

The Backfiring of Expressing Gratitude – When being thanked hinders further good deeds

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Short Abstract:

People, organizations and governments often have to express their gratitude – be it to thank a colleague for a favor, to thank consumers for their loyalty or even to thank citizens for following government regulation. These expressions are powerful and a thank you is generally regarded with a positive effect on its receiver. However, not much is known about different ways of thanking. We suggest that an intense thank you can lead its receivers to over-evaluate their contribution, and can therefore become counter-productive. In our first experiment, we find that after being intensely thanked for their participation, participants were less willing to take part on an extra survey. In our second experiment, we show that after being intensely thanked for following Covid-19 recommendations, participants state intentions of relaxing their compliance in the future.