

Slackers unite: How fundraisers convert social supporters into socially active citizens

November 19 2013

Although somewhat counterintuitive, it turns out that those who support a cause anonymously tend to be more meaningfully supportive of the cause than those who offer more noticeable initial support, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Our research investigates this issue, and uncovers the conditions under which what we call 'slacktivism' occurs," write authors Kirk Kristofferson, Katherine White (both University of British Columbia), and John Peloza (Florida State University). "We define slacktivism as a willingness to perform a relatively costless, token display of support for a social cause with an accompanying lack of willingness to devote subsequent significant effort to enact meaningful change." In other words, someone who publically likes a charity's Facebook may not necessarily donate money or volunteer their time to the cause in real life."

The researchers conducted a series of five laboratory and field studies where they first asked participants to engage in a small, initial, act of support for a cause. Later on, they were asked to do something more meaningful for the same organization.

Their results concluded that when the participant's initial act was more publicly observable, that person was less likely to engage with the cause in a more meaningful way. In fact, they found that when the initial engagement was more private, or anonymous, the participants ultimately felt more in tune with the cause and were more likely to offer

subsequent support.

"If nonprofit organizations implement public token campaigns under the belief that they act as stepping stones to meaningful support, we find that this belief may not be accurate," the authors conclude. "Nonprofits can increase the effectiveness of token support campaigns by making them relatively more private or by drawing attention to similarity of values between the supporter and the cause at the time of token support."

More information: Kirk Kristofferson, Katherine White, and John Peloza. "The Nature of Slacktivism: How the Social Observability of an Initial Act of Token Support Impacts Subsequent Prosocial Action." *Journal of Consumer Research*: April 2014.

Provided by University of Chicago

Citation: Slackers unite: How fundraisers convert social supporters into socially active citizens (2013, November 19) retrieved 5 August 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-slackers-fundraisers-social-socially-citizens.html>

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