

GUIDE TO APPLYING POSITIVE DEVIANCE IN THE WORK OF GERONTO HOUSEWIVES

What is the positive deviance approach? It is an approach aimed at solving problems that plague a community.

What is positive and what is deviance?

The approach is based on the practical knowledge that a number of individuals or groups use different, unusual practices to solve problems faced by the community to which they belong.

Apart from the strategies they use to solve challenges, they do not differ from other people around them, except for one thing - their success in solving the problems that plague their community with the help of available resources. They were called **champions**, and their practices a **positive deviance**.

The positive deviance approach was developed by the Sternin couple, Monique and Jerry, when they were faced with the task of reducing child malnutrition in villages in Vietnam. At that time, the usual method of work: bring experts to do an analysis, and then apply agricultural techniques that give success in other places, they had no money.

They had to approach the problem differently and they did. They went to the village and talked with the people about which children were the best fed and what solutions their parents used. This is how the approach of positive deviance was born.



Positive practices can be practiced by other members of the community - the solutions are generally simple and accessible to everyone.

The positive deviance approach seeks to discover them, to introduce them to those people who face the challenge of the solution found by the champion, and to make knowledge of them available to a wider circle of people. This approach empowers the community to bring about social and behavioral change among its members by: discovering **champions**, encouraging others to learn from them how to solve the challenge they face and by using resources available to all.

The positive deviance approach does not impose solutions but has a motto:

Not about me without me.

In other words: you can't solve my problem without me.



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What steps does the positive deviance approach involve?

The positive deviance methodology has five steps.

1. **Defining the problem.** Community members - those who are affected by the problem, identify what is bothering them and what would be a desirable solution for them. In this phase, you talk to the different individuals and groups that make up the community and constantly ask the question: Who else should be invited to participate in solving the problem? In addition, formal and informal resources available to the community to solve the problem are identified. Then he looks for the usual ways of dealing with the problem, which do not always prove to be successful.

2. followed by **the detachment of those who have a different approach to the problem and who successfully solve it.** The key questions that are asked at this stage are: Are all attempts to solve the problem unsuccessful? Is there anyone who managed to overcome the problem?

3. In the next step, the **community gets to know the specific practices used by the champions** to solve the problem. It is important to describe your strategies and behaviors in great detail and to check if they can be applied to the whole community.

4. In the fourth step, the **community designs and develops activities to teach other people** to use positive deviance. At this stage, it is important to answer the questions: What, Who, With whom, How and How long (does it work)? Then to design activities that will allow people to practice positive deviance in a safe environment.

5. In the fifth step, the community develops indicators that will be able to measure, **initiative** positive deviance. **Can geronto housewives and professional workers of centers for social work use the approach of positive deviance in their work?**

This approach can also be applied by geronto-housewives and professional workers of centers for social work. For example, it is not uncommon for the elderly to suspect and distrust others, including social workers and geronto housewives. When they do not trust others, the elderly do not seek the help they need, and their quality of life decreases. A positive deviance approach here can help identify those who have successfully built trust with the elderly and teach the rest of us how to use their solutions.

There is also one *But!*

The positive deviance approach is not universally applicable and should not be used when there are other, tried and tested solutions that produce results. It is used when existing practices are not successful, as a kind of alternative approach in the case of working on challenges that affect a significant number of members of a community, with unforeseeable consequences, and in order to solve them, they require a social change or a change in the behavior of individuals.

Proposal for gerontohomemakers

What does the application of a positive approach look like in practice?

The positive deviance approach can be practiced at regular meetings of geronto-housewives. We can use this approach when we face challenges while performing our work (as in the example with distrust of old people), as well as in the case that we want to support others to solve problems that indirectly concern us. For example, gerontomo housewives are trained to recognize victims of violence among users of services in the home and inform professionals that an elderly person suffers violence, but they can also point to their own and positive practices that the elderly used to defend themselves from violence.

While performing their regular work, geronto housewives face difficulties. One of them is the refusal of the user to get dressed when they arrive at their place. The elderly homemaker Anika, who faced this challenge, used the following strategy: she told the service user, Janka, that she would inform her superior that she was waiting for her in his underwear and that she would have to stop coming to him because of that, and then she introduced the practice of entering the house, Janka rings the doorbell to let him know she's coming and give him enough time to get dressed.

From this example, we see that the SOLUTIONS are SIMPLE AND APPLICABLE!

EXAMPLE FROM PRACTICE

Here is how the application of the approach can look like in practice. At the regular meeting of gerontohomemakers, field work is discussed and the key problems faced by them and their users are identified. These can be, for example: lack of time to do all the necessary work during working hours, loneliness of the elderly, their isolation, as well as great mistrust. The elderly who do not trust the geronto-homemakers most often cancel the necessary help and thus remain without the necessary support in their daily functioning.

The risk of their social isolation and loneliness, depression, neglect and self-neglect is also increased. Also, elderly housewives have a lot of problems in working with such users.

Natalija tells us about the lack of trust. Marko, the beneficiary, does not want to give her the health card that is necessary in order to get prescriptions for his medicines from the doctor. The question arises: Is anyone else facing this problem? From the answers of other elderly housewives, we learn that this problem bothers them too. The next question we ask is: Did anyone among them manage to solve this challenge? The answer is also yes. Gordana takes care of him. We ask her what solution - positive practice she uses and we are curious to find out all the details. Here is her solution: she agreed with Marko, an untrustworthy older gentleman, that both of them sign the reverse side, on which, in addition to the date when she took his health card and when she returned it, the purpose for which she took the document is written. The reverse is in a visible place, and Marko can always remind himself that Gordana is responsible and that he can trust her. Can other geronto housewives apply this practice? They give an affirmative answer.

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**The opinions expressed in this
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More about the working
method:

www.positivedeviance.org

www.win-org.eu