

When charities ask for time, people give more money

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According to new research in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, simply asking people a question about whether they're willing to volunteer their time leads to increases in donations of both time and money.

"Because time consumption is associated with emotional experiences, thinking about donating time reminds people of the happiness achieved through helping others," write authors Wendy Liu (UCLA) and Jennifer Aaker (Stanford). They explain that the effect cannot be explained by guilt about not donating time, since people first asked to donate time agree to donate more money and more time than other groups.

The researchers conducted three separate studies, which yielded similar results. In the first study, participants completed an online survey and then read a statement about lung cancer and the American Lung Cancer Foundation's mission. Half of the participants were asked how much time they would like to donate to the foundation and half were not asked. Then all were asked how much money they would donate to the foundation. The participants who were asked to donate time eventually pledged more than those who weren't asked: \$36.44 versus \$24.46.

In the next study, researchers introduced undergraduates to the work of HopeLab, a nonprofit organization that serves children with chronic illnesses. The average donation level was nearly five times higher for participants who were first asked about donating their time to the organization. Additionally, the numbers of people who volunteered their time and the number of people who actually followed up and did

volunteer work were both higher in that group. A third study replicated the findings from the first two studies and also explored the feelings that arose when people thought about donating time.

"We argue that thinking about time activates goals of well-being and beliefs involving personal happiness. In contrast, thinking about money suppresses such emotional goals and instead activates goals of economic utility and beliefs about attainment of such goals," the authors explain.

Organizations wishing to increase involvement should take note. "This paper has important practical implications for both profit and non-profit social organizations interested in cultivating ways to more effectively raise funds," the authors conclude.

Source: University of Chicago Press Journals

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