

Session 3: Appreciation

GOAL: During this session, your goal is to begin creating a positive feedback loop by working on APPRECIATION.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Pick a leader.

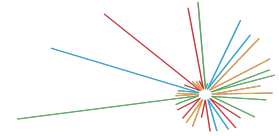
- Pick a team member to lead the session. You can select the same person who led an earlier session or rotate to give different people a chance.
- The leader should prepare the agenda. A standard agenda is with the course materials on the Culture in Action website. You can use the standard as is or adapt it to your needs.
- The leader should read the “Leader Tips,” which are available on the Culture in Action website.

2. Get ready.

- The leader should schedule a 90-minute session, distribute this pdf (or a link to the website’s “Course Materials” page) to all participants, and let participants know whether they should submit their session prep before the meeting.
- All participants should spend 30 minutes or so prepping for the session.
 - First, they should do the pre-reading (below), which discusses APPRECIATION.
 - Second, they should do the “Session Prep” (below), focusing on ACTION, STORY, and TENSIONS.
 - Review the ACTION(S) you agreed on at the last session. Have people done what they committed to do?
 - Think about one short, very specific, very recent STORY that shows the best of how you come together as a team to get things done.
 - Think about one TENSION you’d like the team to discuss at the upcoming session.

3. Go.

- Hold the session. Go through each of the practices in order. You should now be getting comfortable with the practices. If you get stuck, the leader can refer to the Leader Tips for help.
- If you’d like, set aside a few minutes to discuss the practice of APPRECIATION.
- Briefly review ACTIONS from the last meeting. The goal isn’t to do a full review on the substance – it’s to check on whether people are following through on the commitments they made.
- When you get to TENSIONS, spend a few minutes naming TENSION(S) and picking the one you’d like to focus on. As always, you can decide to discuss other TENSIONS in a different meeting or with a smaller group.
- Continue to pay attention to making sure every person has a chance to be heard.



Session 3: Pre-Reading

In Session 2, you started working on your TENSIONS – the dynamic that exists between your current reality and your desired future state.

If you're like most groups, you're itching to talk about those TENSIONS and decide what to do – or, in Culture in Action terms, to move into CONVERSATION and ACTION.

But before you dive into CONVERSATION and ACTION, we think it's important to step back and focus on APPRECIATION.

APPRECIATION is the final practice in each Culture in Action session. We're focusing on it early in the Culture in Action curriculum, however, so you can start explicitly calling out what's working in your sessions. This will let you reinforce what's working and change what isn't.

We call the final step of the Culture in Action cycle APPRECIATION to emphasize the importance of drawing attention to the value, both given and received, in any relationship. We can APPRECIATE the value of the session itself - because it helped us address something real, or because it improved our relationships or our communications. And we can appreciate specific contributions by a colleague.

APPRECIATION allows us to gain the full value from experiences that otherwise might be forgotten. Because our minds are mostly tuned to threats and novelty, we can easily miss the opportunities for gratitude that surround us. Recent studies show that keeping a gratitude journal for just three weeks leads to measurable physical, psychological and social benefits. Yet according to another recent study, people are less likely to express gratitude at work than any place else. The practice of APPRECIATION to end each Culture in Action meeting is designed to also to normalize expressions of APPRECIATION among colleagues.

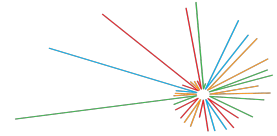
APPRECIATION isn't about empty platitudes or denial of problems; it's about focusing individual and group attention on very specific and tangible acts that create value or productivity in the group. APPRECIATION requires discipline and thought in order to do it well.

For example, APPRECIATION works best when it is non-attributive. In other words, APPRECIATION should articulate how you benefited from someone's actions, but not characterize the person. The distinction is to not presume to tell people about themselves (for example, "You are smart"), but rather to tell them how they have benefited you (for example, "Our decisions are better because of your recent input"). Characterizing the person as smart often leads to negation by the person who is complimented because, after all, they know that they are not always smart. By acknowledging exactly how they applied their intelligence to the situation, it becomes easier for them to accept the compliment and easier to understand how to repeat the behavior in the future.

Specific APPRECIATION can elevate, admire, and thank. Each is subtly separate and distinct. When we elevate, we declare the importance of something contributed by another. We declare that their contribution mattered and we explain how the contribution makes a difference. When we admire, we declare our respect for a certain action or trait, and we explain why it is that we value that action or trait. When we thank, we express our gratitude for a specific contribution and how that contribution served others or us.

Don't be surprised if the language of APPRECIATION becomes halting and awkward. Since most teams rarely focus on expressing APPRECIATION, the words may feel stilted and the practice may feel strange.

Accepting APPRECIATION is just as important as giving it is. Gracious acceptance becomes easier if APPRECIATION is delivered as described above. However, many of us jump right to our habitual responses when we are on the receiving end of APPRECIATION, defaulting to false humility rather than accepting the APPRECIATION. When we do

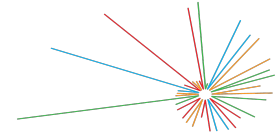


that, we diminish the power of the APPRECIATION and unwittingly rob not just ourselves but also others of the benefits they might receive in the interaction.

The other reason for closing with APPRECIATION is that it reconnects the group to the team and to the longer-term work the team is doing. With APPRECIATION, we step back from the specific issues (TENSIONS, CONVERSATION, AND ACTION) to again focus on the dynamics within the group. By ending with this step, we begin to re-direct the energy coming out of the work we just completed forward, and start directing our attention to new possibilities. Like the trapeze artist, through APPRECIATION we begin to let go of the current rung and begin our leap toward the rung that will swing us into the future.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

- Craft APPRECIATION for five people. Deliver it in-person or in writing.
- Complete the following for yourself: At this moment in my life, what is ending? What am I deliberately letting go of? What is beginning (or emerging) for me? What am I reaching toward?
- Consider keeping a gratitude journal. If you'd like an app for that use Happy Tapper's Gratitude Journal for the iPhone or the Secret of Happiness app for Android.



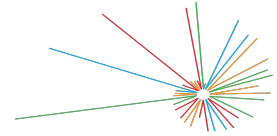
Session 3: Session Prep

Before every session, each participant should read the background materials for the session and think: about the last session, about what’s happening and what it means to them, and about the session to come.

The following chart will help you prepare. You can use this written form if it’s helpful.

If you like, your group can collect submissions in advance and share them. Doing so can help make **STORIES** more visible and streamline the identification of **TENSIONS**.

<p>PRESENCE: What are your current practices and how do you feel you’re doing with them?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SKIP FOR SESSION 3</p>	<p>The goal of this pre-work is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Think about PRESENCE, ACTION, STORIES and TENSIONS before the session. ➤ Collect TENSIONS in advance in order to make the session as efficient as possible. ➤ Make the STORIES, TENSIONS and ACTIONS public and a normal part of work. <p>Even though you won’t have time to address all TENSIONS during the session, it’s still valuable to spend some time naming them.</p> <p>At a minimum, it helps the group see things more clearly.</p> <p>Sometimes, simply naming TENSIONS is enough to make slight shifts to the system over time.</p> <p>If you want, you can agree to get together to talk about them in another setting.</p>
<p>ACTION: What actions did you agreed to at your last session? What progress have you made?</p>	
<p>STORY: Jot down a positive culture story – a real, recent example of something that you believe demonstrates the best of your culture in action.</p>	
<p>TENSION(S): What TENSION(s) do you want to FOCUS on/raise with the group? Remember to phrase them as questions: “How might I/we?”</p>	



Session 3: Additional Resources

For more on APPRECIATION, check out the Additional Resources page on the Culture in Action website.