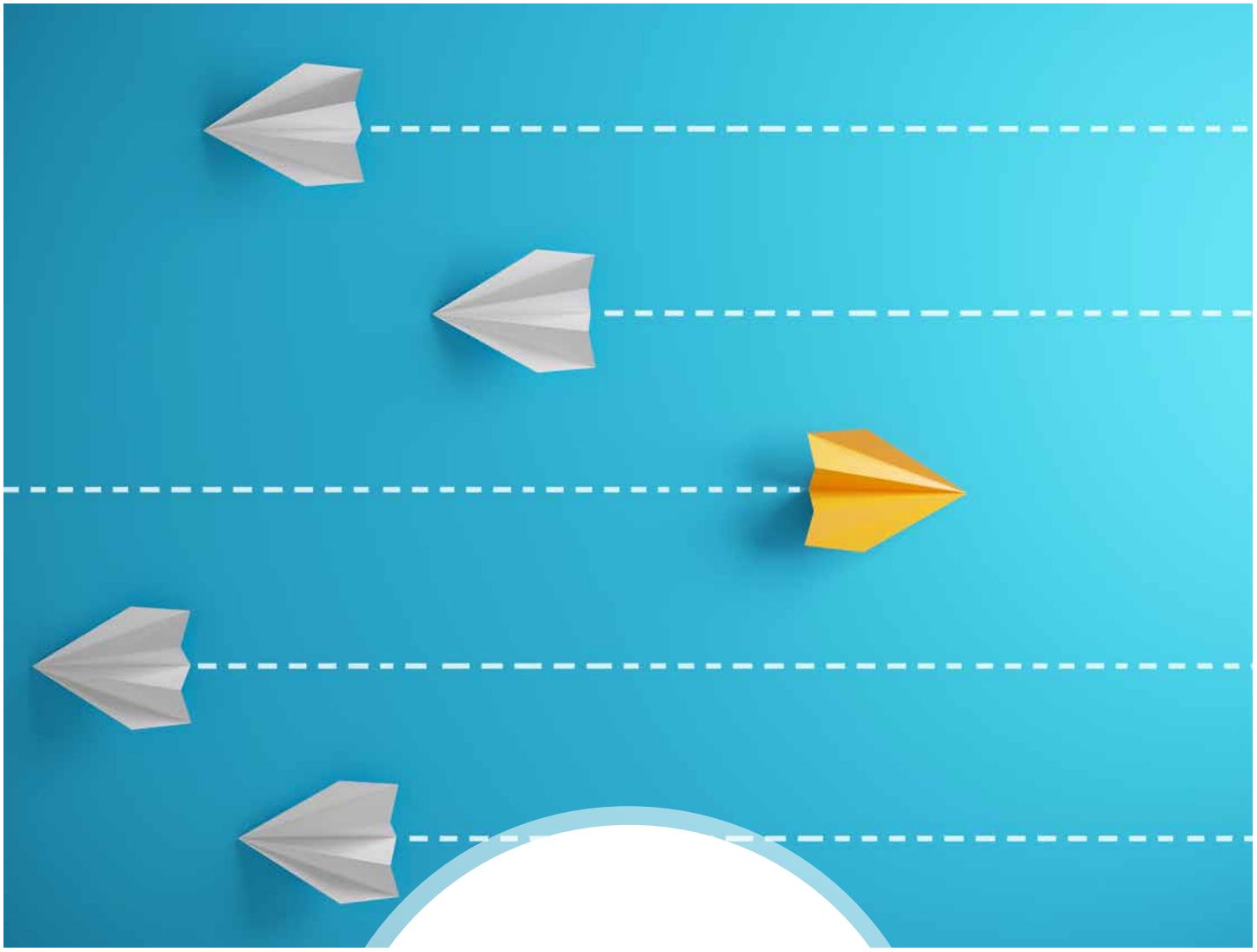


AI SUMMIT TOOLBOX *guide*

POST-SUMMIT: SUSTAINING APPRECIATIVE VITALITY

THE CHANGE LAB
FROM THE MICHELLE MCQUAID GROUP

WHAT NOW?

Flourishing is not a static state, but an emergent property of change that provides the energy and vitality for new levels of organization and inspires people to act. Human flourishing is enabled by the elusive life-energy that Peggy Holman suggests: enlivens people to be aware of what is happening around them, helps them to prioritize taking responsibility for what matters to them, enables them to be generous and compassionate with themselves and others, and keeps them open to learning and growth as they climb the path to mastery of their environment.

While much is still being learned about how human systems create and maintain collective energy, organizational researcher Michael Cole and his colleagues have added to our understanding by proposing that within a system, productive energy is not simply an individual experience but a collective one that comprises: positive affect (feelings of enthusiasm), cognitive arousal (desire to focus attention and find solutions), and purposeful behavior (willingness to invest effort toward shared goals) among system members to realize its potential. They explain that productive energy fluctuates as a result of context, inputs and outcomes, but can become individually and collectively self-reinforcing when leaders and key influencers recognize and legitimize desired actions.

Other researchers suggest that a mirror energy or contagion effect is created between a system and the people in it when there is an experience of shared meaning, positive relationships, positive agency and positive emotions. Note in this list the presence of many of the PERMA pillars and self-determination nutrients that we discovered enable human flourishing, which suggests that not only are energy and flourishing closely interrelated emergent states, but that they can both be supported through the appreciative inquiry practices we have explored throughout this book.

Thus, once the AI Summit event is complete, the goal of the drum phase is to embed appreciative intelligence within a system so that people's ability to seek out generative information, create generative connections and continuously self-organize to amplify and magnify their strengths supplies productive energy that enables the system to realize its expanding potential and flourish. This means ensuring that people understand and can use the skills they have acquired during the preceding AI Summit phases, so that the system can continue dancing to the rhythm of emergent change

How can you pull this off?

WHAT'S YOUR GOAL?

Appreciative inquiry researchers and practitioners repeatedly caution that once the AI Summit event concludes, in many ways the real work begins. In a meta-analysis of more than twenty different AI Summits, researchers concluded that what made a summit transformational was its ability to:

- Change how people think instead of what people do
- Support the self-organizing change processes that flow from new ideas

While it would be amazing if all the prototypes created during the AI Summit were realized in the coming weeks and months, the truth is that the real prize from your investment is much closer than you might realize.

CHANGING THE WAY PEOPLE THINK

You're already well down this path as a result of the information shared and the new connections people made at the Summit. Keep building on these key themes in communications around your appreciative topics using the language and stories that emerged during your AI Summit. This way you'll build a shared language of hope for your future.

Typically when people meet to work on a project our focus is on managing the tasks that need to be completed. Unfortunately this is not how living systems or the people within them flourish. Instead, it is the relationships we create with each other that actually shape what will be done – or not! When we feel respected, valued, and appreciated by others and have the opportunity to learn and engage our strengths in meaningful work we are able to feel good and function effectively (you might recognize this as the pillars of PERMA).

Thus, as people come together in their opportunity area teams, their primary goal is not making the prototype a reality, it is learning to work together in ways that enable them to individually and collectively flourish. To assist steal-with-pride and adapt the Post-Summit Meeting Guide to create a mini (75 minute) AI workshop to help them get started. There are some tips for kicking these meetings off on the following pages.

SUPPORTING SELF-ORGANISATION

For self-organization to thrive people need:

- Clear boundaries provided by a shared purpose and vision about the outcomes you value.
- Simple rules or guiding principles that encourage the desired values and behaviors, so self-organizing masses risk veering wildly off course.

Make sure you continue to clearly communicate the shared vision that emerged from the AI Summit. Give guidance for the self-organized teams about what is expected of them as they work on these projects (the simpler and easier to remember the better – for example one organization decided this was as merely a matter of: "Is this the right thing to do for the people who depend on me?")

Researchers also caution that if self-organization is sought and then throttled back with excessive control because you've decided that leaders really "know best" and this was just an exercise in getting some buy-in, you risk poisoning future efforts. We understand that self-organization can be a new way of working for leaders, so here are few tips to help support your teams:

- It is essential that the prototype volunteers are brought together and encouraged to put effort into realizing their ideas and feel that they have the organizations full support to do so. Think of the role of leaders as less decision-making and more that of a wise and kind coach who is there to nudge them towards their potential, encourage them to be accountable to themselves and their team mates, offer them support to further their hopes, and be willing to offer a compassionate shoulder if it doesn't always go to plan.
- Be realistic and don't expect all of these ideas to succeed. Think of these prototypes as "pilot projects" or "probes" - small, fail-safe experiments that create space for creativity, innovation and informative patterns to emerge – to first sense and then respond to what the system needs.
- It's ok if initiatives don't succeed as long as the learning is celebrated and disseminated. Not every idea is the right idea for this moment, and remember the primary goal is discovering better ways to support individual and collective flourishing as you work together.
- Ideas that show promise will need to be resourced and cultivated. This is where leaders in their role of "coaches" can help to advocate, remove barriers, and guide the integration of the innovations so that the team can access the resources required.
- Periodically review the ideas that landed in the "not yet" bucket and see if the timing may be better or if opportunities for other projects have opened up.

WHERE SHOULD YOU START?

1 | THANK PARTICIPANTS

Within 48 hours of your AI Summit we recommend thanking participants for their contributions – they worked hard! – and reminding them of the key themes that emerged.

Remember, the more people see, hear, and touch an idea the more comfortable we become with it, and the less threatening it is. In fact, Professor Adam Grant suggests liking continues to increase as people are exposed to an idea between ten and twenty times with additional exposure still useful for more complex ideas (although try to keep them short and mixed with other ideas, to help maintain people's curiosity). And Harvard Professor John Kotter found change agents typically under-communicate their visions by a factor of ten.

Use the word art of the strengths that were discovered on your topic to share with participants, thank them for their contribution and remind them of the hopes and actions they committed to from the AI Summit.

2 | SET UP PROTOTYPE TEAM MEETINGS

Within one week of the Summit, agree with your leadership team or steering committee who will coach which prototype groups and ask them to reach out to those who have volunteered to be part of the next conversation and set a 60 – 90 minute time to meet that works for as many people as possible.

Just getting this meeting in people's diaries – even if it is not for the next month – will reassure people that you are serious about supporting their commitment. It sends an important message that you are also willing to take responsibility and honor their passions. Often a "Doodle" calendar or other online tools that allow multiple people to find a time that works is a good way to do this. If people can't attend reassure them that you will ask the group to pick them up for the next conversation if they would like.

Share the Post-Summit Meeting Guide several days before this meeting and ask people to have a quick read, print this, and bring it with them. Make sure teams have a quietish space to work in, encourage them to take some post-it notes and pens and the final AI Summit report to remind them of the purpose and their prototype.

3 | SHARE THE AI SUMMIT REPORT

Within one week of the AI Summit share the report. This is another great opportunity to remind people of the key themes and new ideas that emerged, to let people know that leaders or the steering committee are reaching out to help those who volunteered meet for their first conversations, and that if every one of us took just one small action towards these hopes we would create a flourishing ripple of change in our school.

Put the report in people's hands as quickly as possible. We recommend reviewing it as a leadership team and agreeing to a cheat sheet of points and next steps to be shared with their teams.

Think about how you can integrate the report to other things happening – strategic plans, regular meetings, the environment – to ensure the ideas that were explored live on and gain traction beyond the AI Summit. Remember liking continues to increase as people are exposed to an idea between ten and twenty times.

4 | ESTABLISH PLATFORMS FOR ONGOING COMMUNICATION

Within a month of the AI Summit it is important to have a clear platform for ongoing communication and to share this with everyone so they understand how to stay connected and up to date with what's happening.

This could be a page on your intranet platform, bulletin boards in the staffroom, a Trello board (***www.trello.com***), and anything that fits within your existing communication mediums. Prototype teams should be encouraged to post their notes after each meeting for others to see and to provide brief regular updates to provide public accountability for their efforts. For example, one school we worked with held a mini-exhibition every three months over drinks to share what the teams were all doing and continue growing together.

Whatever platform feels right for your system is fine, but we urge you to set up clear expectations for regular communication so that teams can feel accountable, supported, and celebrated for their efforts. Remember, the goal is to create new ways of working as much as it is to deliver on the prototypes.

5 | APPRECIATION + CELEBRATION

Appreciation and gratitude greases the wheels of self-organization. Do be genuine, but don't be stingy as you mirror back the effort, learning, and generosity you see from those stepping forward to make these changes happen.

Set your leadership team the challenge of thanking at least one person, once a week for the work they are doing on these projects and share with each other who you thanked, and why, for accountability and learning. Gratitude is the most under-utilized resource most systems have to create change. Don't overlook this important tool, it costs you nothing.

Be sure to celebrate key milestones such as prototypes launching or twelve months post-Summit achievements as a way to maintain the focus and energy of people for these projects across your school. See these moments as opportunities for further positive disruptions to spark new growth.

Help your opportunity area teams be recognized for the heroes they are as they take on this additional work. Share and celebrate their stories widely to reinforce the desired behaviors in your system.

NEED MORE HELP?

AI SUMMIT COACHING

Creating change can be hard, which is why we don't want you to struggle through this process alone. If you find you need a little extra help why not draw on the expertise of one of our AI Summit coaches? You can have either:

AI SUMMIT COACHING POWERSHOT

One-hour, one-off, one-on-one coaching session in person or by Skype to ask us all the AI Summit questions you have and get additional advice, insights and resources tailored for your unique needs. We'll review any AI Summit materials you have prior to the call, record the call for you so you can revisit it as many times as you want and provide you with our written recommendations.

AI SUMMIT COACHING PACKAGE

4 x one-hour coaching sessions for you, your sponsors or your entire steering committee to help you plan, deliver and drum in the results of your AI Summit. These sessions are spaced to suit your needs and include any AI Summit training, advice, reviews and resources you may need. We'll be with you at every step of your AI Summit process so you can be the change champion your system needs.

For AI Summit coaching options please contact ***chelle@michellemcquid.com*** and let us know what you need.