

Motivating Prosocial Behavior for Organizations

Determining the most effective motivators for organizations

Major Questions

- ❖ What conditions will entice the most individuals to donate to organizations?
- ❖ What influences provide disincentives for donations?
- ❖ Does the organization's reputation have an impact on these factors?

Introduction

Organizations which rely on public donations and other prosocial public behaviors need to know which incentives will best encourage prosocial behaviors. In general, there are two types of incentives which organizations can use – intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Intrinsic motivations are those which provide the individual with an inner personal benefit such as a feeling of helping others.

Extrinsic motivations are those in which individuals receive material benefits.

When it comes to prosocial behaviors, a third incentive type exists.

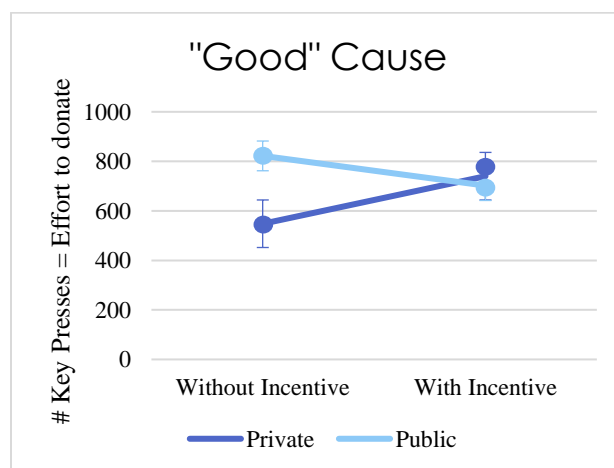
Image motivations are those in which individuals gain public recognition for their actions and thus receive social benefits.

Organizational Take-Aways

Research by Ariely, Bracha, and Meier suggests that an increase in extrinsic motivations may increase prosocial behavior in a private setting, but decrease prosocial behavior in a public setting. This is due to the overshadowing of image motivation by extrinsic motivation. Thus, motivations must be considered in two forms:

- ❖ Private: In private settings, individuals are best motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Providing material incentives to individuals acting in a private setting **increases** prosocial behavior.
- ❖ Public: In public settings, individuals are best motivated by intrinsic and image motivations. However, the addition of an extrinsic motivations **decreases** prosocial behavior due to the material incentive overshadowing the image motivation received when an extrinsic motivation is not present.

These results were determined after participants were asked to perform a simple task, pressing keys, which then translated into donations made on their behalf. The public participants shared their donation amount to the group. The extrinsic motivation provided was a monetary reward equal to the donation amount. Results are displayed below.



Overall, public intrinsic and image motivations are most effective in prompting individuals to behave in a prosocial manner. The study also examined the difference in prosocial behavior with respect to generalized or named organizations. The organization which possessed a good public perception lead to a higher level of prosocial behavior.

Check-List Recap

- 1) Provide means for individual prosocial behaviors to be **publicly visible**, e.g. post donor lists or donor stickers allowing public demonstration of individual donations.
- 2) When in the public sphere, do not provide **extrinsic motivations** such as gifts, monetary rewards, or tax breaks.
- 3) Organizations with good social reputations should promote their **organization's name** when marketing for prosocial behaviors such as donations.

Sources

Ariely, D., Bracha, A., & Meier, S. (2009). Doing Good or Doing Well? Image Motivation and Monetary Incentives in Behaving Prosocially. *American Economic Review*, 99(1), 544-555. doi:10.1257/aer.99.1.544