Course Outline

Communicating Positive Deviance
Department of Communication
The University of Texas at El Paso

COMM 4364 CRN 28560
COMM 5350 CRN 28898
3 Credit Hours
Spring 2018

Facilitator: Arvind Singhal, Ph.D., Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor of Communication, Department of Communication, University of Texas -- El Paso, El Paso, TX 79968, U.S.A. Telephone: (915) 747-6286 (Voicemail). Fax: (915) 747-5236. E-mail: asinghal@utep.edu  website: http://utminers.utep.edu/asinghal/ Office: Cotton Memorial 301. Skype: arvindsinghal62. Twitter: @asinghalUbuntu.

Singhal is co-author or editor of 14 books, including four on the positive deviance approach and several case studies and essays on this topic.

Office Hours: Mondays from 3:45 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. at the lobby of the Hilton Garden Hotel on University Avenue, UTEP Campus; or by appointment. I am also happy to skype or have a telephone call with you, especially when I am on the road.

Meetings: Our regular class will meet every Monday evening from 6 to 8:50 p.m. in UGLC 208.

Course Background: Why do so many students -- who are first in their family to go to college, who work full time, who hail from low socio-economic strata, who have familial responsibilities -- find a way to complete their degrees in four years, and with a high GPA, while most others in their situation fail to achieve a similar outcome? What are these students doing, without access to any additional resources and against all odds, which leads to better outcomes?

How can some very poor households in rural Vietnam, who have access to no special resources, keep their children well nourished, while most others in their situation fail to achieve a similar outcome? What are these households doing?

The Positive Deviance (PD) Approach is based on the observation that in every community, there are some individuals or groups, whose uncommon behaviors and strategies allow them to have more successful outcomes than their neighbors, even though they face the same constraints and have access to the same resources.

Course Objectives: Participants will (1) understand—experientially, critically, and analytically—the positive deviance approach to social change, (2) gain hands-on experience in framing a positive deviance inquiry, and work toward the collective implementation of a small-scale pilot PD intervention(s) with other vested partners. Further, the course participants will have opportunities to learn from each other and from past experiences in implementation of the PD approach to address a variety of complex social
problems. combating childhood malnutrition in Vietnam, reducing school dropout rates in Argentina, and preventing and controlling hospital-acquired infections in US health care settings. Participants will be introduced to the essential steps involved in the PD process by acting their way into a new way of PD thinking.

**Learning Outcomes:** The present course – through its format of readings, discussions, activities, self-reflection, field-based action, and regular journaling seeks to provide

1. an engaged understanding of the positive deviance approach
2. an engaged understanding of the BIG role that small (micro) communication acts can make in bringing about social change.
3. a reflective space for analyzing and critiquing the underlying discourses, frameworks, methods, and approaches in social, organizational, and behavioral change, and how the positive deviance approach represents an alternative.
4. an actionable space for experimentation and experiential learning on the positive deviance approach.

**Course Format:** A mix of group discussions and presentations, storytelling, liberating structures, creative activities, guest speakers, case-studies, video viewings, and reflective learner notes. While engaging with relevant literature (both scholarly and general interest), the present course will consciously seek to promote a strategic, applied, orientation.

**Readings:** Class participants will procure and read these three books during the semester. The books are available in the UTEP bookstore.

**Book #1:**
*The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World’s Toughest Problems*  
Authors: Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, & Monique Sternin  

**Book #2:**
*How to be a Positive Leader: Small Actions, Big Impact.* Authors: Jane Dutton and Gretchen Spreitzer.  
2014 Berrett Kohler Publishers

**Book #3:**
*Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*  
Authors: Chip Heath & Dan Heath  

As the class unfolds, a set of readings will be provided to you electronically (by email) on relevant topics with the expectation that you will go over them before coming to class. Several readings are provided in this syllabus as clickable links.

**Grading and Assignments:** The grading system for this course is based on four sets of activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impromptu PD Group Assignments in Class</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class 120-second Power Presentations</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Learner Notes</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD Inquiry Term Projects</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence, Engagement, and Participation in Class</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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Final grades will be calculated based on points scored in each evaluation activity. The following general point scale will be used to compute grades: A=900 or more, B=899 to 800; C=799 to 700; D=699 to 600; F=599 or less.
Assessment Metrics: An assessment guide for timely submission of assignments is provided below. When submitting your learner notes, your final PD Inquiry Term Projects, and engaging in in-class work, please know that the following criteria will guide your grade:

A = Exceptional work, demonstrating highest levels of engagement and grasp (does not mean “agreement”) of key course ideas, high quality of thinking, creative expression, and well-organized writing.
B = Good work on criteria listed above.
C = Poor work, etc.
D = Very poor work, etc.
F = No work.

Academic Dishonesty: Several types of behaviors constitute academic dishonesty and are not acceptable. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, which involves submitting the works of others as your own and includes improper source citation, no source citation, using materials prepared by another student, and using fictitious sources.

Special Needs: Please let me know if you have any special needs with respect to your involvement in the present class. If you have or suspect a disability and need accommodations, please contact Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO) at 747-5148 or at dss@utep.edu or come by Room 106 Union East Building.

CLASS ONE (1/22)

Introduction to the course

CLASS TWO (1/29)

What is PD?
*Vietnam Case Study: Understanding the PD Process Step-by-Step

Readings: The Power of Positive Deviance (First Half of Book) and


Videos: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ad9su5YL6RU (Monique Sternin on PD)
Jerry Sternin on Positive Deviance http://vimeo.com/61509784 (9'30")

CLASS THREE (2/5)

Guest Lecturer—Case Study on Positive Deviance

Readings: The Power of Positive Deviance (Second Half of Book)

CLASS FOUR (2/12)

Expanding our Understanding of the PD Approach
*Impromptu In-Class Group Assignment #1 on PD


*In-Class work on PD Pitches for next class
CLASS FIVE (2/19)

*3-4 minute Preliminary Project Pitches on PD Inquiry Topics -- Class Participants


Video: Curt Lindberg on Complexity and Positive Deviance (MRSA)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K00MsZcYzZ0&feature=related

Writing one’s name on surgery cap: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FUMWSJSXGO

CLASS SIX (2/26)

PD Inquiry Project – Defining and Determining and Discovery Phases


Videos: CBC Report on Germ Warfare
http://www.cbc.ca/video/#/Shows/The_National/Health/1274854987/ID=2213462958

Positive Deviance in a Brazil Hospital 4’ (Albert Einstein Hospitals)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-X5j1MIY77Y

CLASS SEVEN (3/5)

How Small Leadership Actions Can Make a BIG impact

Readings: How to be a Positive Leader (Book) read first half. And, complete book over Spring break.

Video: Positive Deviance and Malaria Control
https://youtu.be/v1mtuFkDkBY

3/12 SPRING BREAK: No Class Today

During Spring Break Finish How to be a Positive Leader Book.

CLASS EIGHT (3/19)

Positive Deviance and other Social Change Approaches
*120-Second Individual Power Presentations on PD Journey

Readings: Switch (Book) read first half.

CLASS NINE 3/26

Readings: *Switch* (Book) finish second half.

Video: *Switch* [https://youtu.be/qmmwWxVzSsw](https://youtu.be/qmmwWxVzSsw)

In-Class Progress Reports on PD Inquiry Projects

CLASS TEN (4/2)

Designing a PD Intervention: Acting One’s Way

Class ELEVEN (4/9)

In-Class Progress Reports on PD Inquiry Projects
Subtleties and Nuances of Implementing PD

CLASS TWELVE (4/16)

In-Class Progress Reports on PD Inquiry Projects
When Not to Implement PD

CLASS THIRTEEN (4/23)

In-Class Progress Reports on PD Inquiry Projects

CLASS FOURTEEN (4/30)

*Presentation of PD Inquiry Projects*
*Learner Notes Due electronically at asinghal@utep.edu (with summary sheet)*

FINALS WEEK (5/7)

*PD Inquiry Term Project Reports Due Electronically at asinghal@utep.edu*

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Impromptu In-Class Group Assignment on Positive Deviance
(100 points)

On February 12, 2018, you will be split into groups and implement an in-class impromptu positive deviance inquiry. Before this group assignment, we will take you step-by-step through all the key steps of the PD approach. You do not need to do any special preparation, just be caught up on your readings.

Class attendance is mandatory for you to get this group grade. And, peer-grading will be employed!

120-Second Power Presentation
(100 points)

On March 19, 2018 right after Spring Break, come prepared with a 120-second power (short for powerful) presentation on what your PD journey has been like. What buckets have been filled and what fires have been lit? Let your presentation be BIG and POWERFUL and CREATIVE and MEMORABLE but without PowerPoint. Class attendance is mandatory, and peer grading will be employed.

Weekly Learner Notes
(300 points)

This course includes a substantial grade assessment component based on what you believe you are learning from engaging in our readings, class discussions, reflections, and actions. This is an on-going, week-by-week, self- motivated (and monitored) activity. We will often begin our class sessions by inviting you to share your learner notes with other class participants in a small or big group.

How will you operationalize these learner-centered reflection activities?

Each of you will maintain a notebook that you can title “Learner Notes.” After each class session (starting from the first one on 1/22/18), when you return home, write a 500-word essay (about two-double spaced pages), synthesizing your key learning from that day’s class discussions, activities, and/or readings. Try to focus on the most important/revealing concepts, ideas, approaches, and/or vignettes about the positive deviance approach to social change.

You will bring your updated and typed Learner Notes to the next class session in a binder. Each Learner Note should be (a) numbered (1, 2, 3, etc.), (b) dated (the date of the class session on which it is based), and (c) should list the word count. This means your first learner note – which you will bring to class on January 29, 2018 – should be dated January 22, 2018.

Each person can give themselves a break from the Learner Notes once or twice during the semester; which means we will look for 11 entries total in grading the final submission. Each day’s learning notes are thus worth 27 points.

You will submit your collated Learner Notes for final review and grading in electronic MS-Word/or PDF form (sent to me at asinghal@utep.edu) by 6 p.m., April 30, 2018. All learner notes should be in one electronic file.

SUMMARY SHEET: The first page of this Learner Notes doc should be a summary sheet with your name, the total number of learner notes you have, and the dates that you were not present in class. You will need to keep a running tab of your absences (excused/non-excused). The file name and subject line should be in the following manner: Full Name_PD Learner Notes_Spring 2017. Doc/pdf
PD Inquiry Term Projects
(400 points)

This group project (to be carried out in groups of up to three people) involves a step-by-step implementation and documentation of a Positive Deviance Project on an intractable, complex social problem in the city of El Paso.

Regular weekly progress reports will be made by the group members in class to invite inputs from others, and on May 7, 2018 (Final Exam Week) each group will submit a 12-15 page document (electronically to asinghal@utep.edu) summarizing the process through which the intractable problem was framed/defined, how a determination was made of who represent the positive deviants, and what PD behaviors were discovered that are replicable by all.

Each group will present the main findings on April 30, using 7 timed minutes. The presentation should be creative, powerful, awe-inspiring. Again, we encourage you to go beyond PowerPoint and think of it as a Power-presentation.

The report should pay attention to the various decision points, key recommendations for “acting one’s way” into the PD behaviors.

A PD report-writing guide will be provided to you at least three weeks before the project report is due.

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Additional Resources on Positive Deviance

www.positivedeviance.org

THIRTEEN PD Films

Positive Deviance Case Studies and Articles
http://utminers.utep.edu/asinghal/PD%20Wisdom%20Series.htm
Dr. Arvind Singhal (asinghal@utep.edu) is the Samuel Shirley and Edna Holt Marston Endowed Professor of Communication and Director of the Social Justice Initiative at The University of Texas at El Paso. He is also appointed, since 2010, as the William J. Clinton Distinguished Fellow at the Clinton School of Public Service, Little Rock, Arkansas, and since 2015, Distinguished Professor, Faculty of Business Administration, Inland University of Applied Sciences, Norway.

Singhal teaches and conducts research on the diffusion of innovations, the positive deviance approach, organizing for social change, the entertainment-education strategy, and liberating interactional structures. His outreach spans public health, education, human rights, poverty alleviation, sustainable development, civic participation, democracy and governance, and corporate citizenship.


Singhal won Top Paper Awards from the American Public Health Association (APHA), International Communication Association (ICA), and National Communication Association (NCA) over a dozen times, and Ohio University’s Baker Research Award twice. He was selected as Distinguished Anna Endowment Lecturer (2017), the Distinguished Carroll Arnold Lecturer at NCA in 2015, and recognized with the Elizabeth Andersch 2014 Award for outstanding contributions to the communication discipline by the Scripps College of Communication, Ohio University. The Social Science Research Council & the International Communication Association recognized him with the Communication Research as Collaborative Practice Award in 2009 and the Communication Researcher as an Agent of Change Award in 2008. The NW Communication Association honored him with the 2007 Human Rights Award for Steadfast Commitment to Social Justice, Social Change, and Freedom, and in 2005, USC’s Norman Lear Center recognized him with the first Everett M. Rogers Award for Outstanding Contributions to Entertainment-Education.

Singhal’s recent academic honors and appointments include Presidential Scholar, Mudra Institute of Communication Arts, India (2015 onwards); President-Appointed Visiting Professor, Kumamoto (National) University, Japan (2011 onwards) Fulbright Hays Scholar, Slovakia (2012); Schomburg Distinguished Scholar, Ramapo College, NJ (2011), Commerzbank Foundation Professor, Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany (2009); Berkitt Williams Distinguished Lecturer, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas (2009); and Raushni Memorial Deshpande Distinguished Lecturer, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, India (2006).

Singhal’s research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health, The National Science Foundation, The Dutch Health Research Council, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the State of Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. He has served as an advisor to the World Bank, UN-FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNAIDS, UNFPA, U.S. Department of State; U.S. A.I.D., Family Health International, PATH, Save the Children, the BBC World Service Trust, International Rice Research Institute, Voice for Humanity, and private corporations such as Procter & Gamble (U.S.A and Thailand), Telenor AS (Norway), SpareBank (Norway), and others.

He has taught previously at Ohio University, University of Southern California, University of California - Los Angeles, and held visiting professorships at the USC Annenberg School; the Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University; Royal Roads University, Canada; Kumamoto (National) University, Japan; Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany; Institut Teknologi (Malaysia), Bangkok University (Thailand); and visited and lectured in some 90 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia, Europe, and North America.