



# **From the Inside Out: Uncovering Solutions to Intractable Problems through Positive Deviance**

**APRIL 3 - 4, 2006  
BETHESDA, MARYLAND**



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**PLEXUS INSTITUTE  
&  
THE POSITIVE DEVIANCE INITIATIVE AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY**



# Plexus Institute

## From the Inside Out: Uncovering Solutions to Intractable Problems through Positive Deviance

Residence Inn Bethesda - Downtown  
Bethesda, Maryland, US  
April 3 - 4, 2006

### OPENING THOUGHTS

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*Somewhere in your community or 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.*

*Jerry Sternin and Richard Pascale*



*Jerry Sternin*

Positive Deviance, an approach developed over the past fourteen years, demonstrates that isolated examples of success can be tapped to benefit an entire community or organization. Accomplishing this requires a radical departure from “benchmarking” and “best practice” strategies of change.

Plexus Institute invites you to explore Positive Deviance with Jerry and Monique Sternin, leading Positive Deviance (PD) authorities and pioneers, and complexity practitioner Lisa Kimball. Join with colleagues who are searching for solutions to some of the critical social and organizational challenges facing us today.

The PD approach builds on successful but “deviant” (different) practices that are identified from within a community or organization. It is based on the observation that **in every group there are certain individuals whose uncommon, but demonstrably successful practices or behaviors enable them to find better solutions than their neighbors or colleagues who have access to exactly the same resources.** Its use was pioneered in developing countries and has led to sustainable improvements in seemingly intractable organizational and social issues. Some successes are:

- Sustained 65% - 80% reduction in childhood malnutrition in communities with 2.2 million people in Viet Nam

- Sustained reduction in childhood malnutrition in 41 countries around the world
- Successful advocacy against female circumcision in Egypt and thousands of averted genital mutilations
- Reduction in neo-natal mortality and morbidity in Pakistan and Viet Nam
- Increased condom use among commercial sex workers and intravenous drug users in Viet Nam, Burma and Indonesia
- 45% – 50% increase in student retention in schools in poor communities in Argentina and enhanced educational outcomes in US schools
- Documented reduction in girl trafficking in poor villages in East Java, Indonesia

The *Harvard Business Review* featured PD in its May 1, 2005 edition. The approach has also begun to penetrate the social service, government and management consciousness in North America. It has been used to tackle gnarly technical challenges at Hewlett Packard, complexity quality challenges in hospitals, and in schools dedicated to improving education. A PD workshop was held at the January **2005 World Economic Forum** in Davos.

PD is unlike traditional expert-driven models for social and organizational change. Like the human immune system, individuals and institutions reject what is perceived as “foreign matter”. When “experts” provide “best practice” strategies for organizational changes, which are externally identified, and “not invented from within”, they face rejection. The Positive Deviance approach provides an antidote to the immune system defense mechanism; the solution and the host share the same “DNA” and the change comes from within. Those in a community or organization are helped to discover the positive deviants in their midst, understand the strategies they employ and then create among themselves a process for enrolling the larger community in the desired change. Change is from inside out.

Complexity science is a discipline that is providing important new insights into how living systems self-organize, evolve and adapt as a result of emergent and nonlinear interactive processes. Participants will gain new insights into social change triggered by advances in complexity science and get a taste of the theoretical basis upon which the Positive Deviance approach rests.

This workshop will provide an overview of how and where PD has been successfully used to address problems requiring social or behavioral change. All participants will gain an appreciation for the four steps of the PD process.

## **INTENDED PARTICIPANTS**

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Have you been frustrated with the “best practice” or “expert driven” approaches to change? Are you committed to doing something about problems faced by your organization or community that have resisted previous improvement efforts? Have you noticed that many of these problems do not to affect 100% of the community or group? If you answered “yes” to these questions, then this workshop is for you and your colleagues.

The sponsors of this workshop seek to attract a diverse group of participants from social service, healthcare, government, international development, community, and business organizations who are searching for more workable and lasting approaches to community and organizational change. Participants are encouraged to attend with colleagues, bring a specific change challenge and be prepared to work on a specific PD change project. You will leave prepared to explore whether PD could become a valuable approach to issues of importance to your organization or community.

## TESTIMONIALS

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Plexus Institute held two workshops last year on PD. Here is what some of the attendees had to say about their learning experience:

- ◆ “The Sternin’s were magnificent.”
- ◆ “The ideas keep resonating with me. The experience expanded my repertoire of ideas for helping community groups and organizations discover their solutions to their issues.”
- ◆ “I was impressed but not surprised by the amount of wisdom in the room.”
- ◆ “The story telling was superb and really helped me learn and understand PD.”
- ◆ “The two days were extremely rich and inspiration.”

## DATES, TIMES AND LOCATION

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The workshop will be April 3 –4. 2006 at:

**Residence Inn Bethesda - Downtown  
Bethesda, Maryland, 20814 US  
7335 Wisconsin Avenue**

The workshop will be run from 9:00 am to 5:00 each day.

## MAIN WORKSHOP AGENDA

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### **April 3 – Morning**

- How PD works: conceptual framework, underlying behavioral change theory, and the PD 4 step design process. How PD relates to key complexity science concepts.

### **April 3 – Afternoon**

- Stories from the field and participant issues: how PD has been used to address HIV/AIDS risk reduction, educational performance, childhood malnutrition, female genital mutilation, hospital and healthcare quality improvement and beginning work on challenges participants bring to the workshop.

### **April 4 – Morning**

- Practicing PD: Application of the 4 PD design steps to solving social/behavioral change problems, further PD practice on specific issues workshop participants wish to address. Rounds of small group work, coaching and full group reflections.

### **April 4 – Afternoon**

- Next steps: creating PD workgroups and networks – participants design ways to introduce PD to colleagues back home, explore how to get a PD initiative underway, and discuss how they might collaborate on common issues.

## WORKSHOP FACULTY

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### **JERRY STERNIN**

*Director, Positive Deviance Initiative*

Jerry Sternin founded the Positive Deviance Initiative in 2001. It is located at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition, Science and Policy. He has worked for more than a decade refining the concept of PD for application in diverse settings all over the world. He has served as country director for Save the Children (US) in Bangladesh, Philippines, Viet Nam, Egypt and Myanmar. He has also been a Peace Corps Volunteer and country director in Rwanda, Mauritania, Nepal and the Philippines as well as Assistant Dean and Student Advisor at the Harvard Business School. Currently, Jerry Sternin serves on the Science Advisory Board of Plexus Institute.

### **MONIQUE STERNIN**

*Technical Director, Positive Deviance Initiative*

Monique Sternin is the technical director of the PD initiative, and co-teaches a course in “PD for Practitioners” at Tufts University. She has broad experience throughout the world with the use of Positive Deviance. Her work spans such areas as reduction of childhood malnutrition in many countries, advocacy for eradication of female genital mutilation in Egypt, advocacy for condom usage for commercial sex workers in Myanmar and improvement in maternal and newborn care in Pakistan. Monique has also collaborated on the first hospital-based applications of PD in the US.

### **LISA KIMBALL**

*Executive Producer, Group Jazz, and Trustee, Plexus Institute*

Lisa Kimball leads Group Jazz, an organization devoted to supporting efforts of teams, task forces, communities and organizations. She earned her doctorate in educational psychology, cognition and learning. Lisa is active in online community work and organizational development and skilled in using complexity-inspired principles. Lisa also spearheads the Plexus DC Fractal.

### **CURT LINDBERG**

*President, Plexus Institute*

Curt Lindberg helped found Plexus Institute and has served as its President since its incorporation. He has played an important role in introducing complexity science into management practice and health care. Among his many publications is the highly regarded book *Edgework: Insights From Complexity Science for Health Care Leaders*, which he coauthored with Brenda Zimmerman and Paul Plsek.

## LODGING ACCOMMODATIONS

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To reserve a room, contact the hotel by March 11, 2006 and request the Plexus Institute conference room rate 9\$149 – single, \$169 – double).

**Residence Inn Bethesda - Downtown**  
**Bethesda, Maryland, 20814 US**  
**7335 Wisconsin Avenue**  
**301-718-0200**

## **REGISTRATION AND CANCELLATION POLICY**

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To register, complete the attached registration form and return by mail or fax. The registration fee of \$600 covers tuition, materials, continental breakfasts, and break refreshments. Enrollment is limited, and early registration is advised. A confirmation will be sent upon receipt of payment and completed registration form. For those who cannot afford the full registration fee, several scholarships are being offered.

Your registration fee, less a \$50 administrative fee, will be refunded when Plexus Institute receives written notification at least 14 days prior to the conference. No refunds will be made after that time.

## **ABOUT PLEXUS INSTITUTE**

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Plexus Institute is a community of diverse people – scientists, business executives, nurses, artists, educators, journalists, researchers, physicians, university students, and community leaders. Its members, by learning with one another, are making progress on significant issues facing society and organizations. The Institute's mission is to foster the health of individuals, families, communities, organizations and our natural environment by helping people use concepts emerging from the new science of complexity. To learn more about Plexus Institute, visit [www.PlexusInstitute.org](http://www.PlexusInstitute.org).

# Plexus Workshop Registration

## From the Inside Out: Uncovering Solutions to Intractable Problems through Positive Deviance April 3 – 4, 2006

Mail or FAX your form and payment to:

Plexus Institute  
PO Box 395  
Allentown, NJ 08501

Telephone: (609) 208-2930  
Fax: (609) 208-2934  
E-Mail: [Lisa@groupjazz.com](mailto:Lisa@groupjazz.com)  
[Curt@PlexusInstitute.org](mailto:Curt@PlexusInstitute.org)

*(Please print or type all information. You may duplicate this form for multiple registrations.)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Middle name or Initial \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organizational Title \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_



Please check if you have special accommodation or dietary needs and indicate specific need(s):

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### From the Inside Out: Uncovering Solutions to Intractable Problems through PD

- Standard Registration (\$600)\*\* \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Organizational Plexus Member Registration (\$0 US) \* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Payment Enclosed** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### Payment Method

Check Enclosed *(make checks payable to **Plexus Institute**)*  
Credit Card: Visa MasterCard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expires (Month/Year) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* Organizational members can send two individuals for free; additional attendees pay the Standard Registration fee.

\*\* For those applicants who cannot afford the full registration fee, **scholarships** are being offered. Please contact us if you wish to discuss your need for the scholarship. Plexus Institute seeks to be an inclusive organization that welcomes a wide variety of people and organizations to its community. As such, some funds have been allocated by the Institute to support partial conference scholarships for those without the financial resources to cover full registration fees.