## Organization Development Consulting from Inside Out: A Case Study of Talent Development Program of One Global I.T. Company

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### Abstract

One of the world's leading IT company based in Thailand was facing challenges from both inside and outside. The most challenging problem was that most of its employees are from IT background. Though they are experts in IT, they lacked soft skills. To develop the company, HRD department designed a series of workshops to train 40 selected talent employees. They were to get training and articulate knowledge to influence influencees, with the assistance from OD Consultants from the Organization Development Institute of Assumption University.  The project lasted long for four months long.  In each month, each participant was to report his or her progress to OD Consultants. Organization Development Interventions Consultants used were Knowledge Management Appreciative Inquiry, Whole Brain Literacy and Dialogue. The results were: there were evidences that most of participants' soft skills improved. Some participants expanded their influences to larger group of coworkers. Though the project was short, it provided invaluable insight for the OD Consultant. In addition, new models of Appreciative Inquiry, Whole Brain Literacy and Knowledge Management were developed.

*Key words: appreciative inquiry, whole brain literacy, knowledge management, dialogue, the tipping point*

### Introduction

"Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power"

Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching

This Lao Tzu's quote reflects my experience from one of my most challenging Organization Development Projects at a world-class IT company. The company is an IT company, doing financial tasks, outsourced by clients companies, outsourced by leading Corporations especially in banking sector. For years, the company has earned her reputation in the IT industry. The company workforce has been staffed with high knowledgeable   employees in IT.  This resulted in diverse challenges. As the company's business expands, it needs to recruit new employees, sometimes in masses.  There are a lot of problems arising. The most serious problem at that time was: employees were lacking in interpersonal skill. This situation did not only affect the employees' relationship but also clients. The company HRD has come up the with idea of introducing Organization Development Consulting to 40 change agents to improve their interpersonal

skills, which would make positive change. The HRD hoped that such change agents would make positive change to the organization in wider scales.

**Objective**. To help participants apply knowledge including Dialogue, Holistic Life, Dancing Workshop and Art Workshop to create change.

To achieve the main objective as assigned by HRD, the OD Consulting Team came up with the following methodologies.

### Methodology

The Structure of this OD Project is: four experts conducted four separate workshops carried out once a month for four consecutive months. In each month, each participant is to apply what he or she learned to improve their interpersonal skills with his/her three selected influencees. OD Consultants were to consult participants during the process through Organization Development Interventions. There were four one-day workshops delivered:   "Dialogue," "Holistic Life," "Dancing Workshop," and "Art Workshop." All 40 participants were to attend all 4 workshops. From the Company HRD's perspective, such series of workshops would enhance participants' interpersonal skills. Dialogue is the art of science of the delay of judgment. It would help the participants create aware his/her bias and prejudice.  This would result in healthier relationship and co-creation.  Workshop's content can be found in the book, "On Dialogue (Bohm, 2004)." Holistic Life's workshop was introduced to create awareness of work-life balance among participants.  Knowledge in brain science, positive psychology and health were introduced in form of knowledge sharing. Content and step can be found in the book, "Instant Happiness (Thanavut, 2000). Dancing Workshop was geared to help participants learn to link mind and body. It would help participants to cultivate mindfulness.   Content and workshop designed can be found in a book, "Me (Buraphasiricharoonraj, 2006)."  The Art Workshop is aimed to help participants learn art and creativity. It was also aimed to help participants improve their creativity and balance their mind.   This finally would improve participants' interpersonal skills. Workshop's detail can be found in http://www.peseenam.com.

To meet client's objective, the Organization Development Interventions were designed according to the following frameworks:

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These Organization Development interventions were used to promote clients'e learning.  Details and reasons for selection are as follows:

**Knowledge Management (KM).**  Our Knowledge Sharing is a modified model from the SECI Model (Takeuchi and Nonaka, 1995). According to SECI Model, organization knowledge creation has been developed by interaction between tacit knowledge (knowledge from experience) and explicit knowledge (knowledge from recorded sources like books, email and website).
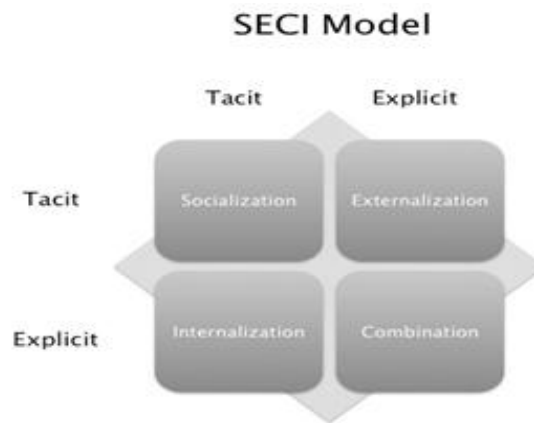


**Figure 1.   SECI Model**
  *Source: Takeuchi I. and Nonaka H. (1995). The Knowledge-Creating Company:
   How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation. New York: Oxford
  University Press*

There are four kind of knowledge creation strategy including Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization. Socialization is basically knowledge sharing activity. In this project, participants learnt from classroom. They would gain both tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. After the class, they must implement what they

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learnt to their target group called, "influencees."  For instance, once participants learn about Dialogue, they are to use Dialogue with their influencees and see what would happen. This means they started "Internalization" of knowledge. Internalization is "learning by doing."  With real practice, by the month end, participants would accumulate more tacit knowledge. When they come to OD Consulting session, they would be ready to share knowledge to others. (Socialization) Sharing knowledge would result in better technical knowledge. At knowledge sharing, OD Consultants would be ready to share their insight through different angles. This means we are blending Externalization to the Socialization process. Externalization is the process where creativity, metaphor and ideas are introduced to participants. Externalization would help participants improve their knowledge.  We used Whole Brain Literacy (WBL) for quick evaluation of each participant so we know which brain's quadrant dominated his/her action. Then we can help each client to expand his/her capability. For instance, if one participant's behavior is I-Control which might affect relationship, we would give an idea how to manage with relationship.  Appreciative Inquiry is also used in this stage to help clients find out the best experience in each situation and leverage it to make better change

Combination is a classification of knowledge. Knowledge emerging from Socialization, Externalization and Internalization can be summarized and classified to have a better focus. This is the process of bringing "meaning" to  knowledge. This knowledge in this stage is helpful for participants and consultants to make better inclusion.  Internalization is also vital for this project. To make transformational change in the company, participants must transfer knowledge from classroom to practice.  They are supposed to apply knowledge to their three influencees and observe the outcome by themselves. Internalization would help participants to gain more experience or tacit knowledge. OD Consultants are to help them to develop sharper and practical knowledge until real change happens in the clients' workplace.

**Appreciative Inquiry (AI).** AI played important roles in every process of the SECI model. Appreciative Inquiry is the science of asking positive questions. It assumes that in every system there is something that functions well. (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) To make change people in the organization can use well-crafted positive questions as a guideline to uncover the good thing in the organization. (Discovery) Then they can extend such good things for wider impacts through the step Dream, Design and Destiny. Dream is a set of simple questions as: "what should be?"  It is actually a step of envisioning. Design is a planning process. Organization members co-create plan to extend what they have envision to the organization. Destiny is the step of taking action.  In this process, The author used the positive question to help clients surface that experience or tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge from Appreciative Inquiry would help participants see opportunities and leverages them to make more impacted changes. The knowledge gained from Appreciative Inquiry would also be helpful for others since it was from the participants' context.  We believe that good stories would enable to develop more good stories and make changes happen.

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Appreciative Inquiry's 4 D Model
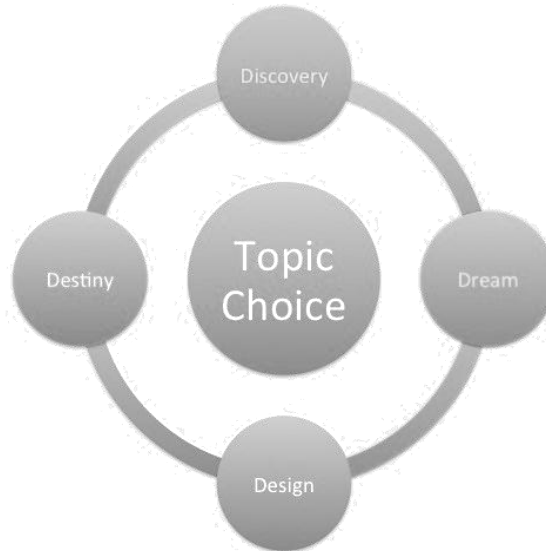


**Figure 2.   Appreciative Inquiry's 4D Model**
   *Source: Cooperrider D.L and Whitney D. (2005).   Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change. San Francisco: Barrette Koehler, Publishers*

   **Whole Brain Literacy (WBL).** WBL was used as a tool for diagnosing participants. It is based on the four-brain model developed by Dudley Lynch (Tayko and Reyes-Talmo, 2010).   The basic idea is: human brain is divided into four quadrants consisting of I-Control, I-Explore, I-Pursue and I-Preserve. I-Control is a tendency to control himself/herself and others. I-Explore is a brain for creativity. I-Pursue is a quadrant of learning by doing. I-Preserve is a brain quadrant of relationship. According to Whole Brain Literacy, humans do not use whole brain or four quadrants in balance. Most people are dominated by one brain quadrant's function. This results in inefficiency in many aspects of life and work. It causes a lot of problems in workplace and in relationship. Through Whole Brain Literacy, OD Consultants can help clients to learn which brain quadrant dominates them and learn how to articulate other sides of brain for better performance. In this OD project we used it as a guideline for making sense of what is going on inside customers' brain. We simply listened to them and made a quick evaluation which brain quadrant dominates them. After that we can help them expand their capacity through diverse suggestions.

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Whole Brain Literacy
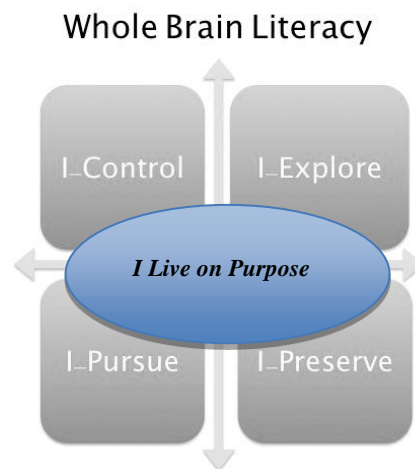


**Figure 3.  Whole Brain Literacy**
*Source: Tayko, P.R.M. and J. M. Agloro (2012). On the Ball: Leveraging the future you want with WBL. Cavite: I-T Partner and Linkage Company*

**Dialogue**.   Dialogue is one the ODI used that was not planned in advance. Dialogue was actually delivered by HRD department as a part of HRD's Contemplative Science Programme. I have attended their session, and found that   it might be helpful to use     along with Appreciative Inquiry.   Dialogue is a simply the conversation without attempts to change others. It is made possible by "Delaying one's Judgment." By delaying judgment, one would found what lies beneath his/her own behavior. (Bohm, 2004) It is called the "Blind Spot" (Scharmer, 2009).   Self-findings can lead to more discovery and co-creation.

After careful planning we have started our journey. We separated it into three cycles. Each cycle lasted long for one month. In each cycle three consultants spent three hours to a group of up to six clients for one session. There is one session for each group per cycle. Interventions and findings are as follows:

**Interventions and Findings**

**Cycle 1**. The first cycle was completed one month after the first workshop, which is "Dialogue. Clients' pattern was emerging: the Innovator, the Early Adopter and Late Adopter.  Innovators were promising. They started implemented what they were taught in their work. The first one is the series is Dialogue. They enjoyed experimenting with  the new idea. The Innovators had experienced some positive changes from month one. One group reported that they were using Dialogue with their long-term unhappy customers. The Innovator started to see customers from new perspectives. One Innovator told the Consultants that their teams were more engaging.     Storytelling from Innovators in the first month inspired their coworkers and helped Consultants to understand customers' context.

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Early Adopters and Later Adopters. The Consultants are able to articulate those stories when   coaching others. The author found that the Innovators' success stories were helpful for other participants. This finding corresponds to the Denning (2011)'s findings. In conclusion, the Innovators are the most advanced participants. They adopted a new idea and experimented it without hesitation. They already experienced positive changes by the first month end. They also have ability to improvise their practice to fit their environment.

Early adopters showed high cooperation yet they still did not move forward. In most case most of Early Adopter showed hesitation about Dialogue's Application. For instance, one misunderstood about the process. He thought Dialogue must be delivered in planned setting like he experienced in the workshop. He cried out that it was not possible for him to run that kind of workshop in the workplace. So the Consultant told him that the core concept of Dialogue is "delay of judgment." So one can delay of judgment in any situation like a meeting room or even at home. After clarification, his practice was more progressive. For another case, one told the Consultant that he did not start it yet. Yet after interviewed, I found that he already practiced "Dialogue." With his wife and he was in the right direction. So the Consultant encouraged him to expand his experience to his workplace. This participant's practice was more progressive in the later month.  It can be summarized that unlike Innovators, most Early Adopter got stuck with some misunderstanding.   After clarification they were able to move forward and make impressive progress in the next cycle.  Later Adopters are actually our challenge. They showed hesitation toward the project. One experienced customers' pressure. One seems to have nostalgia about his past success in his university life. One showed reluctance toward the programme.   One seems to get nothing and lost.  We believed that other incoming workshop might help them to move forward.  GOOD.

In my view, one emerging pattern in this cycle is: I found that Dialogue is really vital ODI for the unfamiliar terrain. I found that "delaying of judgment" helped me understand what was going on in each client's mind better. It helped me see emerging pattern clearly. I found that never before I have more comfortable in working with customers. I think now to enhance my Appreciative Inquiry's practice. Dialogue should be integrated into Appreciative Inquiry's 4-D Model. I then came up with the newly revised model based on 5-D: Dialogue Discovery Dream Design and Destiny as the following diagram GOOD
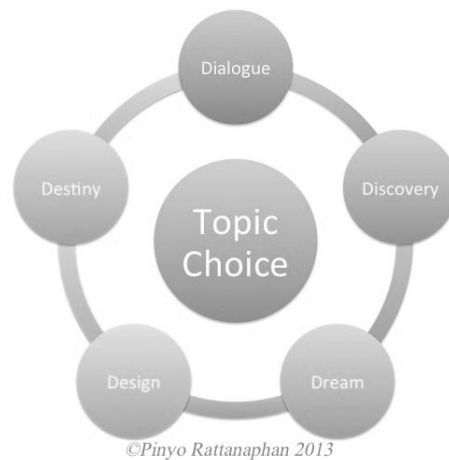
**Figure 4.  Appreciative Inquiry's 5D Model**

**Cycle 2**. By the end of Cycle two, there was another emerging pattern. Though participants attended the second workshop, which is about holistic life. They showed strong interest and excitement during workshop yet few of them mentioned about it by the end of cycle two. Surprisingly most of participants still shared their ideas about "Dialogue."  At this cycle, some of the Innovators have expressed extraordinary outcome to Consultants. One group of senior managers reported the surprise of better relationship with clients after they experimented with "Dialogue" in the unfriendly meeting with Vice President of IT Department.  Never before, have they paid attention to customers in the meeting. There was no interruption. They simply let customers complain. They started to see the "blind spot" which is a cause of problems. (Scharmer, 2009)  It was because of the nature of lengthy reporting procedure resulting conflicts in the Bank.   For instance, when problems were reported on site, it took time until this VP knew the problem. This caused frustration. This finding of "Blind spot" resulted in revising for a more concise reporting procedure.  Our clients reported a friendlier meeting. They said, "We are now partners."

In this cycle, most of Innovators and early adopters have implemented Dialogue not only with three influencers but also to teams and organizations. The author believed that there was a new culture emerging as the idea to "delay of the judgment," had been widely used in company meeting and decision process.  There are many questions arising in this stage. For instance, is it practical to pursue "delay of judgment" in every situation?"  Socialization or knowledge sharing has played an important role in this cycle. They simply shared experience with one another. The OD Consultant also shared what we learned from one group to others.   Late Adopters in this cycle still showed no improvement. Most of them impressed with workshops yet they had not implemented yet. We have been suspicious that they may have personal problem. My strategy now is to "Dialogue" these clients. I believed that Socialization Process might be helpful for them. It is a wait and see.

In the second Cycle, there is one trend emerging. Among the innovator there are few innovators spreading ideas to bigger group of people not only three influences, but also large group of people. I believed that they are the Connector. (Gladwell, 2000) The Connector is the one who have weak tie with so many people. The Connector has his/her

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own network. These personalities are the source of influence and viral marketing.  Lawler III and Worley  (2006) stated that to make efficient and sustainable change, the Connector should be included in change initiatives. I observed that when in Socialization process, their stories inspired others to follow. Their energy is a springboard for others.

**Cycle 3 and Cycle 4**.  I have combined these two cycles together. At these cycles most of the participants were facing challenge from customers and pressure from newly acquired customers. They also were during rigorous internal audit, which affected their attention to pursue their OD projects. In this cycle, people complained to the OD Consultants about their hardship and their problem. In this stage again, I believed "Dialogue" is an essential tool again. I found that in this cycle, most of people want to make sense to what were happening with them. Some question about their leaderships. Some were in need of encouragement. Some wanted to make sense why bad thing/good things happened to them.  In this stage, Externalization had played important role.  I let them talk about their problem and helped them make senses of it through diverse theories such as the Tipping Point, Motivation, Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry.

## Discussion

In these four months, there were interesting patterns emerging. Based on SECI Model, I found that Socialization and Internalization have played vital roles since day one to the end of project. To mobilize change, OD Consultants need to facilitate to have Socialization and Internalization happen in process. Externalization is helpful in many challenging situation where customers need to make sense of their challenge. OD Consultants' background knowledge is helpful. Combination or classification of knowledge is helpful for both participants and OD Consultants especially in term of inclusion. I also found that Appreciative Inquiry is helpful for helping clients surface their tacit knowledge in Socialization Process.  Dialogue is also fruitful in helping OD Consultants to make sense of what happening in clients' context especially during the beginning of project

The most surprising finding in this project is about Whole Brain Literacy. From the first cycle to the end, most of participants still worked on Dialogue. There were more and more reports of change happening. Most of change is not from outside in but inside out. Most of clients found blind spots and resolved them through co-creation with their influencers. It seems that through Dialogue impacts clients' Whole Brain Literacy in positive way.

Basically in this project, we did not make brain assessment with clients and did not provide in-depth consultation about their brain. We simply used it as the guideline for us to make sense of what's going on in their brain only, and advise them to utilize other sides of their brain through other ODIs, which are Knowledge Management and Appreciative Inquiry. During three months, one pattern was emerging clearer and clearer. Clients worked with their influencees with new balanced brain. It seems to me that Dialogue made clients aware of limited capacity and meantime recognized opportunity in transformation. One client team had unhealthy relationships with customers. Their I-control dominated the team. After Dialogue, it seems that they moved from I-Control to I-explore. They explored customers and found blind spot in a chain of command. Finally

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both side use I-pursue to change the procedure, which naturally improved their I-preserve. It showed that Dialogue shift their Whole Brain Literacy to the new healthier balance.

I believe this phenomenon happened to me as I used Dialogue in the Consultation Process along with Appreciative Inquiry and Knowledge Management.  In the past before I have emphasized Dialogue to my OD practice, I always sought out opportunity to "change" my customers. To me, and  I believe my brain is I-explore. But in my OD practice, I heavily use I-control. For instance, if my clients seemed to be distracted from what I want them to be, I interrupted them and tried to keep them on track. But after using Dialogue, I started to delay my judgment. I let participants talked without disruption. I had tried to observe my own bias and my inner feelings while I was listening to them. This helped me find out many of my blind spots and improve my consultation.

For instance, one participant reported that he had done nothing. Through Dialogue I let him talk without interruption. Finally he mentioned that he found something positive in his family because he started talking with his wife and children without interruption. After he finished his free style reporting, I had reaffirmed to him that he had already carried out "Dialogue."  He already possessed skill in Dialogue now. So I advised him to extend it to his office. This client was so surprised with my advice. He reported that at first he understood that Dialogue take place in a well-prepared setting only.  My reflection for this case is: in the past if a client said he had done nothing I would try to team him by repeating what I taught in class. This customer may not be able to work on Dialogue again because his blind spot may exist. He may not start Dialogue because he is too busy to find out the perfect place to do.  On contrarily letting that participant talked freely helped me to undercover his blind spot and helped him get through.

Surprisingly, Dialogue also revealed my blind spot. Without Dialogue I tend to use my existing knowledge and bias to judge the new challenge and try to control it through my past experience. This might result in more unresolved situation. Through Dialogue, I delayed my own judgment. I then found out the root cause or the blind spot of such challenge. This blind spot was new to my experience. With new information emerging I can give client more focused solution resulting in effective outcome. Based on Whole Brain Literacy, without Dialogue, I will carry out my Consulting based on past experience and existing bias. This means that I used the same Whole Brain Literacy's pattern, "I-Control" in an attempt to shape my client to fit my past experience and bias. This might cause another problem.

Thus through Dialogue, I delayed my judgment, found a blind Spot and got better solution for customers. This means: through Whole Brain Literacy's perspective, I have not automatically articulated my "I-Control" to handle situation like I did before. By delaying of my judgment, I started seeing a pattern emerging, which is quite different from my experience.  I experienced that automatically I articulated four brain quadrants in the new way. Through this new emerging experience, it seems to me that I lowered my I-Control. My brain allowed other sides of my brains especially I-Explore to function. By exploring a new pattern closely, I found a better solution for with client.  To me it looked like my Whole Brain Literacy shifted to from ineffective equilibrium to a new effective equilibrium.   In my view, OD Consultant should combine "Dialogue" with Whole Brain Literacy's practice. It can be a new Organization Development Intervention. I name it "**Whole-Brain Dialogue**." (Pinyo Rattanaphan, 2013)  Basically there are four quadrants,

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there should be the fifth quadrant namely, "I-Dialogue."  I-Dialogue is the way to shift one's Whole Brain Literacy to a new equilibrium. It can be done though "Dialogue" with oneself or clients.  The new model can be seen in the following diagram:
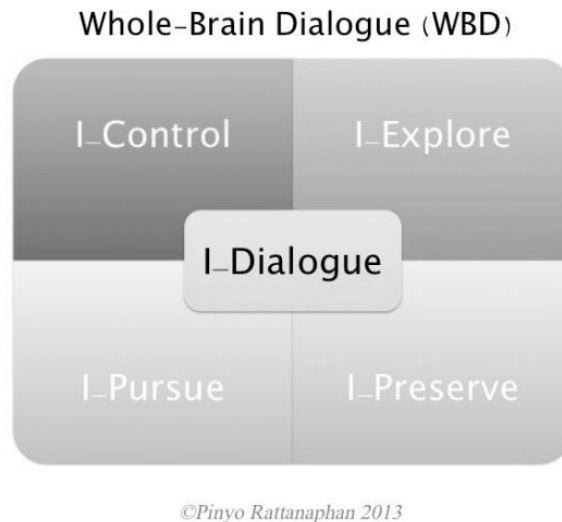


**Figure 5.   Whole-Brain Dialogue**

The implication is WBL is still one of the best tools in making transformational change but it is commercial one. OD Consultant can use Dialogue as an alternative to make clients utilize their brains. Dialogue is a free ODI and powerful in making similar change as full-scale WBL tool. It can be alternative. Yet, it needs more research to support my finding.

In Knowledge Management's perspective, I found that we could refine SECI Model. Experience in this Consultation project suggested that Appreciative Inquiry is helpful in enhancing Socialization. Basically Socialization relies on knowledge sharing. This requires expression of idea. But in Thai culture people always do not express what they think. Asking positive question can encourage them to express ideas easier, which move Socialization Process forward. This means: Appreciative Inquiry is useful in helping participants surface their tacit knowledge better than formal knowledge sharing. I also found that Dialogue is helpful in in Externalization Process. Through Dialogue one can find his/her blind spot. This helps practitioner understand himself/herself. This means OD Practitioner can help clients to resolve their problem with sharper solution. For Whole Brain Literacy, though not direct assessment and training, helped me to understand clients' mode of brain operation. This helps me to unlock their potential easier. So I think Whole Brain Literacy is helpful in Combination Process. This means: OD Consultant can help customers utilize their potential better by classifying customers into four quadrants. If they weree in I-Control quadrant, they would need knowledge through I-Preserve' frame. If they are focusing on I-Preserve, we can help them to get through by I-Control's knowledge. If they are working on I-Explore, it would be better for the customers to kick-off their I-Pursue's mode. If customers' actions were based on I-Pursue Mode, it would be best for them to think out of the box by their I-Explore mode.

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When looked into the Internalization Process, in this project, we found that the Connector has played the vital role in spreading idea to larger group of people. This means inclusion of the Connector is meaningful for large groups' transformation. Inclusion of the Connector in Internalization Process is therefore the driver for Knowledge Management and high impact of OD Project. Actually there are other two personalities according to Gladwell's Tipping Point. They are the Maven and The Salesman. They are also responsible for word of mount and transformational change. These are personalities in Gladwell's (2000) Tipping Point. I believe that inclusion of all these personalities in the OD Project would be driver for better Internalization.  In brief, in order to make Knowledge Management more effective, SECI Model should include Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue, Whole Brain Literacy, and the Tipping Point into Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization respectively. I named the new model, Appreciative Knowledge Management. (Pinyo Rattanaphan 2013)  Since it is from my attempts to see what the best in each model is. It is from my Positives' view as I am an Appreciative Inquiry Practitioner. Yet, this new model is in need of further investigation and refinement. The Appreciative Knowledge Management can be seen in the following diagram:
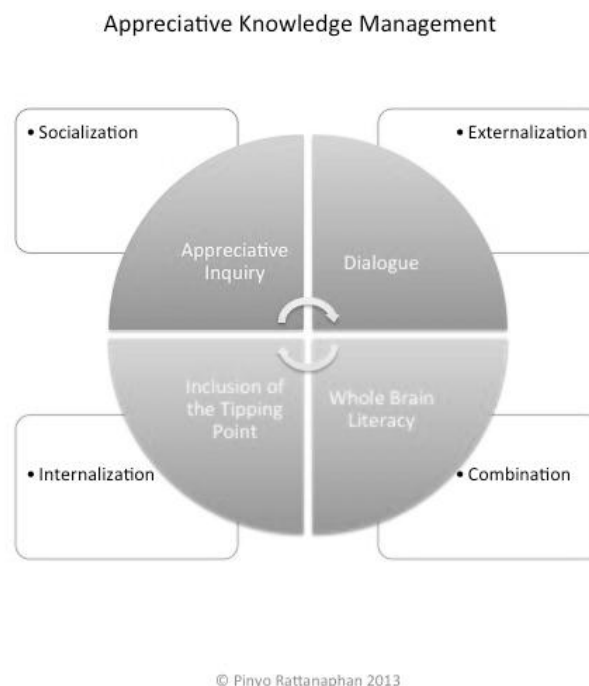


**Figure  6.   Appreciative Knowledge Management**

These three new models emerging from the project need more investigation and refinement.

The most invaluable lesson I learnt in this project is not only reflected from the outcomes and new models, but also my last finding.  I found that to transformational change in the organization is partly from the transformational change of OD practitioner.

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This reflected Lao Tzu quotes, "Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power." (Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching)

**Summary**

OD Consultants from Organization Development Institute of Assumption University Thailand had delivered OD Consulting service to a Thailand-based global IT outsourcing company. The company was in pressure at that time because it faced fierce competition from international competitor. It also faced the challenge from the company's business model since its expansion is based on the company's acquisition of clients' IT department. There have been more and more new employees of radically different background and culture. They were in need of handling both external and internal challenges. The company's HRD had designed Organization Development Program to develop their own pool of talent employees in diverse program including Dialogue, Holistic Life, Dancing and Art. OD Consultants from ODI had played a role in helping such participants to articulate knowledge they learnt in real life's situation. They were supposed to implement knowledge with three influences. OD Consultants have planned and used ODIs including Appreciative Inquiry, Whole Brain Literacy and Dialogue.

The result is: they were few participants causing transformational change with larger group resulting in better employee engagement.  Some can resolve long-term conflict with their customers. There were many changes reported, mostly influenced by Dialogue.  As reflection from my practice, I found that Dialogue should be included in Appreciative Inquiry for better inclusion. This resulted in the new Appreciative Inquiry's 5D Model. Dialogue is also helpful in Whole Brain Literacy. Therefore the new model was formed namely, "Whole-Brain Dialogue." Dialogue was blended to Whole Brain Literacy to make it work better. Dialogue can even be alternative for Whole Brain Literacy. For the last implication, I found that SECI Model could be improved by inclusion of Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue, Whole Brain Literacy and the Tipping Point. I named the new model, "Appreciative Knowledge Management." Finally I found that this project has not only changed clients but also myself. In the overall, this OD Project is truly, "OD Project from the inside out."

*Without changing oneself, it is difficult to transform others.*

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