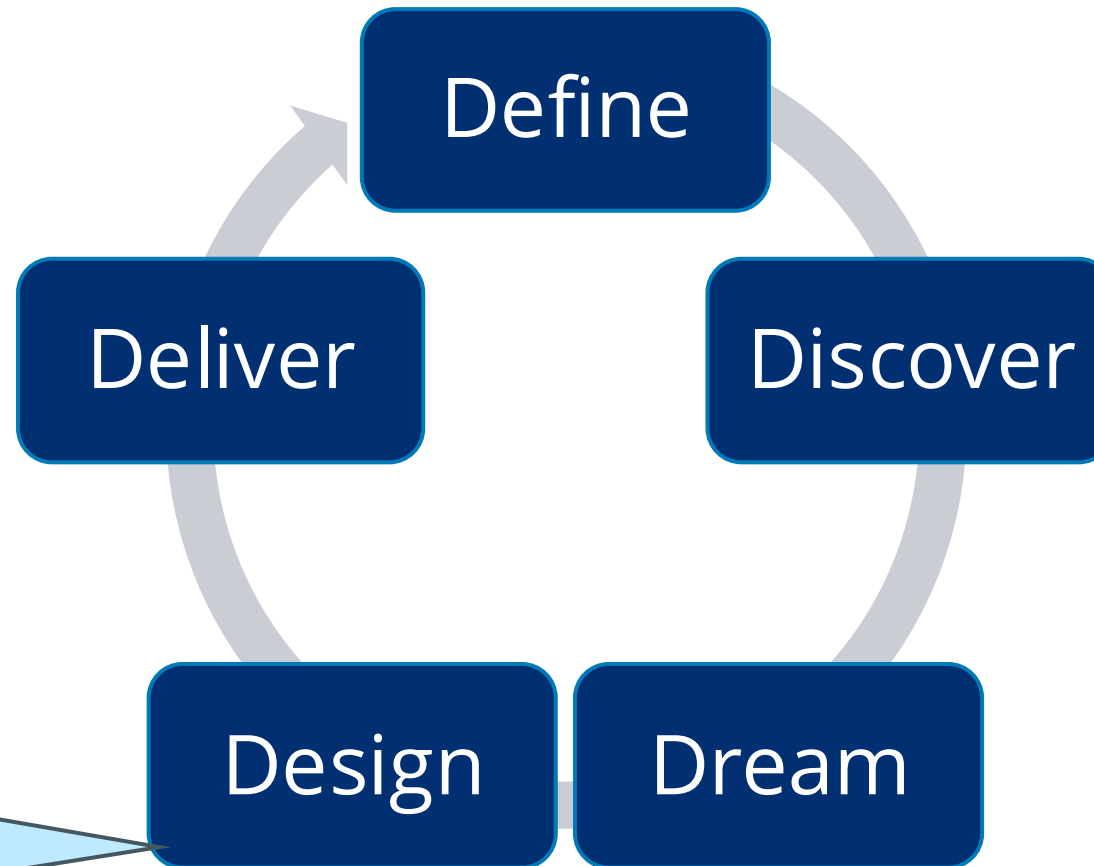
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The 5-Ds: A Framework for Change

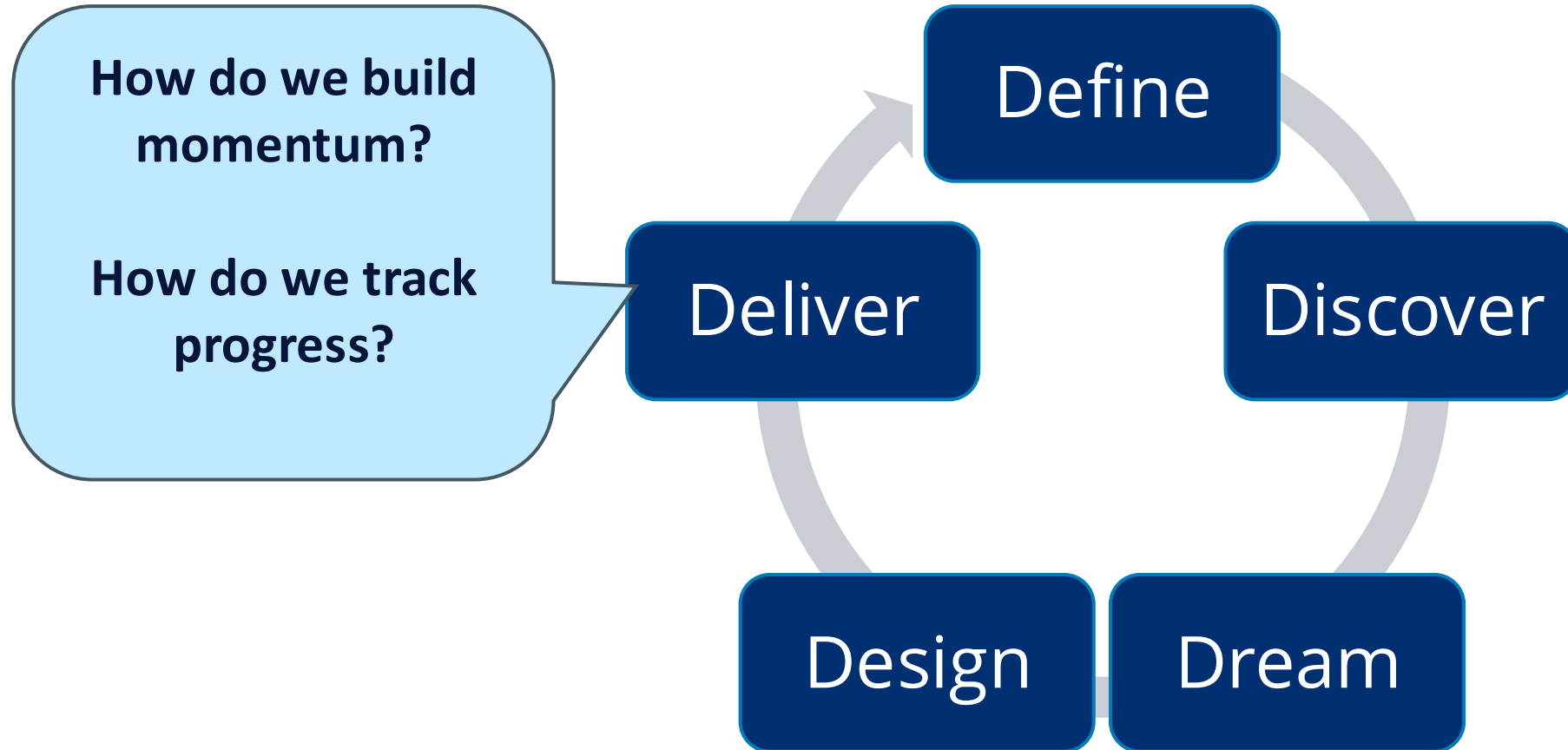


The 5-Ds: A Framework for Change



How might we begin
to move forward?

The 5-Ds: A Framework for Change



Case Example: Dealer Tire's Inclusive Leadership Journey



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ArPractitioner

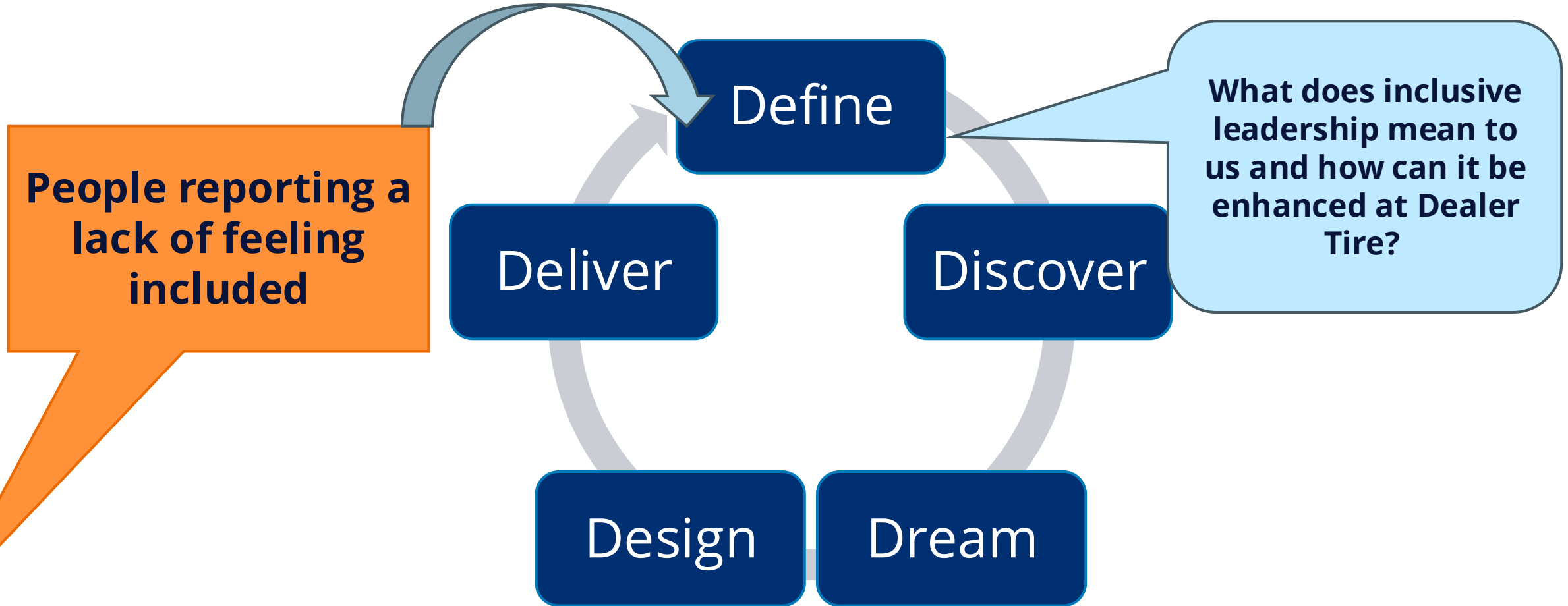
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Angel Walker Angel is a senior organizational development specialist with a focus on talent and performance development. She has over sixteen years of experience in multiple human resources disciplines and industries. Contact: awalker@dealer-tire.com	Olivia Zerapio Olivia is a business development manager for Dealer Tire with over seven years of automotive experience ranging from the customer sales experience side to the call center. In increasing enterprise sales with our dealership, these values guide our interactions in big and small ways. For example, knowing

Co-Creating a Roadmap for Inclusion: Dealer Tire's Conversations on Inclusive Leadership (COIL)

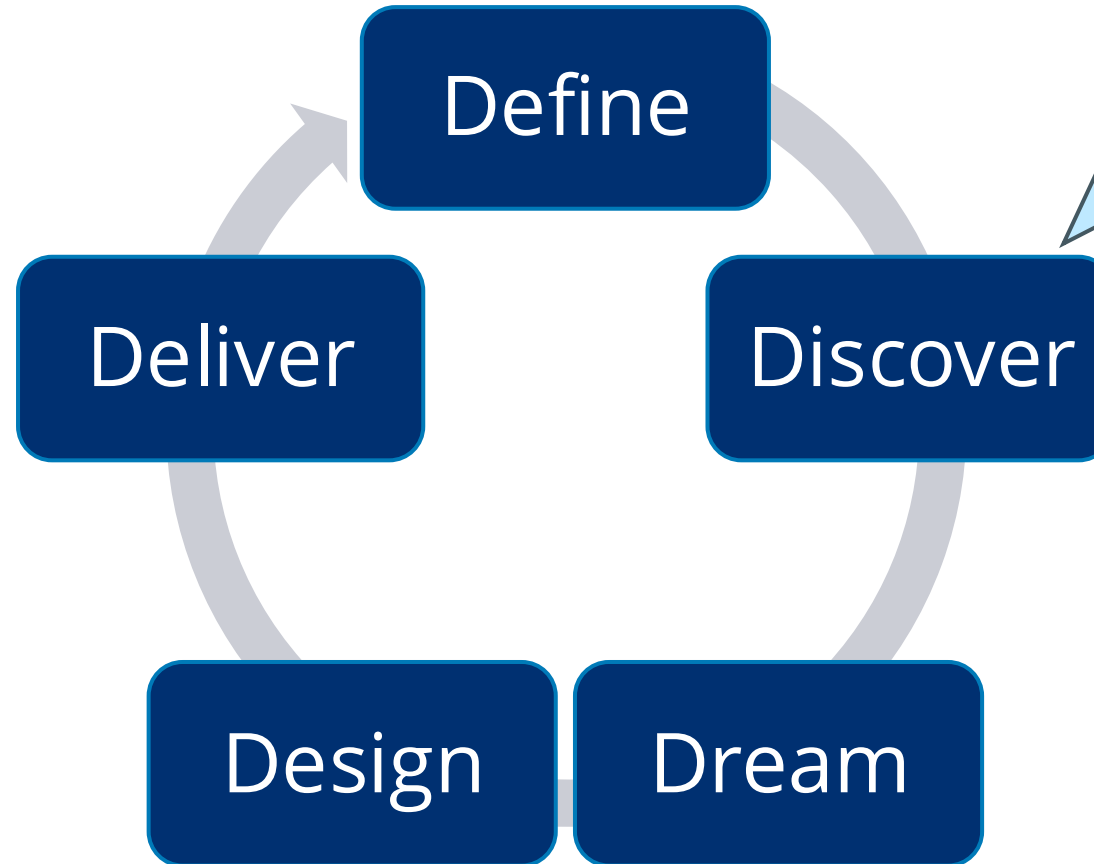
This article builds upon our long history of leveraging AI by detailing Dealer Tire's journey to create a multi-stakeholder, virtual AI-dialogue process called "conversations on inclusive leadership" (COIL).

We are Dealer Tire, a Cleveland, Ohio-based family business founded in 1999 that manages replacement tire and parts programs for more than twenty automotive OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) in the US and China, and serves more than 10,000 automotive dealerships across the US. Peering under the hood of our culture, we have worked to embed an appreciative spirit throughout Dealer Tire, as reflected in our core values (See Figure 1). More than being simply words, these values guide our interactions in big and small ways. For example, knowing

Dealer Tire: The 5-Ds In Real Life



Dealer Tire: The 5-Ds In Real Life

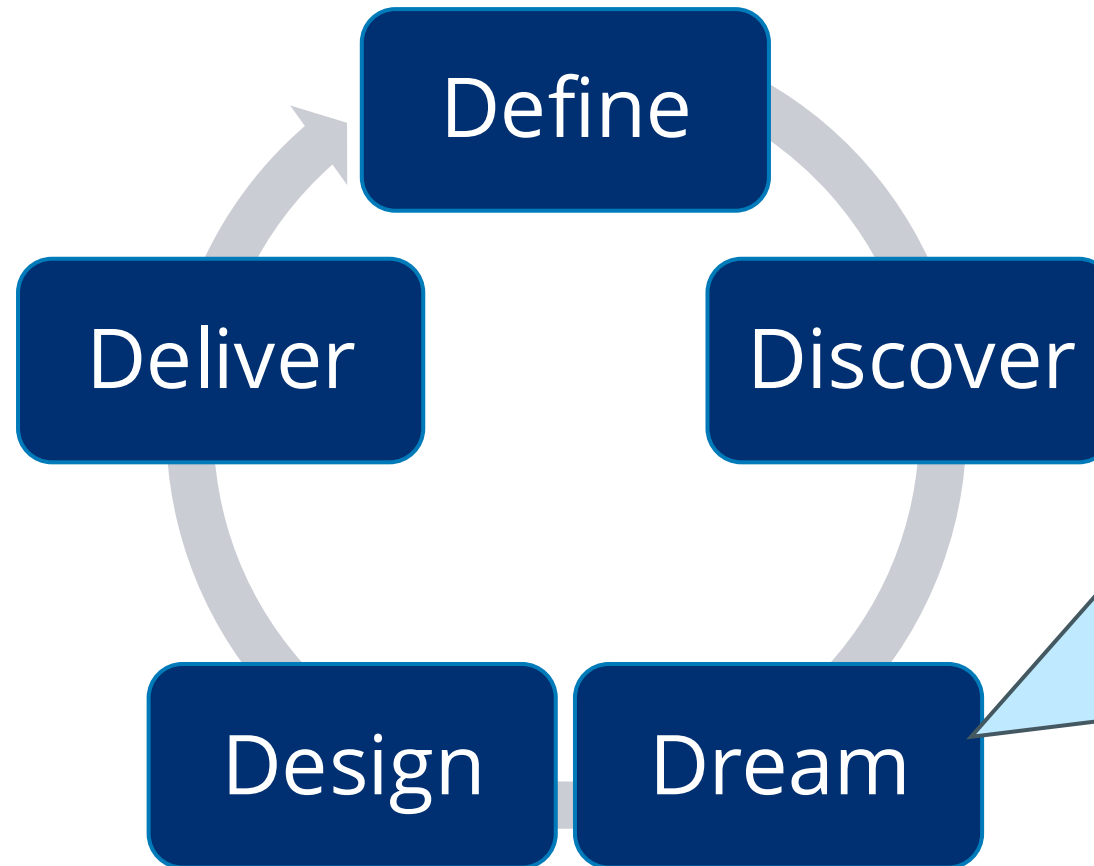


Reflecting on what inclusion means to you personally, when in your past experiences is a time when you felt included?

What actions did others take?

From your perspective, what is Dealer Tire currently doing to foster an inclusive organization?

Dealer Tire: The 5-Ds In Real Life

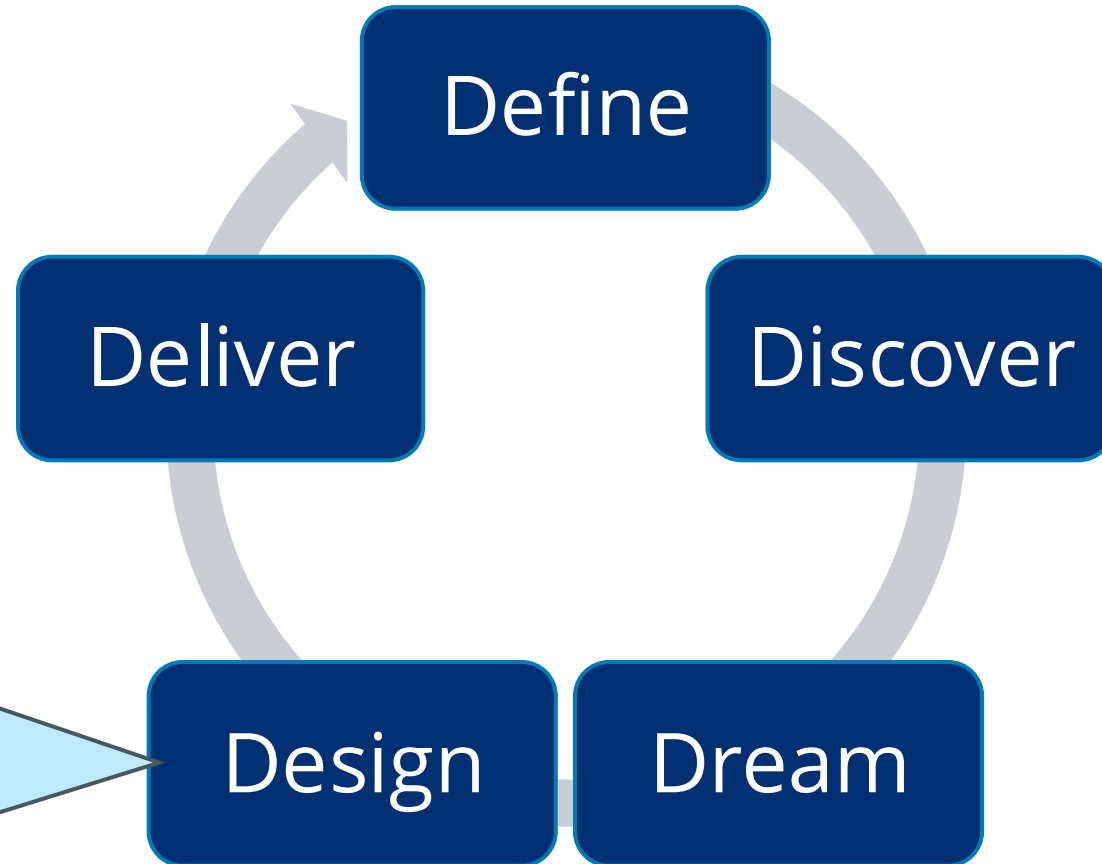


**Imagine that it is 2027
and Dealer Tire has
become recognized as a
leader in workplace
inclusion.**

**What specifically has
happened make you
feel this way?**

**What are you and
others doing now?**

Dealer Tire: The 5-Ds In Real Life

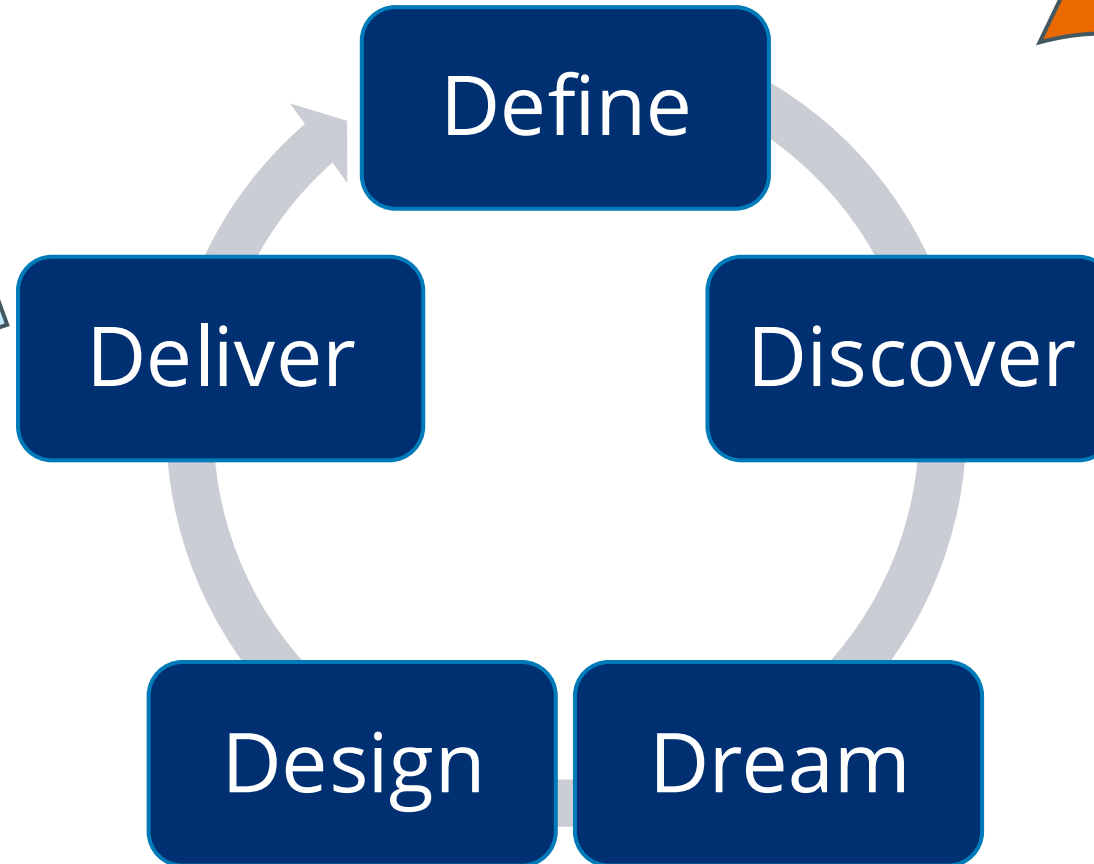


Reflecting on your images of the future, what are 1- 2 small actions you will take to help foster a more inclusive workplace for others across Dealer Tire?

Dealer Tire: The 5-Ds In Real Life

Ongoing Work:

- Expanding the recruiting pool
- Setting specific inclusion goals & metrics
- Examining benefits packages for equity
- Creating trainings on specific leadership development topics (communication, etc.)



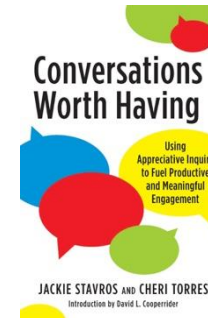
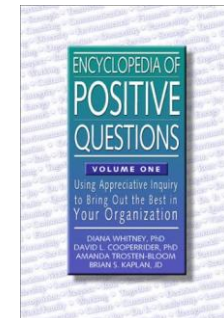
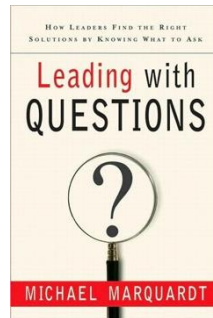
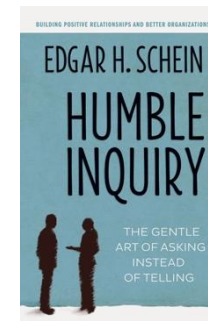
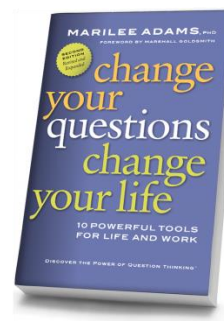
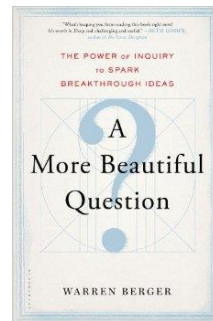
People Commit to
what they Co-create

Closing Reflection + Commitment



What's one appreciative question you want to start asking more often?

More Resources to Explore



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Thank You!

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