

# Shifting employee bonuses from self to others increases satisfaction and productivity at work

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Providing employees with a bonus to spend on charities or co-workers may increase job satisfaction and team sales, according to results published September 18 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Lalin Anik from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University and colleagues from other institutions.

In the first of three studies, some employees at an Australian bank were given a 25-dollar or a 50-dollar voucher to donate to a [charity](#) of their choice on behalf of the company. Employees who donated the larger amount to charity reported enhanced happiness and [job satisfaction](#), compared to those who did not donate to charity or donated the smaller amount.

In subsequent experiments, the researchers measured the performance of 11 [sports teams](#) in Canada and 14 [pharmaceutical sales](#) teams in Belgium after receiving bonuses. A third of each team was selected to receive 20 dollars to spend either on themselves, or on their teammates. In both experiments, the researchers found that when participants spent their bonuses on teammates, the whole team performed significantly better than when individuals spent their bonuses on themselves. The increase in team performance may also increase earnings as a whole, the study suggests. In the case of pharmaceutical sales, for every ten dollars given to a team member to spend on their colleagues, the team received 52 dollars in sales.

Anik elaborates, "The results across three studies suggest that a minor adjustment to employee bonuses – shifting the focus from the self to others – can create more altruistic, satisfying, and productive workplace.

**More information:** Anik L, Aknin LB, Norton MI, Dunn EW, Quoidbach J (2013) Prosocial Bonuses Increase Employee Satisfaction and Team Performance. *PLoS ONE* 8(9): e75509. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0075509](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0075509)

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