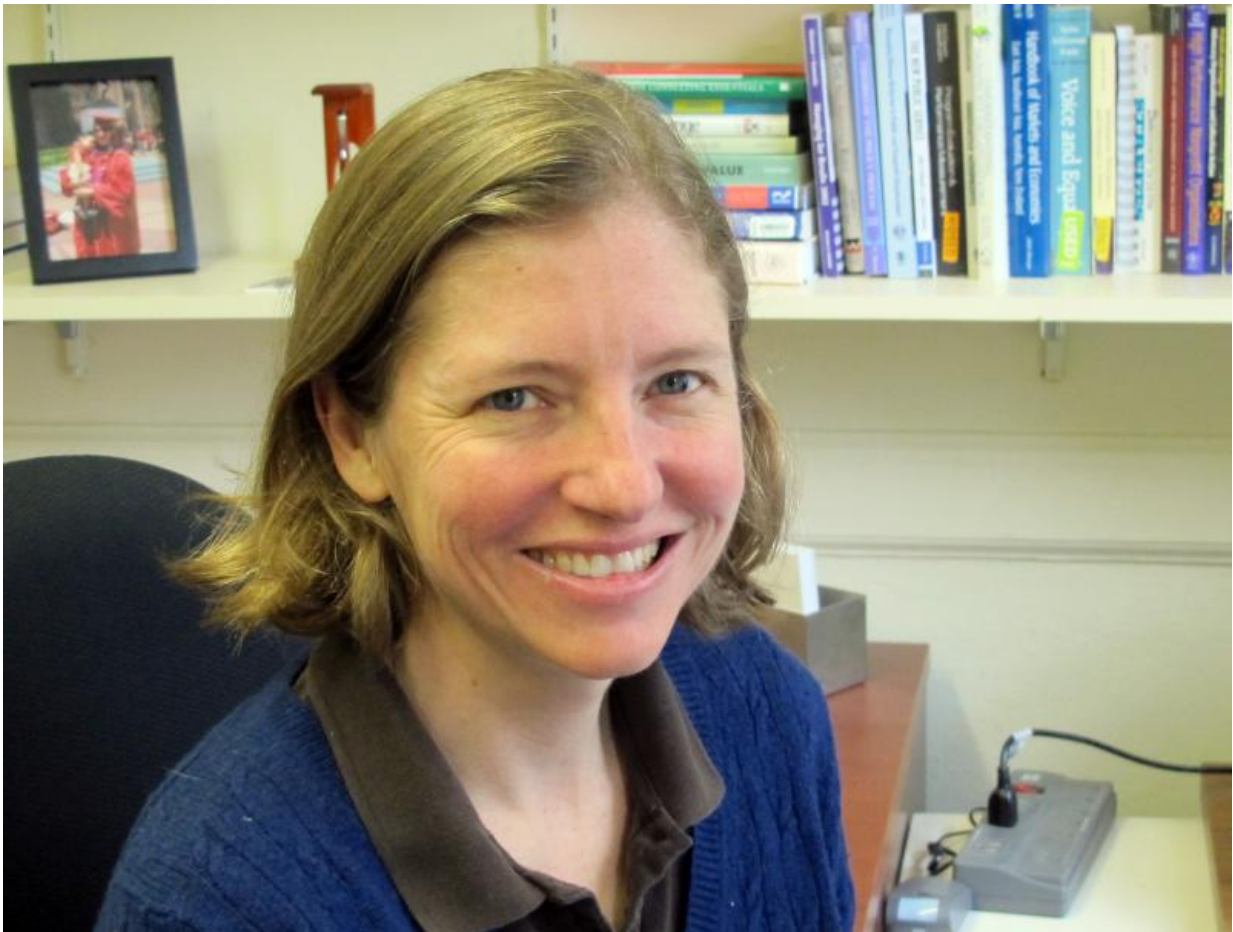


Pitch for support, in Spanish and offering recognition, scores for nonprofit

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Dyana Mason of the University of Oregon found that a cross-cultural outreach effort paid off for a Los Angeles nonprofit organization. Success was reached by sending out letters in the appropriate language and by offering personal recognition to a targeted audience. Credit: University of Oregon

Messaging matters, and tailoring communications to resonate with a target audience can pay off for a nonprofit organization seeking new support.

Such thinking is not new, but its use in a cross-cultural effort on behalf of a nonprofit childcare provider in Los Angeles harvested a large positive response, reports a University of Oregon researcher in the journal *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

Spanish-speaking residents who received a mailed invitation—written in Spanish and offering personal recognition—responded at a 32-percent higher rate than did residents who received letters written in English. Their support required nothing out of pocket; recipients only had to sign up for a program in which the nonprofit would get a percentage of grocery purchases.

"That's quite significant for a non-profit," said study author Dyana P. Mason of the UO Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management. "If you can increase your response rate by 30 percent, it could mean hundreds of thousands of dollars to a large nonprofit."

The study was designed primarily to see if promising publicity for potential donors would stimulate giving. In the letter, examples of how donors' names might appear in the nonprofit's upcoming newsletter were provided.

The control group received letters written in English, with half containing the enticement of personal recognition. Care was taken in analyzing the data to sort out potential language barriers for non-English and non-Spanish speaking recipients. Spanish-language letters also involved an offer of recognition of just a pitch for signing up for the program.

"We found the result to be quite surprising," she said. "There is not a lot of theory on what would explain it. There's a little bit in communications and business theories about cross-cultural communications and making people feel more connected to an organization through culturally competent communication."

The promise of recognition mattered in this case, but whether the same approach would work for all groups is worthy of more research, Mason said. It also could be, she wrote in the paper, "that Spanish speakers were simply more responsive when they received a letter in their primary language."

More research on cross-cultural communications in charitable giving and volunteerism is needed, she said. "I think nonprofit organizations and their leaders need to consider how they communicate with their members and their supporters," she said. "If they are asking them to take action in some way, or get involved, or feel connected or like they have a sense of ownership in the organization, they probably would be well served to communicate in ways that are meaningful to their audiences."

Research on charitable giving has grown in the last 10 to 15 years, Mason said, but not sufficiently for nonprofit organizations. Most has been laboratory based and conducted by economists and social psychologists.

More information: *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, [nvs.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... 64015576408.abstract](https://nvs.sagepub.com/content/early/.../64015576408.abstract)

Provided by University of Oregon

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