Commitment and Consistency

Remember cognitive dissonance?

- Feeling of anxiety or tension
- Arises when behaviors $\neq$ attitudes
“Please call if you have to change your plans.”
30% no show rate

“Will you please call if you have to change your plans?”
10% no show rate

**Commitment and Consistency**

*Once we make a commitment, we feel pressure from ourselves and others to behave consistently with that commitment.*
Beach Towel Study
(Moriarty, 1975)

**Control group**: no commitment

**Experimental group**: commitment:

"Could you please watch my things"
Here's another example...

Researchers asked 1/2 of the residents in an apt. complex to sign a petition to create a recreation center for the handicapped.

2 weeks later, all residents were approached and asked to donate money to the cause.

This reflects a two-step process for the 1/2 of participants who signed the petition:

Step 1: obtain commitment (i.e., petition signature) Step 2: get consistency in behavior (i.e., donate $)

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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This process is called...

The Foot-in-the-Door Technique

Foot-in-the-Door Technique

Compliance with small request increases chance of compliance with larger request later
American Cancer Society Study
(Cialdini & Schroeder, 1976)

Control Group:
"I’m collecting money for the American Cancer Society. Would you be willing to help by giving a donation."

Experimental Group:
"I’m collecting money for the American Cancer Society. Would you be willing to help by giving a donation. Even a penny would help."

Percent who donated money: $18.55 (Control) vs. $30.34 (Experimental)
Commitments “grow their own legs”

People add reasons and justifications to support the commitments they have made.

This causes prior commitments to be self-perpetuating because people will stick to their prior commitments even when the original factor leading to compliance is gone.

Low Ball Technique

Costs concealed until commitment is made
Quit Smoking Study (Joule, 1987)
Smokers asked to complete survey
After committing, told “no smoking”

85%  12%

Commitment and Consistency

Why does it work?

• Consistency is valued

• Consistency saves mental resources
Factors that Affect Commitment and Consistency

Is the commitment voluntary or forced?

*He that complies against his will is of his own opinion still*

Is the commitment made in public or private?

Did the commitment take effort or not?

Is the commitment made actively or passively?

Aids Awareness Study

Active: answer ‘YES’ on 2 items

Passive: skip 2 items

74%  26%