



BUSINESS *digest*

Betting on Anomaly

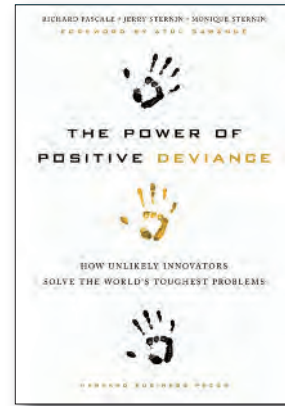
When Positive Deviants
Become a Collective Resource



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POINT OF VIEW: *The Power of Positive Deviance*

Based on the book by **Richard PASCALE**, Jerry and **Monique STERNIN** (Harvard Business Press, June 2010) and their article “Your Company’s Secret Change Agents” (*Harvard Business Review*, May 2005).



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INTERVIEW: Positive Deviance at Merck: A Clinical Trial

Interview with **David GASSER**, consultant and former Associate Director Corporate Engagement at Merck & Co., Inc. January 2011.



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INTERVIEW: Positive Deviance in Healthcare: Mobilizing the Community to Make Latent Solutions Emerge

Interview with **Jon LLOYD**, ex-Project Coordinator at VAPHS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), January 2011.



In Brief

In every community, some people get by better than others. Escaping norms and processes, they find innovative solutions to the problems that most people fail to solve. These “positive deviants” can be of value to companies provided that they know how to turn these anomalies into a collective resource.

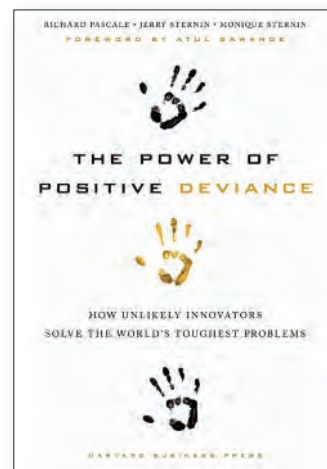
Merck tried out positive deviance in Mexico to improve faltering sales.

David Gasser recounts how management agreed to hand over responsibility to teams in the field to identify and share what was working, rather than trying to fix what wasn’t. The result was 17% growth in a market that was growing at 13%.

Similar story, similar success: the eradication of a fatal nosocomial infection. Jon Lloyd of the Veterans Administration Pittsburgh Healthcare System used the strategic arm of the incriminated bacterium itself to find effective solutions: teamwork. In sum, an illustration of how the notion of multiple solutions comes to replace a shortage.

The Power of Positive Deviance

Based on *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems* by **Richard PASCALE, Jerry STERNIN, and Monique STERNIN** (Harvard Business Press, June 2010) and the article co-authored by **R. PASCALE and J. STERNIN**, "Your Company's Secret Change Agents" (*Harvard Business Review*, May 2005).



In every community and every organization, some people do better than others with the same tools and constraints. They are called “positive deviants.” For about two decades, numerous NGOs have understood the value, for entire communities, of tapping into the know-how of these exceptional individuals. As for companies, they are starting to recognize the potential of such deviants in change strategies. But the road ahead is long.

Thirty years ago, positive deviants were a phenomenon known only to observers of NGOs. The expression designated those rare individuals, who, submitted to the same conditions as the rest of their community, could solve a problem that the community, otherwise could not—provided its ways and customs. In 1990, Jerry and Monique Sternin, who were working for Save the Children’s program to end infant malnutrition in Vietnam, decided to take advantage of these positive deviants to develop a problem-solving approach at the community level

in close collaboration with the local population. The idea was to first allow the community to understand why deviants succeed where others have failed before endorsing new behaviors. In Vietnam, the good nutritional status of children from rare “deviant families” was due to a few uncommon practices: systematic hand washing, small portions, and cooking rice with its natural parasite (a small, high-caloric crab). In a period of a few months, the population sustainably adopted these

habits for better results than any of the numerous humanitarian campaigns carried out in the region. This first success was followed by several others in diverse areas such as excision in Egypt, AIDS in Myanmar, school attendance in Argentina, nosocomial infections in American hospitals, and so on. The positive deviance approach has become a standard in humanitarian activity and a frequent tool for public policies on health and social action. “Positive deviance is not suitable for everything,” say the authors. “It is unnecessary when a

MEMO

- **Positive deviants are a source of innovation, in that they can resolve,** by their own means, a problem that their community has not yet been able to solve.
- **The challenge is making an anomaly a collective resource;** attention must be placed on individual success more so than global dysfunction.
- **Responsibilities are shifted:** the identification and diffusion of new ideas occurs in the field, breaking away from the traditional top-down model.

Sociological Definition

Deviance, in a sociological context, designates behaviors that violate social norms. Deviance that goes against norms to achieve an ideal model (in terms of values and virtues) constitutes “positive deviance.”

technical solution exists. But the process excels when addressing problems that are enmeshed in a complex social system and require social and behavioral change.”

POSITIVE DEVIANTS: A SOURCE OF INNOVATION FOR COMPANIES

The corporate world is starting to take an interest in the effectiveness of the approach in situations deemed hopeless and is attempting to adapt it to its specific challenges and constraints.

■ The Limits of a Top-Down Approach in Problem Solving

The authors evoke four corporate experiences: two laboratories (Genentech et Merck) that fail to successfully market promising treatments; one bank (Goldman Sachs), dogged by the evolution of wealth management in the United States; and a manufacturer (Hewlett-Packard) unable to focus its workforce on a technical challenge deemed insurmountable: processor overheating. What the four companies have in common is that they all experienced the failure of standard governance. In this model, change is initiated, piloted, and monitored from the top, with the support of consultants and PowerPoint presentations that are supposed to spread good practices. In their article, Pascale and J. Sternin say, “[In the standard model] managers either overlook the isolated successes under their noses or, having spotted them, repackage the discoveries as templates and disseminate them from the top. This seldom generates the enthusiasm necessary to create change.”

■ Turn an Anomaly into a Collective Resource

The positive deviance approach is a radical break from the standard model, say Pascale and J. Sternin: “Isolated success strategies can indeed be brought into the mainstream, but doing so requires a departure from the notions of benchmarking and best practices with which we are all familiar.” The authors call for a radical change in perspective with attention placed on individual success (how do they do it?) rather than global dysfunction (why doesn’t it work?). They also advocate for a shift in responsibility: the process of discovering deviant behaviors is led by teams in the field, similar to the development of scaling schemes and, subsequently, the measurement of progress.

The Authors

Jerry and Monique STERNIN met at Harvard before working with Save the Children. They are recognized as pioneers in “positive deviance,” which they tested for the first time in Vietnam in 1990 as a tool for change before promoting their approach in more than 25 countries.

Richard PASCALE author, consultant, and associate professor at Oxford, has observed the Sternins in numerous missions. Today, he devotes his time in particular to the adoption of positive deviance in the for-profit private sector.



Richard Pascale

THE KEYS TO POSITIVE DEVIANCE

The authors willingly recognize that their first encounter with positive deviance was as instinctive as empirical. Over the next two decades, they developed a methodology for change management “by deviants” in several phases. The approach is intended for people who want to break free from an inextricable situation or wish to adopt a more proactive attitude in the face of change.

■ Mobilizing the Field and Reframing the Problem

The positive deviance model valorizes the role of those in the field: the community controls all change processes. For the authors, this collective approach must start well in advance, as soon as the problem or issue has been defined. They advise leaders to bring together stakeholders and to make sure that they do not limit themselves to people who are directly concerned or who belong to the same hierarchical level. At this stage, it is important for leaders to resist the temptation to present the analysis of the problem “from the top.” The account of the situation should be limited to concrete facts, without downplaying their possible severity. The group must be able to deliver its vision of the current situation and reframe the problem based on members’ personal experiences. The operational players, “game masters,” define the rules. The authors underline the frequently noted discrepancy between expert analysis and the reality in the field.

■ Observing Deviant Practices

The ideal agenda of this first meeting—the only one where the leader plays a key role—likewise includes the presentation of the concept of positive deviance. “Is it pertinent in our situation?” “Do you think you and the company will be able to get something out of it?” If the concept gains a following, the next step is launching the idea of a self-created project team—the most open possible—composed of change agents. These individuals are in charge of identifying successful behaviors by skirting around or overhauling generally accepted processes. ●●●

Genentech, the Bad Example Or how not to exploit the genius of two deviants!

In 2003, the laboratory Genentech was rolling out a revolutionary asthma treatment, featuring unique preventive qualities. Against all expectations, sales were disappointing. However, two salesmen out of the group's 242 in the United States set themselves apart with sales 20 times greater than that of their colleagues. This was achieved by providing personalized coaching to doctors, unsettled by this unusual type of relationship.

A classic case of positive deviance, Genentech unfortunately didn't know how to take advantage of it. Initially, laboratory management suspected the deviants of unethical behavior. Then, when an investigation revealed the legitimacy of their initiatives, it was decided to launch a campaign to promote the behavior, based on the traditional best practices model: a memo was sent by email and a conference call was held without the participation of the two deviant salesmen. As a result, support was nominal and market penetration stood at a standstill.

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■ Discovering Non-Standard Practices

The team sets out to meet with the community of their peers to take inventory of common practices and to identify exceptional individuals. "Even if what you are learning is repetitive, involve as many members of the community as possible in the conversation," advise the authors. At this stage, the leaders of the organization may be tempted to call upon external expertise to carry out this investigative work. But, this runs the risk of creating the "not invented here" syndrome (where there is an unwillingness to adopt ideas that originate from the outside) for the entire process. The process of identifying and deciphering deviant behavior will certainly be long (close to six months at Goldman Sachs). But this is the necessary time for the targeted individuals to take ownership of the approach and the practices that it allows to uncover. This stage might be compromised by accepted beliefs. For example, at Genentech (*see box "Genentech, the Bad Example"*), two high-performing pharmaceutical sales representatives were initially suspected of disrespecting the deontological codes of the profession.

■ Sharing Deviants' Knowledge

Once they have been singled out, positive deviants play an active role in the most crucial step of the process: getting the community involved. Here again, leaders must curb their desire to take control to spread the good word. "But explicit knowledge, conventionally delivered like pizza (neat boxes with toppings of concepts, theories, best practices and war stories), is consumed by the brain but not metabolized in action. The learning gets into the bloodstream through osmosis. It is shaped by social context." The authors developed the concept of a living university based on an "action team" in charge of practical tutoring. At Goldman Sachs, the team brought in a representative from each regional office and defined the content of the training sessions before going around to all sites to present practices identified during the discovery phase. The adoption of new behaviors is entirely voluntary. The last phase also plans for the development of a system for measuring and analyzing progress—which is likewise the responsibility of the community. The results are

made public to maintain long-term support for the process. The authors are well aware that positive deviance places into question the traditional scope of leadership. "It calls for nothing less than a role reversal in which experts become learners, teachers become students, and authority figures become catalysts for bottom-up change. Instead of the CEO (chief expert officer), the leader becomes the CFO (chief facilitation officer). The hardest part is to listen, pay attention, trust the process and the wisdom of the crowds and permit the emergent potential of the community to express itself." ■

Five Tips for Leaders Who Want to Try Positive Deviance

1. Build the reflex to focus on what works despite all odds instead of what does not work or what is lacking.
2. Present the project by insisting on the fact that it is voluntary: your employees need to feel free to participate or not.
3. Recruit a large number of people, not just those who are directly concerned.
4. Promote the reframing of the problem to ensure that the proposed solution is consistent, operational, and measurable.
5. Watch out that you do not take control of the process: the group must be able to discover deviants by itself and virally assume ownership of the desired practices. You should thus be the catalyst of the project, not its author or its manager.

Positive Deviance at Merck

A Clinical Trial

Interview with **David GASSER**, consultant and former Associate Director Corporate Engagement at Merck & Co., Inc. January 2011.

In an unusual experience for such a large, hierarchical corporate giant, Merck tested a Positive Deviance approach to improve sales in a Latin American subsidiary. While it was no easy ride letting the employees on the lower rungs run the show, the poorly performing product on which the initiative was tested saw its sales grow by 17%, and employee confidence was boosted!

BIOGRAPHY



David GASSER spent 20 years at Merck, working his way from Sales Representative, through Marketing, to Associate Director Corporate Engagement, then External Affairs. When offered early retirement in 2008, he settled down in Puerto Rico as a management consultant, mainly supporting organizations fighting HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean, and also opened a photography studio. He holds a BA in biochemistry from the University of Colorado and studied music at the conservatory in Brussels before joining Merck.

When retracing his career at Merck, David Gasser tends to pepper his description with the adjective “unusual”: surveying the launch of dermatological and ophthalmological products (not the company’s usual core business), and managing e-business (unusual in the highly regulated drug industry). So it is perhaps no surprise that from 2004 onwards, he is the one who spearheaded the application of positive deviance, among other innovative methods, as an “unusual way to improve performance” at the pharmaceutical giant. A cultural change was already underway, led by then Vice President Grey Warner, in order to better mobilize employees, to engage customers, and ultimately keep the company competitive. David Gasser, who was Associate Director Customer Engagement at the time, recalls: “Keith McCandless, a gifted consultant who had been helping us with Merck’s

Living Dialogue, a toolbox of techniques to foster learning and innovation, told us about Positive Deviance. We were immediately attracted to the concept, because it is very similar to a social transformation technique we were already working with, called ‘Appreciative Inquiry,’ which helps groups construct a common future based on values.” Grey Warner picked up his phone and invited Jerry Sternin, the seminal figure behind Positive Deviance, to introduce the idea to senior managers.

Find the Right People to Challenge the Standard Model

But it took a while to find a manager willing to take the risk of using the technique. Hardly surprising, in a way it appears “threatening” for hierarchy, as David Gasser points out: “It assumes that management has to get out of the way, instead of telling employees what to do,

whereas the assumption in the standard business model is that the people at the top know what is good.” The experiment was carried out in Mexico in early 2005, as an opportunity to improve sales. “Top management sitting in a room could have just told the Mexican sales force ‘you need to employ such-and-such technique to improve sales’ but we went out of our way not to,” says David Gasser. “The business unit Director described the Positive Deviance project to District Managers and the sales force, and left it to them to make a decision about how to apply it.” And so, because the District Managers were being asked for their opinion, not being dictated orders from above, they engaged fully, instead of using the meeting as an opportunity to complain, recalls David Gasser. Thus a team effort defined the problem to which the approach could be applied. ...

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How the Positive Deviance Approach was Applied at Merck

While the whole process may appear a bit fuzzy, David Gasser stresses that the first step—problem definition—is based on solid data, and that it is the group involved, not the boss, who decides on the parameters that measure success (market share, volume of sales, etc.). The sales representatives and district managers pinned down the problem they were going to tackle: out of 21 districts in Mexico, 15 were not meeting sales targets of FOSAMAX®, an osteoporosis-treatment drug. And this is where Positive Deviance, as a strength-based approach, turned the question on its head: it focused on the six districts that were selling well. “It was a revelation,” says David Gasser, “because the generally accepted way of doing business focuses on what is not working, and improving it.” Instead, they began to notice uncommon but successful practices, specific behaviors that emerged in the six “positive deviant” districts. “For instance, if a sales representative wanted to invite a physician to an event, he or she would do so via a counterpart who had a good relation with the physician and was visiting his area,” says David Gasser. “Or they simply kept up-to-date on current events to make better conversation with the doctor”—slightly different ways of interacting with clients and colleagues, which were far from obvious if you were not looking for them, and, importantly, which required no extra resources.

The Real Behavior Change

Once codified and amplified across the company, these little things made a true difference: by building better relationships with doctors, the sales reps were perceived as less annoying and their visits less time-consuming than previously. “While it is difficult to isolate the effect of the Positive Deviance approach from market performance in general, Fosomax went to the top-selling products,” he recalls. In 2005, sales increased by 17% while the market grew by 13%. But what the Associate Director found even more important, was how the individuals changed, with interactions becoming less

FACTS & FIGURES MERCK

Creation: 1891.
Industry: Pharmaceutical.
Headquarters: Whitehouse Station, New Jersey.
Employees (2005): more than 61,500.
Sales (2009) : \$27,4 millions.

hierarchical and decision-making less top-down. “Junior people were given more latitude to make decisions; sales representatives benefitted from a broadening of what was accepted as work, for example spending time talking to each other on the phone. While these results are gratifying, they are hard to quantify, you can not put them on a balance sheet.”

Success, But no Follow-Up

The whole experiment is called a “squared opportunity” in The Power of Positive Deviance, but David Gasser begs to differ: “The initiative was only ever designed for Latin America; just because it never went company-wide does not mean it was a waste. Furthermore, the

organization changed its priorities afterwards, when it had to deal with the fallout from the voluntary recall of VIOXX® [an anti-inflammatory drug which was found to increase the risk of heart attacks and recalled in 2004], and in a time of crisis, people prefer to regroup into the familiar.” Also, David Gasser himself was given a new position away from the whole Living Dialogue, removing one of the driving forces behind the efforts (Cf. “How leaders pave the way”)—though he is quick to say the he was not doing the work, merely shepherding people into making the process their own. “Like Monique Sternin says, my job is to make myself irrelevant, he quips. I have been away from Merck too long to know if PD is still being practiced although I suspect that there are currently no projects underway. Nonetheless, for those individuals who were part of the original work described above, I have no doubt that the changes precipitated by their experience with PD have endured. PD engenders changes in behavior, especially a disposition to observe what successful colleagues do. The realization that small differences can lead to big differences is transformative and enduring. ■

How Leaders Pave the Way: Key Factors of Success

1. Firstly, a senior manager must be sincerely committed to the initiative and give it time and space, the way Grey Warner did at Merck. It is all the harder as the process is messy, iterative, so it takes a lot of confidence for a leader to step aside and trust collective wisdom. “The leader needs to be able to say ‘let me pave the way’, not ‘show the way,’ and not many are prepared to let go of that responsibility, because of all the what-ifs, what if people get lazy and do not do anything, what if...” says David Gasser, adding that in his experience, most “what-ifs” never came to be.
2. Also, once the process is started, he says you need to interview about 50% of the organization to identify all common practices as well as the positive deviant ones. “It is a huge amount of work,” he says, “but it builds ownership of the work by the community, and though it starts off messy, at the end it is all tied into a neat bundle.”
3. Another important condition is that the people must see themselves as a community—as part of the same village in the case of health programs or as part of the same corporate entity—facing the same challenges, and finding the solution themselves. Or else you run into what David Gasser calls the cultural immune response: if people feel the solution was not invented by them, they will find excuses to avoid adopting it. “What they choose may not be very different from the solution management had come up with, but the path is different, and there lies the huge difference,” points out David Gasser.

Positive Deviance in Healthcare

Mobilizing the Community to Make Latent Solutions Emerge

Interview with **Jon LLOYD**, ex-Project Coordinator at VAPHS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), January 2011.

When Dr Lloyd became coordinator of a regional healthcare initiative in Pittsburgh to work on eliminating one of the deadliest hospital-acquired infections in 2004, he decided to try beating the germs at their own game. “Germs use a process called quorum sensing to communicate, collaborate and coordinate with each other in order to develop resistance to antibiotics and determine when they have reached a critical mass to successfully attack. Positive Deviance is its human equivalent, coordinating people who usually work separately so that they exchange information and collaborate.”

BIOGRAPHY



Jon LLOYD is a retired surgeon and Senior Associate at the Positive Deviance Initiative in the U.S.A. He completed his surgical training at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) and worked as a general and vascular surgeon for 35 years, including 10 years as Chairman of the Department of Surgery at UPMC-Shadyside Hospital. After successfully coordinating a Positive-Deviance-based effort at VAPHS and participating in similar efforts in multiple hospitals in the US, Canada and Colombia to fight resistant healthcare-associated infections from 2004 onwards, Dr Lloyd is now working on expanding the method to other problems such as youth violence.

In 2004, as Project Coordinator at VAPHS and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Jon Lloyd introduced and helped implement the “Positive Deviance” (PD) approach to get rid of endemic Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). The CDC estimates that 100,000 people acquire MRSA infections in the US every year. The vast majority of them pick the germ up in hospitals and 20,000 die. At the beginning of the decade, VAPHS had tried traditional education, then had applied principles from the Toyota Production System to foster compliance with hand hygiene and other precautions. This met with modest and fragile success. Not only were those methods slow

and resource-intensive, they only got MRSA infection rates down by 50% in 2 out of 14 units and it took over three years. “We had our backs against the wall, the standard technical approaches had failed. It occurred to us that MRSA infections were primarily a behavioral problem so we were looking for an innovative solution,” Jon Lloyd recalls. In 2004, an article about Jerry and Monique Sternin’s seminal work in Vietnam caught his eye, and VAPHS invited the Sternins to present Positive Deviance to the staff.

Mobilizing the Community

At VAPHS and subsequent hospitals where the method was introduced, all the

people whose behavior potentially needed to change were invited to participate in a Positive Deviance kick-off – in fact, anyone who came in contact with patients, since MRSA is transmitted by touch. “About 150 people who had never been together in the same room, doctors, nurses, housekeepers, surgeons, ministers attended,” recalls Dr Lloyd. “After discussing the infection problem, they decided to try the Positive Deviance approach to solve it. Dr Rajiv Jain, the Chief of Staff at VAPHS convened another meeting the next day to organize the work. About a third of the initial attendees—the most passionate—turned up. Volunteers, who were frustrated by the failure of previous methods, ...

... dedicated time, time being the only resource really required to collect and use data. Facilitators went around nursing units giving everyone the opportunity to answer structured questions, in order to compare practices and discover “positive deviants,” whose behaviors were preventing infections. The people who were asked to give their opinion came up with plenty of existing and latent solutions, solutions that were just waiting to be acted upon. “Especially since the healthcare industry is seen as a ‘broken system,’ people were excited to find things that were working,” recalls Jon Lloyd. “Positive Deviance is a structured way to get everyone involved in finding and spreading their hidden solutions.”

Listening, not Teaching

He quips that the three keys to rallying the troops are: “invitation, invitation,

“People do not turn their backs on what they have created themselves!”

invitation.” In other terms, he and his colleagues went about as facilitators with questions, not as experts with answers. “Dr Jain mobilized the front-line staff by telling them that they knew best, because they were the ones facing the problem every day.” Issues were explored with precise questions, for instance regarding hygiene. Although it is essential to fight the spread of MRSA, only 50% of nurses and barely 15% of physicians systematically washed their hands entering and exiting rooms in most US hospitals. “Rather than asking ‘why do not you wash your hands,’ we asked ‘can you wash your hands?’,” says Dr Lloyd. “We uncovered barriers, such as lack of soap. Front line staff suggested placing hand hygiene dispensers in creative places, like next to the elevators, at the threshold of every room and in every

FACTS & FIGURES VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

CEO : Terry Gerigk Wolf.

Employees and volunteers (2009) : 4,442.

Number of beds (2009) : 583.

Operating budget (2009) : more than 540 billions dollars.

patient room.” Even church ministers were asked for ideas! “While they were most obedient when it came to donning protective gowns and gloves, they did not know how MRSA spread, but when told, they realized that they needed to clean their bibles between visits, too.”

Needless to say, some were uncomfortable with the idea of involving cleaners and ministers: “One infection prevention

nurse was worried the staff would come up with frivolous or even dangerous ideas (alcohol-based hand rub is flammable). Or perhaps she was ashamed she had not thought of them herself. But when she realized it functioned, she was relieved, because it also meant she no longer needed to be the ‘hand-hygiene cop’, she could be a scientific filter for ideas generated by the staff, a role she preferred,” says Jon Lloyd.

Fostering Ownership

The involvement of the cleaning staff is an outstanding example of how ownership of the solutions was fostered. While housekeepers had written instructions about how to clean rooms, they didn't really use them, either because they knew little English, or thought the instructions out-of-date. During the lis-

tening sessions, they asked nurses where exactly the germs lived. The nurses took swabs from different surfaces, cultured them, and translated the results into green dots on a picture of the bed, shower and bathroom of a room. The housekeepers then decided what needed cleaning, tested that on a room, then refined their checklist. “Their final pictorial document surpassed any design that we could have come up with in effectiveness,” recalls Jon Lloyd. “The housekeepers were so proud of it that they laminated it and placed copies on every cleaning cart and in every supply closet in the hospital. What is more, they no longer viewed their job as simply cleaning, they felt part of an infection-control team.” This sense of ownership is the key to durability, according to him: “People do not turn their backs on what they have created themselves.”

Dr Lloyd likes to reflect on Positive Deviance as a method that potentially can be applied to problems that have not yielded to traditional approaches, especially those that require behavior change. While the theory states that the group involved must see itself as a community, it does not mean that the approach is restricted to villages in the developing world or to the social sector. “A community is the context in which the idea of scarcity is replaced by the idea—and reality—of abundance of unimagined solutions,” he says. “It is a question of using existing resources in a better way.” But most importantly, “what must be appreciated is the expertise that comes from the people who are on the front line.” The Positive Deviance approach is unlikely to appeal to a company that functions in a linear, top-down way, satisfied with an exclusively defect-based or technical approach to all problems. Jon Lloyd argues in favor of socio-technical solutions: “For certain complex problems, it is important to develop an epistemology of comprehensive improvement strategies that include both asset-based and defect-based solutions.” ■

READ AGAIN IN *BUSINESS DIGEST*■ **ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATION: RELEASING YOUR COMPANY'S CREATIVE ENERGY**

How can you support the intellectual vivacity that is such a valuable source of business innovation? Based on the book by Lynda Gratton, *Hot Spots* (Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2007), and the interview with Jan Kratzer, professor at the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), and a case study on Whirlpool. *Business Digest* no. 178, October 2007.

■ **THINK DIFFERENTLY: YOUR CREATIVITY IS LIMITLESS!**

How can you build your creativity in an environment where change and uncertainty are considered suspicious? Based on *Creativity Unlimited* by Micael Dalhén, John Wiley & Sons Ltd., October 2008, and an interview with David Sandström, head planner, DDB Stockholm, February 2010. *Business Digest* no. 204, March 2009.


**SWITCH: HOW TO CHANGE THINGS
WHEN CHANGE IS HARD**

By Chip and Dan Heath, *Crown Business*, February 2010.

When change seems difficult, don't try to solve problems, copy successes," instructs *Switch*, which borrows concepts from positive deviance. According to Chip and Dan Heath, authors of the bestseller *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (Random House, January 2007), identifying what works is the first step of all problem-solving processes in a difficult context (e.g., major organizational change). When

everything's going well, there's nothing to worry about: leaders can focus on solving problems one by one when they arise. However, when everything's going wrong and the situation is too big to handle, such an approach can be a serious loss of energy. Concentrating on what works and diffusing it on a large scale is THE solution. But it's still necessary to be able to identify and to understand successes. Through concrete examples, *Switch* aims to provide managers with a practical guide to change using positive deviance.


**INNOVATION X: WHY A COMPANY'S TOUGHEST
PROBLEMS ARE ITS GREATEST ADVANTAGE**

By Adam Richardson, *Jossey-Bass*, February 2010.

What if behind every problem you encountered was hiding an immense innovation opportunity? That's the theory put forward by Adam Richardson, creative director of the global innovation firm Frog Design, in *Innovation X*, which takes the opposing view of the advocates of positive deviance. According to Richardson, focusing on the most complex problems—the X problems (those which incite us to think differently)—is an

unrivaled source of creativity. Through case studies from companies such as Apple, BMW, Zipcar, Google, and Hewlett-Packard, Richardson shows us that spending time on solving an inextricable problem opens up incomparable innovation perspectives.


ON THE WEB
Positive deviance

<http://www.positivedeviance.org>

The website devoted to the positive deviance initiative is a goldmine for those looking to learn more about this original problem-solving approach. Numerous resources (research articles, reference books, podcasts, etc.) are available for free to visitors, who will find in particular a complete field guide to implementing positive deviance. The document can be downloaded at the following address:

<http://www.positivedeviance.org/pdf/Field%20Guide/FINALguide10072010.pdf>