

Compliance Employing a Combined Foot-in-the-Door and Door-in-the-Face Procedure

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ABSTRACT. The foot-in-the-door procedure increases compliance for a desired target request by making an easier first request. In the door-in-the-face procedure, compliance is increased by first making an extremely hard request and following this with a target request, the one actually desired. The current study combined both of these procedures and formulated a new compliance technique consisting of two initial requests to precede the target request. Three hundred and eighty subjects selected at random from the telephone directory were called to test the new compliance procedure. The results showed that compliance was significantly greater for the new combination method when compared with both other methods. The theoretical model developed to devise and explain the new method also received support.

TWO PROCEDURES FOR INCREASING COMPLIANCE to a request are the foot-in-the-door (*foot*) and the door-in-the-face (*face*). Initially tested by Freedman and Fraser (1966), the *foot* procedure has been repeatedly shown to increase compliance (Goldman & Creason, 1981; Goldman, Gier, & Smith, 1981; Goldman, Seever, & Seever, 1982; Pliner, Hart, Kohl, & Saari, 1974). Subjects who agree first to carry out a small task are more apt to comply with a large, target request than those who are asked to comply only with the target request. To explain the increased compliance obtained with the *foot* procedure, self-perception and attribution theories have been employed (Bem, 1972; Kelley, 1973). An individual who has initially complied with a small request will perceive himself as being helpful to others. Having made this self-attribution, that individual will continue to act in a consistent manner, and thus will comply more frequently to a second larger request than will

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an individual to whom only the second larger request has been made.

The *face* procedure devised by Cialdini et al. (1975) has also repeatedly been found to induce greater levels of compliance (Cialdini & Ascani, 1976; Even-Chen, Yinon, & Bizman, 1978; Goldman & Creason, 1981). An individual is first asked to perform an extremely difficult task, which is almost always refused, and this is followed by a less difficult, target request. Having refused the extreme request, the same individual is more likely to comply with the target request than someone who initially has not been faced with the extremely difficult task. A reciprocal concession theory (Cialdini et al., 1975), a contrast theory (Shanab & O'Neill, 1979), and a worthy person theory (Goldman, McVeigh, & Richter-Kessing, 1984) have been contrived to explain the increased compliance obtained.

While each of the above techniques have been shown to enhance compliance, it might be possible to increase compliance further by combining the two procedures. A method for accomplishing this was devised by Goldman and Creason (1981) and Goldman, Creason, and McCall (1981). In these studies, they have shown that a three-request procedure where two requests preceded the target request attained greater compliance than either the typical *foot* or *face* technique. In these studies, however, two initial requests were employed for either the *face* or the *foot* method but not for a combination of the two procedures. In addition, Seligman, Bush, and Kirsch (1976) and Goldman, Creason, and McCall (1981) found that the size of the request which preceded the target request influenced the effectiveness of the *foot* procedure.

If agreeing to comply with an initial request indicates to individuals that they are helpful, it would follow that, if this initial task was more difficult to perform and if individuals complied, they would have stronger confirmation that they were helpful and would be more likely to comply with a subsequent target request. The difficulty in applying this plan is that, while it may work for individuals who agree to perform the initial request, individuals who might not agree to comply, and therefore might perceive themselves as not helpful, would be less likely to grant a subsequent target request. It might be possible, however, by first employing the *face* procedure, to have a large proportion of individuals comply with a more difficult initial task. Then, continuing with the *foot* procedure should induce greater compliance to the target request.

Specifically, the combination routine would utilize two requests to precede the target request. Individuals would be asked to perform an extremely difficult task, which almost all would refuse. This would be followed by a moderate request, one of a more difficult level than that used in the typical *foot* procedure, but less difficult than the target request. The *face* procedure would help insure that a larger proportion of individuals would agree to carrying out the moderate task. This moderately difficult task would now serve

as the “foot” for the target request, and greater compliance should be obtained.

The present study was designed to test the correctness of the above reasoning, that a combination of the *face* and *foot* procedures would induce greater compliance than either procedure used alone.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 380 Kansas City residents whose telephone numbers were randomly selected from the Kansas City telephone directory. They were telephone interviewed by four callers on weekdays between 12:00 and 5:00 p.m. and were randomly assigned to five conditions, which were executed in a random order. One rotation of the five conditions was completed before the next rotation began. Each of the five conditions contained 76 subjects.

Procedure

An interviewer telephoned a subject and began by saying, “Hello, my name is Bill/Kathy Brown. I’m calling on behalf of the local organization, Friends of the Zoo, which supports the Kansas City Zoo.” Then, according to the experimental condition being run, one or more of the four following requests were employed.

1. *Easy Request (E)*: “We are doing a survey concerning people’s attitudes toward the zoo and would like to ask you a few questions. Have you ever been to the zoo? Have you been to the zoo within the last year? Do you plan to go to the zoo this year? Have you ever seen any advertisements for the zoo?”
2. *Moderate Request (M)*: “Would you participate in an extended interview about the Kansas City Zoo? This interview would take place by phone at a later date and would take approximately 25 minutes.”
3. *Target Request (T)*: “We are trying to raise funds for the zoo by mailing solicitations and we need people to help us with this campaign to raise funds by helping us send out letters. Would you stuff and address 75 envelopes? These materials would be delivered to you and picked up.”
4. *Hard Request (H)*: “We need people who would help us carry out a survey by calling people over the phone and asking them a few questions. Would you call 150 people whose names have been randomly selected and conduct a survey about the zoo?”

Five experimental conditions were devised consisting of the above requests: (a) Target Control, in which only T was asked; (b) Moderate Control, in which only M was asked; (c) Foot, in which E was followed by T; (d) Face, in which H was followed by T; and (e) Combination, in which H was followed by M and then, in turn, by T.

Subjects agreeing to E were allowed to answer the questions dealing with the zoo. But, if they complied with H, M, or T, they were told that a list of volunteers was being compiled and if their help was needed they would be contacted within the week.

Two main predictions derived from the combination *face* and *foot* model were made. First, it was expected that the subjects in the Combination condition would comply more with the target request than would those in the Face and Foot conditions. Second, it was predicted that subjects responding to M in the Combination condition would comply more than would those responding to the M in the Moderate-Control condition. It was also expected that in both the Face and Foot conditions subjects would comply more with T than they would to the T in the Target-Control condition.

Results

A subject who agreed to the target request was scored 1, and a refusal was scored 0. Mean scores of .22, .42, .46, and .57 were obtained, respectively, for the Target-Control, Face, Foot, and Combination conditions. Analysis of variance procedures have been shown (Lunney, 1970) to be appropriate for dichotomized data if the degrees of freedom are sufficiently large ($df > 20$), a requirement far exceeded in the present study. Differences among the four means for the above conditions were highly significant, $F(3,300) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. Support was obtained for the prediction that the Combination condition produced more compliance to the target request than the Foot and Face conditions, $t = 1.93$, $p < .03$, using a one-tailed test.

Results relating to the second main prediction pertaining to the Moderate request were examined next. Similar to the scoring procedure for the target request, a subject who agreed to the moderate request in either the Moderate-Control condition or in the Combination condition was given a score of 1, and a refusal was scored 0. Mean scores of .37 and .54 were obtained, respectively, for the moderate requests in the Moderate-Control and in the Combination conditions. In support of the second main prediction, significantly greater compliance for the moderate request was produced in the Combination condition than in Moderate-Control condition, $t = 2.14$, $p < .025$, using a one-tailed test.

Differences between the means for the target request in the Target-Control and Face conditions were significant ($p < .05$), and the differences

between the means for the target request in the Target-Control and Foot conditions were significant ($p < .05$).

Discussion

The present study corroborates that the *foot* and *face* procedures were effective for heightening compliance. Several studies have tried to compare the *foot* and *face* (Cialdini & Ascani, 1976; Goldman, Gier, & Smith, 1981) and there has been an effort to show that one procedure has more limitations than the other (Cann, Sherman, & Elkes, 1975). Rather than prove that one technique is better, the attempt here was to see whether a method could be developed which combined the two to produce a greater degree of compliance. The findings show that the two procedures could be successfully combined.

The theoretical model formulated to explain the arrangement for the combination also received support. The essential element of the new method makes use of the self-attribution of being helpful. The *face* procedure allows subjects to establish a strong attribution that they are helpful and the *foot* procedure further augments the number of these subjects who will agree to the target request.

The new procedure makes use of two initial requests before presenting the desired target request. However, it is possible to extend the technique, making more requests before the target request. For example, two extreme *face* requests could first be offered and these could be followed by two stepped-up *foot* requests before making the target request. It may be assumed that at some point repeated requests would be refused. The limit with a given population and with a given desired target request could be determined empirically. The results obtained here indicate that two initial requests preceding the target request were effective.

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