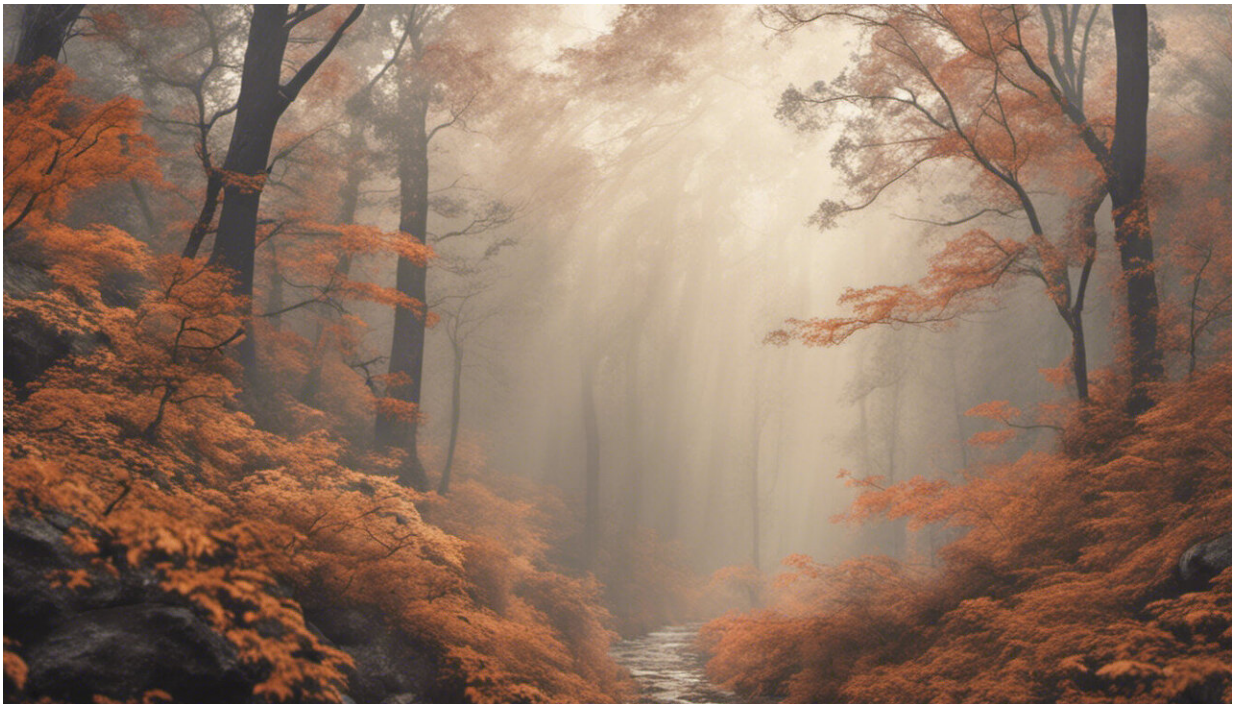


# New research finds that when it comes to crowdsourcing, less is more

January 18 2019, by Mark Rigby

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New research from Cass Business School has found a solution that deals with one of the primary challenges businesses face when they crowdsource innovation.

Dr. Oguz A. Acar, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, analysed survey

responses from more than 645 users of the global crowdsourcing platform InnoCentive.

The results show that those who participate in crowdsourcing challenges because they enjoy it or because there is an offer of reward are the ones who submit the most appropriate solutions.

Dr. Acar said the findings could help organisations target crowdsourcing activities more effectively.

"Crowdsourcing efforts often yield a large number of diverse ideas but unfortunately most of those ideas are of questionable quality," Dr. Acar said.

"It's grossly time consuming and it delays the innovation process when you're trying to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Dr. Acar said his research showed businesses could avoid such failure by attracting people with the right motivations.

## **Survey links solution appropriateness with motivation**

Dr. Acar's survey was designed to identify what motivated people to submit solutions; their responses were cross-referenced with the appropriateness of the ideas they provided using archival information from InnoCentive.

"Appropriateness is measured by how well an idea fits the problem at hand, how it meets the specific constraints of the situation and, hence, its potential value in resolving the problem," Dr. Acar said.

He said people with intrinsic motivations, those who engage in a task purely because they enjoy it, and people with extrinsic motivations,

those who perform a task because of the offer of a reward or prize, often submitted the most appropriate solutions.

Conversely, people who make submissions because they want to help or they believe they will learn something from the process often provided the least appropriate solutions.

Dr. Acar said it was when companies attract responses from people with the wrong kinds of motivation that they end up swamped with ideas and the crowdsourcing campaign often fails.

## **BP's spectacular failure highlights what not to do**

When BP spilled millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 they turned to crowdsourcing to generate novel approaches to clean up the spill and prevent further environmental impacts in the region.

Their crowdsourcing campaign received around 123,000 responses from more than 100 countries, effectively flooding BP's project team with a plethora of inappropriate solutions.

Dr. Acar said that, in this instance, BP cast their crowdsourcing net too wide; rather than designing a campaign to attract people with specific motivations – those who are more likely to generate appropriate solutions – they appealed to people who just wanted to help by sharing their ideas, regardless of whether their [solution](#) was suitable.

## **Motivating 'the right people' to provide the right solutions**

To attract more appropriate solutions through crowdsourcing, Dr. Acar said businesses need to motivate the right people.

"Businesses looking to crowdsource solutions need to attract people who are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated and discourage those that are pro-socially motivated or those who are motivated by learning," he said.

"Using your challenge design to highlight how much fun the actual problem solving process is can help a great deal in intrinsically motivating the right people and attracting the most appropriate responses."

He said extrinsic [motivation](#) was even simpler in that businesses can include different types of rewards, and not necessarily money.

"If you promote those who won the challenge, or those who generated a wonderful idea but didn't win, that would also serve as an important form of reward, as well as promoting the benefits people could gain in terms of their career," he said.

"At the same time you could consider downplaying the learning opportunities offered by crowdsourcing challenges as well as the prosocial aspects.

"Following these principles may mean businesses attract fewer responses but the responses they receive will be more appropriate, improving effectiveness, efficiency and speed of identifying a breakthrough solution through [crowdsourcing](#)."

Dr. Acar's paper, "Motivations and Solution Appropriateness in Crowdsourcing Challenges for Innovation," is to be published in the journal *Research Policy* this year.

**More information:** Oguz A. Acar. Motivations and solution appropriateness in crowdsourcing challenges for innovation, *Research Policy* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.respol.2018.11.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2018.11.010)

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