

The Positive Deviant

Hi. Welcome back for the second video for module two. In this video, we're going to talk about looking for a positive deviance. One good way to identify a subject for a story is to first analyze the problem. Ask yourself, what's the small slice of the problem that's most important to my audience? Then look for who's doing better on that.

The growing emphasis on data driven development presents an opportunity for global development professionals to learn from and perhaps even replicate the successes of the best performers within a data set. But that can only happen once they learn how to take a positive deviance approach. Identifying the people or policies that defy the norm and achieve better outcomes as a result and as a starting point to determine what is working. Despite the emphasis on data journalism in the last few years, some journalists still shy away from large data sets. And when journalists do turn to data, it's often to investigate. A negative outlier data usually informs journalistic inquiries, like what city has the worst crime rate? Where is governance the weakest? Where are racial and economic inequities the greatest? At the Solutions Journalism Network.

We suggest a different way for journalists to use data exploring positive deviance or slices of a data set that get at the best performers. For example, which hospitals in Texas have the lowest infection rate? What country has the highest participation of women in government? A positive deviant is a signal that something newsworthy could be happening. It's the journalist's job to get the story behind the positive deviant, and in doing so, uncover information that could be valuable for people everywhere. Perhaps the Texas hospital found a way to encourage nurses to speak up when a doctor fails to wash hands. Maybe state prison authorities began providing mental health services and drug treatment to recently released prisoners. Those are important stories. But that being said, a positive deviant could also signify nothing. It could be a quirk in the data, a function of demographics or an inaccurate measurement. As I've said, it's the journalist's job to find out. Positive deviant journalism works backwards from data outcomes. Some journalists hesitate to attempt solutions journalism because they fear being labeled advocates or PR representatives. But with positive deviant journalism, the data will give you the story and therefore will refute any confusion with advocacy.

Next time you look at a data set, here are a few ways to consider slicing to find a noteworthy, positive deviant. First up, change over time. Which place has made newsworthy improvements? Second comparison to peers. Which place is doing better than its comparable peers? Method Best practice.

Which place is succeeding with innovative new ideas and may use breaking ground episode from class to career. The program outlines that only 2 billion a year is spent on adult education in the US. A Washington State program is making the best of that minimal funding. By combining skills training with basic education, preparing adults for jobs, the secret sauce team teaching, which allows for personal attention coverage, which place has greatly expanded access to a solution subgroup, Which place has improved outcomes for a particular population.

Policy Which government has instituted successful new policies to solve a problem. In the reading L.A. Policy shift yields decline. In school suspensions. Huge numbers of students were getting suspensions as punishment until there was a nationwide push to roll back zero tolerance policies instituted after the deadly Columbine High School shootings that emphasized harsh discipline for even minor misbehavior in favor of supported focused

alternatives, disparity which place has reduced racial, geographic or socioeconomic disparities and outcomes cost? Which place has maintained good service while reducing costs? In an interview, Bill Hazel, director of global government at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle, Washington, said If you are trying to make decisions and set priorities in your community and you are only focused on things that aren't working, then you can quickly end up in the cycle of always chasing the most obstinate problems instead of looking to areas where there's possibly progress and trying to mirror that progress. The data shows there are success stories happening all the time, so it's about putting a narrative around that and finding what worked and whether it's replicable.

Last, using founder of the Welfare Improvement Network, advises to keep the stages of the positive deviance approach in mind. Defining the problem, Discovering the norm. Determining the behavior of the best performers, figuring out the what and the how, then spreading the results. Next week we'll be taking a look at organizing and telling solution stories. Solution stories are often structured differently. There is no one size fits all. We will review fundamental concepts when choosing a narrative. Thank you for watching and I'll see you in the forums.