What is "Positive Deviance?"?

Five Minute Academy

Social and Behavior Change Lab

BETA V18: 4-7-21
[For external sharing and feedback]
Feel free to adapt the slides prior to sharing - This is now YOUR "mini-module"...

Once upon a time, in a small village in Vietnam….

There were 100
families…

….and of the 100
families, 95 of them had
children who were
malnourished

VILLAGE
95 FAMILIES

But there were **five** families with children who were well-nourished

Should someone ask the five families what they're doing differently…?

Well, that is *almost* the case.

First, the families had to learn more about each others' resources

The five families learned that **one** family had the only fishing boat in the village

The **one** family with the fishing boat had well-nourished children because they had **extra resources.**

For the other four families, that did NOT have access to extra resources....

Here is what happened next...

The four families, the positive models (or positive *deviants*), were asked:

- What is your secret?

- What are you doing differently?

VILLAGE

95 FAMILIES

It turns out that all four families were adding something to their children's meals:

1. Sweet potato leaves
2. River shrimp

VILLAGE

95 FAMILIES

To help their neighbors, the four families decided to organise an opportunity for others to practice cooking with the key ingredients…

VILLAGE

95 FAMILIES

And so, the four families organized a cooking party with an invitation to the all families in the village…

And guests were asked to bring something to the cooking session...

VILLAGE
95 FAMILIES

The "price of admission" for all families to enter the cooking party was bamboo shoots and river shrimp.

VILLAGE

95 FAMILIES

Positive deviance approach promotes **DOING as a way of learning**.

It promotes "acting your way to a new way of knowing" ….rather than seeking to first share knowledge, and then hope that action will follow.

VILLAGE

95 FAMILIES

The traditional development approach: Focusing on the **95 families with malnourished children**
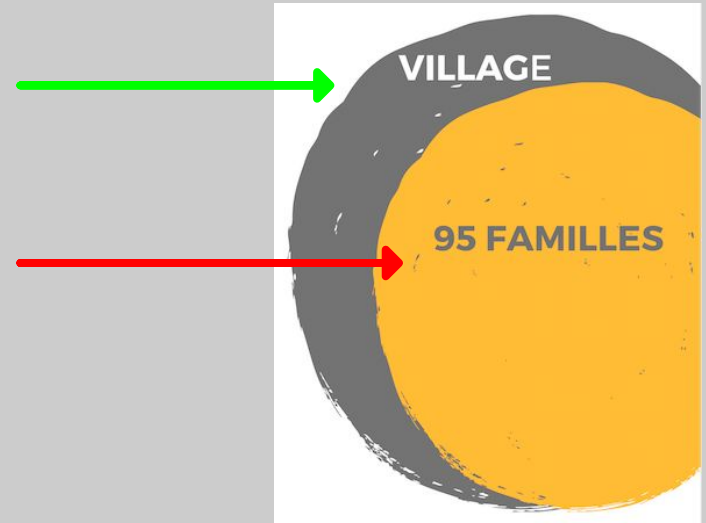
The "Positive deviance" approach focuses on existing resources and success in a community. The "deviants" (positive models) are those who are able to succeed where others fail, despite having the same resources.

With Positive Deviance, we start HERE
(With the five familles)

Not here (the malnourished children)

VILLAGE

95 FAMILLES

Why "deviance/deviants"? Deviating from the norm, but in a positive way (Reference: Deviance from mathematical average)
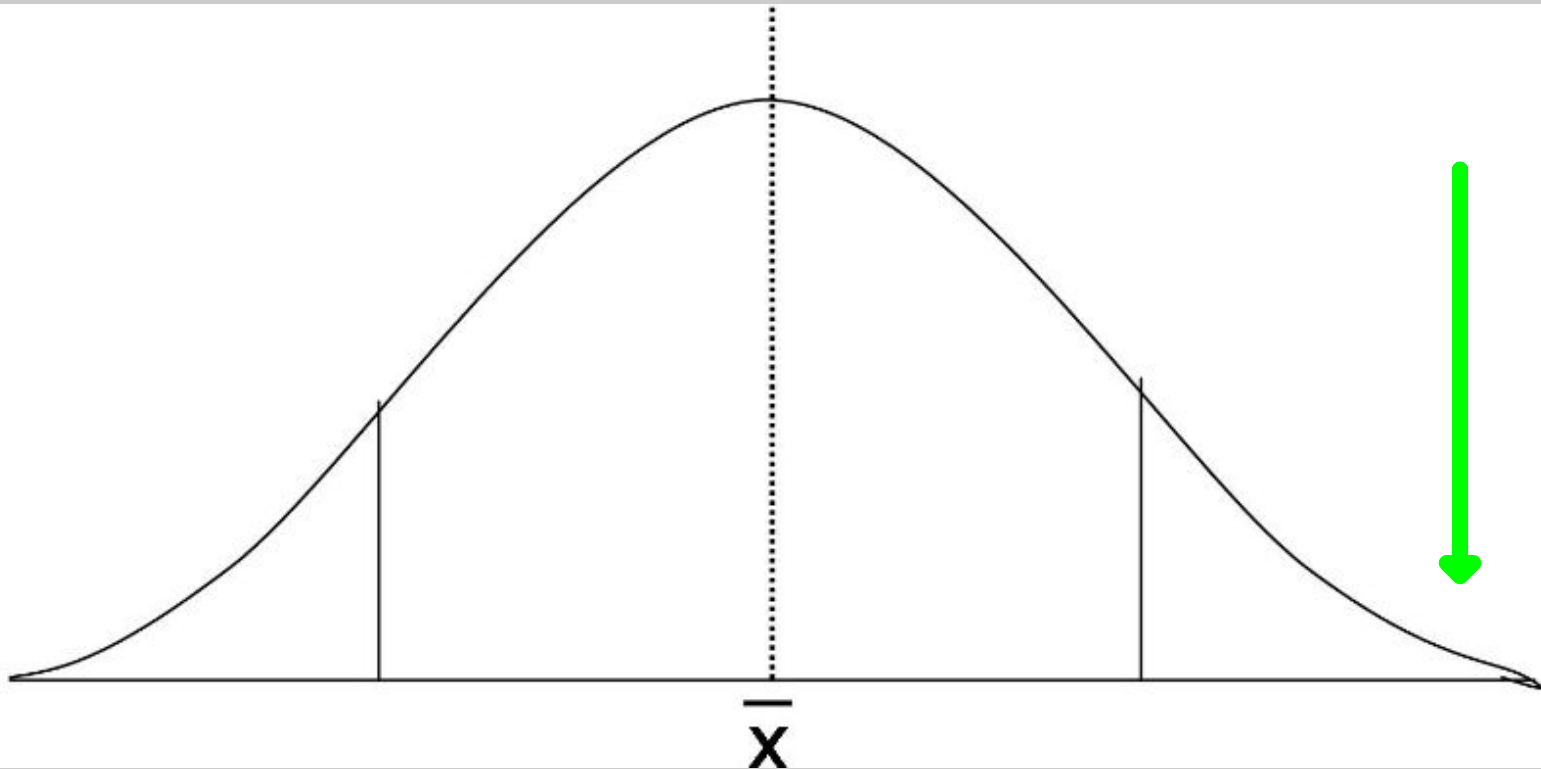
Summary of basic steps for a positive deviance approach:

1. Create a community resource team;
2. Proceed with the **"Four Ds"**:
   i. **Define** the problem
   ii. **Determine** presence of positive deviants (yes or no? If no, do not proceed)
   iii. **Discover** the uncommon but successful practices
   iv. **Design** opportunities to try out the successful practices

Summary of basic steps for a positive deviance inquiry (and/or intervention)

Once you have established a community resource team (a group of people who will work on the inquiry together)

1. **Define** the problem (together with the community)

2. **Determine** if there are positive deviants in the community - This can be individuals or groups, families, etc.

3. **Discover** the uncommon but successful practices through inquiry and/or observation

4. **Design** activities to allow community members to practice the discovered actions/behaviors

Summary

Basic Steps carried out by the community resource team:

As defined earlier, PD methodology consists of five basic steps carried out by members of the community:

1. ***Define*** the problem, current perceived causes, challenges and constraints, common practices, and desired outcomes.

2. ***Determine*** the presence of PD individuals or groups.

3. ***Discover*** uncommon but successful behaviors and strategies through inquiry and observation.

4. ***Design*** activities to allow community members to practice the discovered behaviors.

5. ***Monitor*** *and evaluate the resulting project or initiative which* **further** fuels change by documenting and sharing improvements as they occur, and help the community discern the effectiveness of the initiative.

Resources:

1. Positive Deviance Field Guide

2. Harvard Business Review: Your Company's Secret Change Agents (2005)

3. Vietnam nutrition story (English) (Positive Deviance, Save the Children, 1996)

4. Stanford Social Innovation Review: Design Thinking for Social Innovation (2010)

5. Positive Deviance Collaborative (Formerly at Tufts University, now independent)

6. Positive Deviance Wisdom Series (University of Texas El Paso/UTEP)

Suggestions on this Positive Deviance mini-module?
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YOUR COMPANY'S
Secret
CHANGE AGENTS

by Richard Tanner Pascale
and Jerry Sternin

Somewhere in your organization, groups of people are already doing things differently and better. To create lasting change, find these areas of positive deviance and fan their flames.