



p-TIPS

A change for the better (Your company's secret change agents)

Hundreds of volumes have been written on the management of change. In their article "Your company's secret change agents" in the May 2005 *Harvard Business Review*, Richard Tanner Pascale and Jerry Sternin argue that when changes in behavior and attitude are necessary, "positive deviants" within organizations who are already working more productively and solving problems more effectively in the same environment and with the same resources should be emulated. Forget top-down edicts on change; instead identify change agents already working anonymously in your organization. The authors recommend six steps, which have been followed by enterprises as diverse as Save the Children, Hewlett Packard, Coca Cola, and Genentech.

Step 1) Make the group the guru. Absolute dependence on leaders absolves team members from owning changes adopted. If innovators are just like every other employee, disbelief and resistance are more easily overcome. Many problems are best solved by line workers.

Step 2) Reframe through facts. Restating problems from different perspectives based on hard data offers opportunities for change. If group A is producing more than group B, find out how and whether its practices could be transferred.

Step 3) Make it safe to learn. Positive deviants should not be ridiculed for doing things differently if their way works. Similarly, acknowledging a problem should not implicate anyone in its origins. Authority figures must show that they are also willing to change and learn.

Step 4) Make the problem concrete. Show employees exactly what happens when a product does not function as advertised or a customer service representative is brusque. Don't bury problems in PowerPoint presentations; demonstrate so that the challenge of solving them can't be ignored.

Step 5) Leverage social proof. Publicize the accomplishments of your positive deviants and encourage others to attempt similar changes. People more often act themselves into a new way of thinking than think themselves into a new way of acting.

Step 6) Confound the immune defense response. People generally hate change, but when ideas come from within the community of employees, changes feel more natural. In-house solutions avoid the "transplant rejection" that outside best practices may meet.