

Sources of Motivation in Business Surveys

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Abstract

Survey organizations are typically faced with – and burdened because of – nonresponse and measurement errors in business surveys. These errors are assumed not to be so much a result of actual response burden as of perceived burden. This suggests that a driving force, i.e. the motivation for participation, and accurate and timely response, is lacking. Knowledge of sources from which this motivation comes from in business surveys, promises to enhance capabilities of survey organizations to influence the response behavior. This paper seeks to identify these sources of motivation based on motivation theory on the one hand and empirical data from the Netherlands and Slovenia on the other, and suggests recommendations for increasing motivation in business surveys. These recommendations should be a useful asset for survey organizations to develop strategies to improve survey participation and response quality.

Key Words: incentive, organization, respondent, survey error, survey participation, data quality.

1. Introduction

The role of motivation has been acknowledged and tested through research on incentives in academic and commercial business surveys; and recently, a paradigm shift from a burden-centered to a motivation-centered approach has also been happening in governmental business surveys. Several recent studies have given an account of factors that affect participation in business surveys (e.g. Davis & Pihama 2009, Janik & Kohaut 2009, Porter 2004, Seiler 2010,). Theoretically, these accounts are largely based on one of or a combination of the frameworks provided for by Groves, Cialdini & Couper (1992), Tomaskovic-Devey, Leiter & Thompson (1994, 1995), and Willimack, Nichols & Sudman (2002). Though in some cases it is suggested that the exposed factors affect the participation through the motivation to respond, both the empirical accounts as the theoretical frameworks lack an elaborated explanation about the precise role of motivation and about the way factors affect the response behavior or the motivation for this behavior.

From a different point of view, based on motivation theories, it is contended that motivation can be activated through several sources, depending on which motivational subsystem governs and organizes the behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Motivation can be implicit or explicit depending on whether a person's behavior is spontaneously emitted or consciously guided (McClelland, 1985). On the other hand, motivation can be intrinsic, i.e. completely self-determined, so that a task is an end in itself; or extrinsic, i.e. involving differential levels of self-determination, so that a task (in the extreme) is a means to an end. Different sets of sources of motivation have been grounded in the psychological literature. McClelland et al. (1989) refer to the easiness of the task as a preferred characteristic within the explicit motivational subsystem. Pittman, Boggiano & Ruble (1983) and Kruglanski (1975) mention predictability, simplicity and ease of mastering the task as important bases for extrinsic motivation. Concerning intrinsic motivation, authors mention autonomy and feelings of competence (Deci 1975, Deci & Ryan 1985, Ryan & Deci 2000), competence valuation (e.g. Epstein & Harakiewicz, 1992), challenge, control curiosity and fantasy (Malone & Lepper, 1987), or just challenge (McClelland et al., 1989). Perceived competence and perceived behavioral control are as

well exposed as an important factor for motivation (e.g. Ajzen, 1991, Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, these studies examine behavior in contexts that differ from the business setting in which the business survey task is performed.

Our study of motivation in business surveys attempts to bring together theories from psychology and survey methodology. We treat motivation to participate in business surveys and provide an accurate and timely response as a single and integral concept that leads to different outcomes of survey behavior. The concept thus addresses not only the decision to participate in a business survey but also the commitment to the task, which affects the accuracy and timing of the response. We focus on respondents' motivation while acknowledging organizational motives as an important source of the individual motivation. A simplified model is presented in Figure 1. At the extreme left are the sources that trigger the motivation of respondents, which result in behavioral and survey outcomes either directly or after an evaluation.

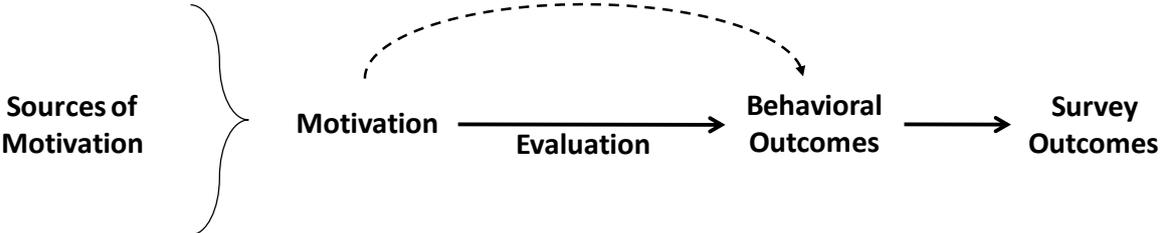


Figure 1: From Sources of Motivation to Survey Outcomes

In this paper we elaborate on specific factors or sources of motivation based on empirical data from the Netherlands and Slovenia, and we indicate what types of motivation may be important in the business context. This serves as a basis for identifying the sources of motivation to be used in designing response enhancing strategies in the specific context of the business survey task. The methodology behind these empirical data is described in the next section. Afterwards, the results are presented and discussed. The paper concludes with recommendations for improvement of motivation in business surveys and suggestions for further research.

2. Methodology

We used a combination of primary and secondary data sources (see Table 1 for details about the selected businesses and respective interviewees) to identify concrete and specific sources of motivation for the business survey response task.

Table 1: Overview of interviewed people and businesses in analyzed data sources

Country	Data source	Total number of interviewees by role	Total number of businesses included in the field study by size class
Netherlands	Primary (BLUE-ETS project)	13 interviewees, of which: <i>7 data users</i> <i>5 respondents to business surveys</i> <i>1 interviewee in both roles</i>	11 businesses in different economic activities, of which: <i>3 small</i> <i>4 medium</i> <i>4 large</i>
Slovenia	Primary (BLUE-ETS project)	16 interviewees, of which: <i>8 data users</i> <i>7 respondents to business surveys</i> <i>1 interviewee in both roles</i>	9 businesses in different economic activities, of which: <i>3 small</i> <i>3 medium</i> <i>3 large</i>
Slovenia	Secondary (research on the response process)	44 interviewees, of which: <i>25 respondents</i> <i>6 respondents working in pairs</i> <i>13 other key people involved in the response process</i>	28 businesses mainly or partly involved in trade activities, of which: <i>13 small</i> <i>5 medium</i> <i>10 large</i>

2.1 Primary Data Source

The primary data come from qualitative research interviews with businesses conducted in the framework of the international research project BLUE-ETS that seeks, among others, to understand what motivates businesses for participation and accurate and timely reporting in surveys of national statistical institutes (hereinafter NSIs). This paper is based on interviews conducted in the Netherlands and Slovenia between September 2010 and February 2011. Questions about motivational aspects of business survey response behavior represented an important part of the interview guide, which otherwise also addressed the use of data in businesses and the links within businesses between respondents to business surveys and those who use internal or external data as part of their job (labeled as data users). These semi-structured interviews had a fixed list of motivational topics and objectives (e.g. organizational decisions and norms on survey participation, beliefs about survey participation, organizational and interviewee's perceptions of NSI surveys etc.) but only a suggested list of questions within each topic. The structured topic list acted as a frame of reference and as a reminder to ask about certain issues, but within those main topics we pursued an unstructured way of interviewing as a more appropriate way to uncover previously unsuspected elements.

Selection of businesses was based on purposeful maximum variation sampling to gather as much information as possible (Cutcliffe, 2000). The sampling relied on size class and economic activity, hypothesized to influence survey response behavior the most. Businesses were chosen from different size classes (small – less than 50 employees; medium – at least 50, less than 250 employees; and large – at least 250 employees) and diverse manufacturing, commercial and service activities. We decided beforehand that these activities should be important for the national economy, have many businesses and have a large share of small businesses. Activities with significant value added typically get considerable attention from survey organizations (and thus have a high response burden); high number

of similar businesses facilitates generalization of findings; and small businesses deserve special attention because they have a relatively high response burden, and are assumed to have problematic survey response behavior. We also sought to ensure as much variability as possible with respect to other criteria that were not explicitly defined, e.g. services vs. industry, internationally oriented vs. locally oriented business, foreign- vs. domestically-owned, location, age of business and management etc.

Initial contacts were established by phone. To get at least one respondent and one data user per business, the recruiting strategy was to start with one interview agreed in advance, then ask for another interview on the spot using the “foot in the door” technique. In some businesses, we first targeted respondents to business surveys while in others we targeted data users (e.g. accounting, economic, analytical, and (quality) control departments). Interviews with data users were used for the present analysis only if they had insights into reporting (e.g. as superiors). Interviews were recorded to facilitate detailed transcription. In the Netherlands, gifts were given before or after the interview as a token of appreciation.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed to have a verbatim account of all verbal utterances. We then searched for “expressions” in the data that related to our specific question of interest (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), namely motivational aspects in business survey response behavior. This first analysis mainly relied on an inductive, “bottom up” approach even if we have to acknowledge that during the development of the interview guide we already had some preconceptions and background knowledge of potentially relevant or related theories (for results, see Torres van Grinsven, Bolko & Bavdaz 2011). This mainly data-driven process of coding was later followed by a re-examination of the data to examine the fit with the above exposed theoretical bases. In both implementations of thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006), we searched for themes at the semantic or explicit level within the realist/essentialist paradigm, where we assumed a simple, largely unidirectional relationship between meaning and experience and language. Themes sometimes applied to a longer passage of the interview while other times several themes applied to an interviewee’s turn of speech.

2.2. Secondary Data Source

The secondary data come from a doctoral research that studied from start to finish the actual response process to a specific business survey in a real business environment (see Bavdaz, 2010). The selected survey, the Quarterly Survey on Trade, was a mandatory self-administered survey conducted by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia on a sample of units performing trade activities. On-site visits were arranged around two consecutive deadlines for the questionnaire’s completion in 2005. The qualitative research interview was the primary method of investigation in businesses. It largely relied on retrospective probing (Willis 2005) and ethnographic interviewing (Gerber 1999) of the principal respondent to the survey on-site. In three cases, a double interview was conducted because respondents were working very closely (e.g. a novice and the preceding respondent). An attempt was made to contact other key people involved in the response process besides the respondents but these contacts were sometimes short, structured telephone interviews. Altogether the study included 28 different-sized businesses covering various combinations of trade activities and kinds of merchandise. All verbal communication with people who provided data on the response process was recorded and transcribed, except for shorter interactions, which were noted immediately.

Although the focus of the interviews was on the response process, attention was also paid to contextual topics such as the role of authorities and other organizational issues, and attitudes towards the NSI and (official) statistics. This often produced insights into the motivational aspects, which made the data source useful to the present analysis. This data source complements well the primary data source because the interviews were tight to a specific questionnaire’s completion (special attention paid to minimizing the time that elapsed between the completion and the interview) compared to general assessments in the primary data source. The data were inspected to find segments bearing information on motivation. These segments were then analyzed for the fit with the proposed theoretical bases.

3. Results

In this section we give an account of “expressions” coded in our data that represent concrete sources of motivation for business survey participation and accurate and timely response. The sources of motivation are structured according to the type of motivation they trigger or influence; they are thus attributed to implicit motives, intrinsic motivation or any of the different levels of extrinsic motivation. For each type of motivation, several subthemes are presented as the result of the final data reduction and interpretation process during the theoretical coding. These subthemes represent the first-level grouping of expressions and are illustrated with quotes from the data.

3.1. Implicit Motives

Our data show the presence of two kinds of dispositions that are potentially relevant for the business survey response task. One concerns a disposition for precision and accuracy that seems to be typically inherent in the accounting profession. This disposition stems from the accounting work methods that require perfect correspondence among accounts, and from the fact that the accounts should reflect business reality. Evidently, an accuracy-motivated disposition can also be present in other respondents regardless of profession. This disposition together with the explicit goals to respond to a survey promises to lead to an accurate response.

If I do something, I do it well, that's in a bookkeeper.

We do our best, we don't just put any random data thinking it's good enough for statistics.

The other type of disposition concerns human curiosity that is visible in the attraction to performing new, demanding tasks (e.g. searching for new data and solutions, optimizing processes), or learning new things. This disposition is likely to lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation when applied to the survey task.

I'm a searcher in my soul. It's a challenge for me to search for new ways of obtaining and using data.

Next year we are facing an exciting event as two different branches of our company have to be merged. That's a challenge again, so I like to do that, yes.

3.2. Intrinsic Motivation

Expressions from our data suggest several sources of intrinsic motivation that are grouped into five subthemes: enjoyment and challenge, mood, perceived competence, relatedness and autonomy. The accounts of intrinsic motivation are, however, fewer than those of extrinsic motivation.

3.2.1. Enjoyment and challenge

Some respondents enjoy surveys and find challenge in them. They like the survey task simply because they find pleasure in it, which shows their intrinsic motivation.

I always found that the survey on finances and enterprises was a very enjoyable form. Yes, I like that. That's the kind of work I like to do.

In the case of voluntary surveys, the intrinsic motivation seems to play a more important role in the decision to participate than in the case of mandatory surveys. The following quote suggests that the lack of (intrinsic) motivation may in certain cases be the only basis upon which to consider participation in voluntary surveys.

If they irritate me I just throw them away.

3.2.2. Mood

Some verbal accounts suggest that a person's mood affects motivation at least temporarily. Here we show an account pointing to the relevance of the mood for the decision about the survey participation:

When I'm in a good mood then I usually participate in all those surveys, but if I'm in a bad mood then I probably reject.

3.2.3. Perceived competence

Many respondents claimed that the survey requests are intelligible and the questionnaires are clear and easy to them, which suggests that they perceived themselves as competent to perform the task.

Questions seem to be clear enough, at least the majority of them.

In one of the businesses where the respondent's perceived competence is low, the survey task is always outsourced and the respondent has never completed the task alone.

I made an attempt to look at the survey. But it is a lot. It looked like it is a lot. And, ehm, time consuming.

3.2.4. Relatedness

Intrinsic motivation can also arise from connectedness to others in the business and the survey organization. In the data, there are several expressions of appreciation of a good personal relationship with the NSI. Respondents express how their personal relationship with the designated NSI staff has advantages and makes them feel obliged to keep the relationship good. If respondents receive help from the NSI staff, then that can make them want to do something in return.

The advantage is that you've seen each other a couple of times. When I'm talking to somebody on the phone now, then I think, I know his face.

I think I have a good relationship. Yes, with X.

[About the interview] *My colleagues asked why I should do this interview. Then I replied: I find this is important now, because I'm the one having the contact [with the NSI], therefore I want to do this. Because I want to maintain the contact in good shape, so I want to do this now.*

A friendly tone and language as an expression of a correct relationship seem to be expected in communication that is addressed to the companies; they might even be indispensable for survey requests to be considered.

[Discussing a polite tone and language] *I think that's the way to cooperate. If you attack from one of both sides, then somebody might get blocked and that's worse.*

If the requests are not polite, we cancel them immediately.

Some of the interviewed respondents also stated that they appreciate receiving a reaction when reported data seem to be wrong or just to acknowledge the receipt of the data. The awareness that the reported data are used promises to make them feel the time and effort they put in the questionnaire matters, which enhances a good relationship, contributes to positive feelings associated with the task, and influences the perceived value of the task done.

But they do look at that, and yes, I like that, because if you get an answer then at least you know they do look at it. So that's pleasant.

3.2.5. Autonomy

Some respondents find it important that consultations and negotiations with the survey organization take place so that their working processes are considered and some autonomy about the deadline is granted.

We don't have all the data available at the deadline and as we are a large company that represents a great share of aggregated data, we made an agreement with the NSI that we report with a few days of delay in order to assure accurate and reliable data.

3.3. Extrinsic Motivation

In our data, verbal accounts as an expression of extrinsic motivation are highly represented. Depending on the level of self-determination, we assign specific sources to one of the four types of extrinsic motivation, namely external, introjected, identified and integrated motivation. It has to be noted though that transitions from the least self-determined to the most self-determined motivation are a matter of degree and may also change in time through processes of internalization and integration.

3.3.1. External regulation

Obligation: legal mandate

In the case of external regulation, the task is executed with the only purpose to satisfy an external demand. In business surveys this demand often comes from legislature and represents a legal obligation for the business. External regulation seems to be the most common source of motivation in governmental business surveys. While some respondents stress the importance of participation, others also express concern with accuracy and timeliness.

The only reason to participate is the legal mandate.

We have to report, we are legally obliged to do it.

It is something that has to be delivered in time. And it also concerns correctness. It has to be correct.

The obligation itself can be explicitly known or just assumed.

I haven't checked, but I assume it's obligatory to report. If you are chosen and you agree on something, than you have to do it no matter what.

Response enhancing practices based on legal mandate seem to be highly effective in the minds of the interviewees. In the occasional occurrence that a business was late with the response to the survey request, reminding phone calls and letters, and threats of fines would lead the business to respond. Reacting to letters threatening with charging of fines represents a form of externally regulated behavior while reminders represent a softer form of extrinsic regulation (i.e. introjected), mainly counting on feelings of guilt for not respecting the deadline.

Preferably we want to prevent that we receive letters [with fines].

That one was also postponed for a while, and then there came serious letters with the possible fines. And that became rather nasty. (...) So I caught up on that.

Some other respondents explain that the point where they would finally respond is when the threats are finally communicated in a letter.

3.3.2. Introjection

- Work tasks

Obligations stemming from the organization and imposed on the respondent are an important source of motivation to not only participate in a survey, but also to respond timely and accurately, as part of the introjected extrinsic motivational subsystem. Introjected extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors performed under external pressure to avoid guilt and anxiety or build self-esteem (Ryan & Deci 2000).

The top management requests us to participate in as many surveys as possible in order to be more transparent.

I know he [the superior] takes the matter seriously. He instructs me to comply to that and send those things back in time, so that we don't get any reminders or anything.

The agreement in this company is that we neatly comply with the request and send it [the survey] back in time.

This obligation to comply can be implicitly communicated by certain actions or explicitly part of one's work tasks and remuneration basis.

When a survey comes in, he [the superior] lays it down at my desk and just presupposes I will get it answered.

It's a part of my job tasks.

It's in my work description.

These data show that avoiding the superior to get upset is exposed as a reason to comply with the survey request, which would be an introjected type of motivation. From the point of view of the superior, though, this can be categorized as an external extrinsic motivation, because from that perspective the salience is put on the avoidance of external punishments.

He instructs me to comply and to send those things back in time so that we don't get any reminders or anything. Because if we get a reminder by post he will come to my desk asking if I forgot or what's happening.

It has to be noted though that for work tasks, in certain cases a higher degree of internalization or self-determination is possible. In this case motivation pertaining under these tasks can be part of the identified or even integrated extrinsic motivation.

- *Social responsibility: value for society in general, value for specific purposes, value for specific groups; principle of reciprocity*

We as well find verbal accounts of value for society as a source of introjected external motivation. Businesses seem to acknowledge importance of their data for society and other businesses.

The government needs data to function properly.

I think everybody has to just contribute their part, because the whole picture has to be right, because it will be used by politics, the national economic planning institution or any other institution.

If I'm not selfish, then I have to say that as I need some specific data, others might need some other data that I might find useless, thus we should report them.

Data we are producing need to be accurate, that's the most important thing. We are informing the public, so we must provide accurate data.

3.3.3. Identification

Value for own business or self

Identified extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors with which a person has identified so that he or she consciously values them (Ryan & Deci 2000). Our data show that getting something back for the effort and time spent on responding to a business survey is an important source of this motivation. Value can be expressed with tangible benefits or rewards or merely perceived as such.

[Referring to the incentive given for the interview] *This is a good start. We, Dutch people, always want to have something. Get something.*

I think it is useful to send a thank-you note. Just to let them know you had the response and you appreciate it.

You probably don't like it and you ask 'why do I have to do it', but if you know that you have to do something to get something, then you just do it.

[Referring to the value of (official) statistics] *Having no statistical data is like driving a car by night without lights on – you have no idea where are you going.*

Look, everybody wants to receive data in return. And every company is very selfish in this.

One good deserves another.

In fact, a commonly mentioned reason to participate in a voluntary survey is receiving results in return because they are relevant for the company's operations management.

We pay to participate in surveys from which we get data back.

We participate in surveys if it's interesting for us to get data back.

When there are no perceived benefits, responding to the questionnaire is experienced merely as a cost.

Replying to business surveys seems an extra job that doesn't give any benefit.

3.3.4. Integrated extrinsic motivation

Integrated extrinsic motivation refers to behaviors that are externally motivated but completely internalized (Ryan & Deci 2000). In the business context this can be interpreted as executing the tasks not because of external regulation and control but because it is congruent with one's values. So although some interviewees claim that they take part in official surveys because they have to, this obligation is in some cases integrated to the extent that it is neither checked nor questioned but simply accepted as part of the job.

Actually the NSI surveys are all just answered.

It's just something you have to do.

This is not debated. It's just something that has to happen.

It is important to note that this integration does not only affect participation, but also accuracy and timeliness.

We just presuppose we will fill it in in good faith and accurately.

Their motivation to respond seems also to be guided to some extent by the concern for the public image. An interviewee thus reports that their company carefully follows the news on their company in the media.

Sometimes qualitative information could ruin our image, reputation, although our quantitative data is showing a positive direction. We have to be aware of that.

3.3.5 Easiness, predictability and simplicity

Specific characteristics of the business survey task seem to support all types of extrinsic motivation for this task. These characteristics are the task's easiness, predictability and simplicity and according to interviewees, they can be achieved in various ways. Especially for the mandatory surveys, the most radical and preferred way would be to "to make fewer surveys". Other mentioned ideas are that "the NSI should look for a junction with the tax declaration", that the questionnaire should be adapted to the internal administration of companies, and other ways of simplifying response and "automatizing things as much as possible" in order "to be as efficient as possible". Concerning predictability, our data show that it is important to maintain questionnaire items and items' order over time in recurring surveys, and, in case of changes, inform about these in time. Respondents often have a routinized approach to the questionnaire's completion in these surveys, especially if repeated frequently, which makes it more difficult to adapt to changes.

"I always try to do things in a certain way. If then something changes, yes, that gives me extra work.

When there are changes then I have to change my models and that costs extra time.

I find it important to get notifications on changes of the questionnaires. I do things automatically, thus I need to know if there are any changes so that I can pay attention to them.

3.3.6. Extrinsic motivation may override intrinsic motivation

We also suggest that extrinsic motivation may override the intrinsic one when they are not congruent. An individual's implicit motives determine if a task is experienced as intrinsically motivating, but the influence of implicit motives may disappear in the presence of powerful explicit motives (Kehr, 2004; McClelland et al., 1953). This is also supported by our data. In our interviews, most respondents reported not to like or particularly enjoy their work tasks when it comes to participating in business surveys. Still, the interviewees claiming to have no intrinsic motivation towards the survey task, report not only doing the job, but also doing it timely and as accurately as possible.

Well we have nicer and less nice tasks, that everybody has in his job. And this is one of the standards. The tasks that are not always that enjoyable.

It doesn't matter what I think about the survey. We are obliged to collect data and that's it

Well, it's not the greatest challenge to fill in those questionnaires. Yes, the obligation and, ehm, yes, of course, as accurate as possible. And on time.

I think we fill in in good faith, but it's seen as a necessary evil.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

The paper presents specific factors and sources of motivation in business surveys based on qualitative data collected in businesses through interviews. Empirical data support all types of motivation suggested in theory but the extent and diversity of supporting data vary by type of motivation.

Still, given that the theoretical bases and empirical data converge, it is possible to suggest a set of recommendations. These recommendations go beyond the *questionnaire design* and also refer to the *communication* with the respondent and the business. Some of these recommendations are not new, but we iterate them here for completeness and because the theoretical bases explain why they should be effective in the business setting. The business setting is a setting where, from respondents' point of view, the employment relationship reigns. From the business' point of view, it is a setting where a profit-oriented activity is taking place. In general in this setting, influencing extrinsic motivation promises to be especially important for achieving participation, timely response and data of good quality, which might be in contrast with the household surveys where intrinsic motivation plays a prominent role. On the other hand, it seems that influencing intrinsic motivation also has some potential— not because intrinsic motivation seems to be high in the business survey task but because it has rarely been systematically treated and research findings suggest intrinsic motivation positively influences commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000), although in different kind of settings. Thus the recommendations are focused both on intrinsic and on extrinsic motivation. They are presented as concrete actions and strategies that can be applied to enhance motivation, which is, in turn, hypothesized to positively affect the outcome of the survey task and minimize four aspects of survey error, i.e. unit and item non-response, measurement error and timeliness.

Recommendations that focus mainly on enhancing respondents' intrinsic motivation are:

- Survey participation should be made as *enjoyable* as possible. Given that the task of answering survey questions is not attractive to most respondents, it might be necessary to think of other aspects of survey participation and make them enjoyable. The possibilities are greater or at least more convenient for electronic reporting and include, for instance, accessing an online questionnaire, printing the questionnaire, receiving a confirmation of receipt by email, etc. These activities might become more enjoyable if accompanied by interesting figures, famous or wise thoughts, quiz-like questions, etc. A respectful and friendly tone should be present in all communication.
- Respondents' *mood* should be improved. As mood is a temporary state, it is important to focus on activities that immediately precede questionnaire's completion. Given the impact of humor on people's mood, ideas for improving the mood could be sought in humorous thoughts, anecdotes, etc.

- Respondents' *perceived competence* (or perceived abilities) should be enhanced, as it seems that perceived competence influences response behavior and, vice versa, having positive experiences with questionnaires influences perceived competence towards future questionnaires. This can be done by using an appropriate communication strategy that would stress the easiness and the simplicity of the response task. This should of course be accompanied by a questionnaire that *is* as much easy and simplified as possible but also user-friendly to make a good first impression.
- A good *relationship* with the business and the respondent should be built up to enhance relatedness. A good example of this is using dedicated staff (account managers) for businesses that are important for the aggregate statistics. However, such approach is typically granted to only a handful of large businesses so it is necessary to think of finding efficient ways of establishing and maintaining the relationship with the businesses at large. Possible strategies are to target only new respondents, respondents involved in more surveys, respondents completing questionnaires for several businesses (e.g. in accounting firms), etc. The relationship could be established through a live contact, with small gifts or other tokens of appreciation, etc. Given that a good relationship is typically based on reciprocity, giving different forms of feedback should also be useful in this regard.
- Respondents should feel that they have some *autonomy* with regard to the business survey task. Two situations where more autonomy typically is or could be granted concern the deadline for reporting and the provision of estimates instead of precise figures.

Recommendations that focus mainly on enhancing respondents' extrinsic motivation are:

- Current response enhancing practices, i.e. reminders and (threats of) fines in the case of nonresponse, seem to achieve their aim of assuring response.
- *Value* of the survey, the survey organization and the survey outcomes should be improved and communicated. The value is expressed with tangible benefits or rewards or merely perceived as such. Three 'stakeholders' should get or perceive this value, namely society, the business and the individual respondent. Influencing the *value in real terms* could be done by giving the businesses an appropriate incentive for the time and effort they have spend to fill in the questionnaire, though this might be costly. The *perceived value* can be increased by a communication strategy, for instance, by showing businesses more concretely what the data are used for and which is the specific purpose of the requested data.
- Responding to a questionnaire should be made as *easy, simple and predictable* as possible. This concretely means, for example, to adapt the survey items as much as possible to the businesses' administration; to avoid changes as much as possible, and if changes are made, communicate them early and clearly to the business; to use as much as possible a standardized format, for example in concordance with other data requesting organizations as the tax office, and so on.
- Therefore it seems extremely important to alleviate factual survey burden, but as well to inform businesses very well of the impossibility of alleviating this burden even more and of the value of the official statistics.

Some strategies promise to affect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, depending also on the exact form of implementation. This, for instance, holds for the provision of some sort of *feedback* that should be given to respondents because it tackles motivation from two sides. It influences intrinsic motivation by enhancing a good relationship through reciprocity and making the survey participation pleasant, and it influences the perceived value of the task done. Some kinds of feedback are already used on a regular or *ad hoc* basis such as statistical results and thank-you notes. However, there is still a lot of potential in improving and diversifying even these two kinds of feedback. Statistical results can be customized and more tailored to the needs of a specific business, presented in a way to offer information (not only data) to the business or simply made more attractive but survey organizations are not always knowledgeable of business data needs. Acknowledging respondents' efforts can be supported with more far-reaching marketing activities such as rewarding the most deserved respondents once a year at a special occasion or with participation in special events. Another strategy is to send positive evaluations about good respondents to their superiors but also requests for improvement of reporting. To direct certain strategies not only towards the respondents but also towards superiors promises to

enhance their effectiveness. Acknowledging organizational efforts, on the other hand, can be implemented with the cooperation of a reputable company that excels also in reporting and thus nourishes its social responsibility.

5. Further Research

These recommendations are based on theories of motivation and qualitative data from two data sources. As our empirical data are limited, additional or somewhat different recommendations might be given if other data are used, especially if these data are more focused on voluntary surveys. Nevertheless, they should help with the development of other possible interventions. The next step should be to implement and experimentally test interventions as a means to evaluate the proposed recommendations. Research is necessary to evaluate the specific impact of each one of the different sources of motivation that appear to be of importance in the business survey task.

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