Logos and Dollars: How Procedural and Incentive Payment Changes Can Increase Response Rate

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Motivation

- Response rates to telephone surveys have been declining\(^1\)
- Researchers must use creative methods to gain cooperation of respondents
- Monetary incentives and advance letters can increase response rate\(^2-4\)
Study Background

- List-frame survey part of nationwide evaluation of United States Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration (USDOL-ETA) program
- Sample members were unemployed in the past few years
- 38 minute CATI survey administered by trained interviewers
Incentive Structure

- 20% offered $25 post-pay (n = 152)
- 40% offered $50 post-pay (n = 367)
- 40% offered $75 post-pay (n = 372)
Advance Letter Types

- Switched from Mathematica (MPR) letterhead to USDOL letterhead
  - MPR letter written and signed by MPR project director \( (n = 1704) \)
  - USDOL letter written and signed by federal project officer \( (n = 152) \)
Data Analysis: Incentive Structure

- **Response Rate**
  - Compare $25, $50, $75 incentives at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months

- **Level of Effort to Complete**
  - Compare mean number of calls to complete for $25, $50, $75 incentives at 1 month, 2 months, 3 months
Data Analysis: Advance Letter Type

- **Response Rate**
  - Compare MPR letter to USDOL letter at 1 month, 2 months, and 3 months

- **Level of Effort to Complete**
  - Compare mean number of calls to complete for MPR letter and USDOL letter at 1 month, 2 months, 3 months
Response Rate by Incentive Amount

- $25
- $50
- $75

Response Rate (\%)

Months After Release

* = significant at p<0.01
Response Rate by Gender
($25 Incentive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months After Release</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>36.4*</td>
<td>58.7*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>45.5*</td>
<td>69.3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>45.5*</td>
<td>70.7*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = significant at p<0.01

Response Rate (%)

* = significant at p<0.01
## Level of Effort to Complete by Incentive Amount

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Number of Calls</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 month</strong></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 months</strong></td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 months</strong></td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The p-values indicate the significance of the difference in mean number of calls across different incentive amounts and time periods.*
Response Rate by Letter Type

MPR Letter  
USDOL Letter

* = significant at p<0.01

Response Rate (%)  
Months After Release

MPR Letter  
USDOL Letter

1  2  3

36.8*  47.4*  57.2  57.9

40  50  60

Response Rate (%)
# Level of Effort to Complete by Letter Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MPR Letter</th>
<th>USDOL Letter</th>
<th>p&lt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 month</strong></td>
<td>3.3*</td>
<td>4.5*</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 months</strong></td>
<td>4.2*</td>
<td>5.9*</td>
<td>0.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 months</strong></td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = significant at p<0.05
Discussion: Incentive Structure

- Results suggestive of a direct relationship between response rate and incentive amount
- Results may be indication of the value sample members place on their time
- Gender difference in $25 group warrants further investigation
Discussion: Advance Letter Types

- Advance letters from sources deemed most legitimate may be better at gaining cooperation in the short-term.

- Inverse relationship between level of effort and response rate highlights important trade-offs between maximizing response rate and budget concerns.
Limitations

- Smaller sample sizes may have limited the ability to detect differences between groups.

- Sample members who received the MPR letter and the USDOL letter lived in different states.
Summary

- Monetary incentives and advance letters can impact response rate
- Highest incentive amount associated with highest response rate in this survey
- USDOL letterhead associated with higher response rate over the short term
References


