
Good Companies - *Organizations discovering the good in themselves by using Positive Deviance as a change management strategy.*

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Summary:

Drawing on three case studies, interviews with key practitioners, participation in workshops, exploratory research into innovation dissemination, developmental and positive organizational studies, Roberto sought to understand the emerging phenomenon of **Positive Deviance** and its potential application for change management in a variety of organizations in the developed world.

According to the basic premise of Positive Deviance (PD), in every community there are individuals who solve intractable problems in original and resourceful ways without recourse to special methods or external resources. These individuals are deviants in that they stray from the norm, but positive in that they solve problems most people in the community can't solve on their own. As a method, then, PD attempts to solve difficult issues or problems by: (1) identifying positive deviants, (2) determining the new practices which should be adopted based on a study of these deviants, and (3) having the community practice the new behaviors -- thereby amplifying the deviance to solve the problem for the greater community.

Roberto concluded that PD is indeed applicable in the developed world and well outside the context of developmental economics and social aid. The method, however, requires a shift in mindset for practitioners, consultants, organizational members, and above all leaders.

Recommendations:

For PD to be employed successfully, if not optimally, in developed world contexts, organizations' leaders and change management practitioners must be willing to accept certain tenets:

- **Behavioral change happens when you practice your way into a new way of thinking, and not as usually held, i.e. by thinking your way into a new practice.** PD is not a "theory" or a knowledge-based approach to change; it is embedded in day to day practice through a *show me* approach to change.
- **Not all of the underlying causes to a problem need to be resolved or even fully understood before change can start to happen:** Since positive deviants are already in the system, there is evidence that some degree of change is possible because it has already taken place in a smaller scale.
- **The driver for change is the community:** and the role of the leader is to create the space for the community to lead. The leader has an outstanding opportunity to portray humility.
- **The consultant becomes a facilitator for change:** not the generator of the new ideas or paradigm, but a seeker of practices and a supporter for the seeking community.