

## Are workers motivated by the greater good?

### Workers care about employers' social causes, but the public sector does not attract particularly motivated employees

Keywords: corporate philanthropy, employee motivation, public sector, recruitment

#### ELEVATOR PITCH

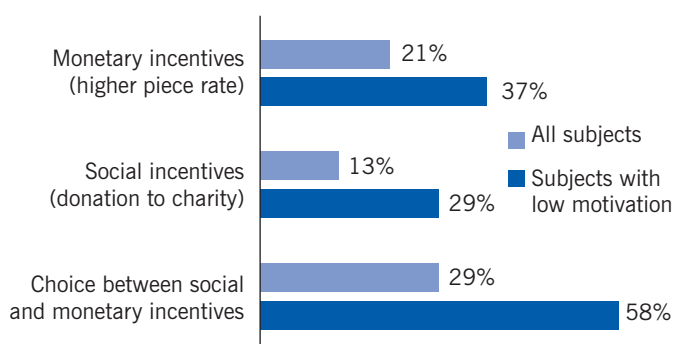
Employees show more commitment to an employer that promotes the greater good, and they work harder too. Moreover, many people are willing to give up some of their compensation to contribute to a social cause. Being able to attract a motivated workforce would be particularly important for the public sector, but this goal remains elusive. Indeed, there is evidence for the public sector that paying people more or underlining the career opportunities (as opposed to the social aspects) associated with public sector jobs is instrumental in attracting a more productive workforce, without having a negative impact on intrinsic motivation.

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Pros

- + Employees work harder and are more motivated when their job is associated with a social cause.
- + Many people are willing to give up some of their private compensation to contribute to the greater good.
- + Survey results show that socially responsible firms are more attractive to jobseekers.
- + Attracting a motivated workforce is particularly important for the public sector.
- + In the public sector, randomized controlled trials suggest that extrinsic incentives (pay, career options) do not crowd out intrinsic motivation to serve the public interest.

People work harder when a higher financial reward or a social cause is introduced, especially when initial motivation is low



Source: [1].

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##### Cons

- What represents a good cause may be subjective, and a good match in terms of mission between workers and their firm is crucial.
- Attracting a motivated workforce can be challenging, and the public sector appears to have had limited success.
- Highlighting the social aspects of a job in the public sector may not be an effective way to recruit motivated workers.
- The evidence on workers' motivation is limited, affecting the generalizability of study findings.

#### AUTHOR'S MAIN MESSAGE

Empirical evidence shows that organizations that support a social cause have an advantage in motivating employee effort. Jobseekers, customers, and investors view such companies as more attractive. The public sector, however, is generally not very successful in attracting particularly motivated workers. Experimental studies show that using extrinsic incentives (better pay and career prospects) to recruit public sector workers can attract more productive people without negatively affecting the intrinsic motivation to serve the public interest. This suggests that human resources practices from the private sector can also be successfully deployed in the public sector.