

Leading for failure



Question 1 : I have worked as a researcher my entire life, and I am familiar that researchers do a lot of work on the thresholds of uncertainty, experimentation does always come with a risk of failure, the null hypotheses are not always confirmed. It strikes me as interesting; I often look to the pharmaceutical industry in how they test medications and how they really start small and then scale up undertaking multiple experiments before the medication or vaccine is approved. It strikes me as interesting, if starting small the risks of failure and the negative effects of failure are also quite small. It strikes me that this is an approach that we could be taking in our policing agencies and in our other criminal justice agencies, as in starting small there is a small risk of failure but in starting small as well it also gives us an evidence base that we can use to justify larger scale experiments. I would be interested to get your thoughts on this.



Answer: [Stuart Bartels]: I would agree. The framing for this presentation is of course on leadership and the strength-based approach element of that. What the literature is telling us, and what is attracting the AIPM to this is the fact that in one's organisation there are likely to be these people with a positive deviant attributes already, and who may already have started small and if they are surrounded by the right leadership; the leadership that empowers; the leadership that gets up on the balcony and can see that these types of people in the organisation and embrace them; not the leader that sits up in the balcony and views these people as recalcitrant and working outside the pecking order, but actually sees someone with great altruistic values but who works outside the system a little bit with great energy, they might already be there and so they may already be starting small, starting to address these issues outside the greater research framework. Of course, if this is identified, then the research framework can come in and start to test some of these things they are doing. What has happened first is the leaders made the observation, "hey something different is happening here, we are not using the system that we thought we had to use , someone is working slightly outside that for all the right reasons, with all the right intentions, lets have a look at that". So we are offering in this context of the age of scrutiny, a different way perhaps to look at evidence-based policing and the types of people that are right for that. In the space of positive deviance under the right empowering leadership, those people are already doing something and we haven't noticed it. More emerges from the inside out and so maybe they have already started small and tested the boundaries but maybe in policing we have the propensity to put those people in a certain bucket working outside the system being "troublemakers". With a strength-based view, positive deviance view they are seen as mavericks but in a positive way.



Question 2: 'Positive Deviance' is a great way of nudging the status quo ... Would you also advocate using a Shakespearean 'Fool' to speak to King Lear ruling his police Kingdom?

Answer [Stuart Bartels]: I think that is absolutely the point, it is absolutely what these mavericks do that display these positive deviance characteristics. They do challenge the status quo and they do challenge the 'King Lears' of the world to think a little bit more differently. You will often hear them as being spoken about as "thinking outside the square". But it takes really authentic and courageous leaders to both observe that, empower it, support it and let it be. It is almost a circular thing because you need the leaders in there to observe these people, identify them and empower them. It is courageous leadership at times, where Vicki started in the failure piece, not really in the DNA of police.