Foot In The Door Compliance Technique

The FITD technique aims at increasing compliance with a large request by first asking people to go along with a smaller request.

For example:

A student may ask his/her teacher “May I turn in the paper at the end of the day?” Once agreement to this request has been made it is followed by “May I turn in the paper next lesson?”

Also:

If asked to sign a petition first then a person is more likely to comply when next asked to make a donation. The technique sometimes requires a delay between the initial request and the larger one.

**Evidence:**

**Dickerson et al. (1992)** did a field experiment where they asked university students to conserve water in the dormitory showers. To do so, they asked students in Santa Cruz, California to do two things: first, they asked them to sign a poster that said, “Take shorter showers. If I can do it, so can you!” Then they asked them to take a survey designed to make them think about their own water usage.

Then all students in a dormitory had their shower times monitored. Students who had signed the poster and then been forced to think about their own water usage had average shower times of about 3.5 minutes less compared to the rest of the students across the dormitories as a whole.

Evaluation:

+ The field experiment demonstrates FITD technique in a real life situation.

- Students already committed to water conservation would be more likely to sign the petition.

- The findings may not be applicable to non-student populations.

**Freedman and Fraser (1966)**

Two groups are asked to place a large, very unsightly sign in their front yard reading "Drive Carefully". Two weeks earlier the members of one group had been approached to put a small sign in their front window reading "Be a Safe Driver", almost all agreed. In response to the "Drive Carefully" request 76 percent of those who were initially asked to display the small sign complied, in comparison with only 17 percent of those in the other group who had not been exposed to the earlier request.

In a second study participants who had been asked to sign a petition about road safety were more likely to agree to the sitting/placing of a large, ugly ‘drive carefully’ sign in their garden than a group who were asked to site the sign without the prior request.

Explanation of why FITD works:

According to Cialdini (2009), FITD is successful because of **consistency** and **commitment**. We perceive from the first request that we are the type of person who gives help in this type of situation and this guides our future behavior as we wish to be consistent. People are more willing to agree to requests that are consistent with prior commitment.

Kurt Lewin (1951) argued that behavior is motivated by **goal gradients**. The longer people commit themselves to something, the less likely they are to abandon the goal (also applies to lowballing technique).

Other interesting aspects of FITD:

* Initial requests must not be so large that people will refuse them.
* When the same person makes both requests it is difficult to get compliance.

Evaluation of FITD technique:

The technique is highly regarded as being effective and practical. The foot-in the door technique is widely used and the number of people out on the street asking people to sign petitions for practical causes is an example of this.

One interesting application of FITD is that is has been found to be an effective way to increase compliance to health screening. For example, Dolin and Booth-Butterfield (1995) allocated women who attended a health fair randomly to a FITD or control condition in which the target behavior was making an appointment for health screening. Results indicated that the FITD produced a significant effect with women in the experimental condition, who showed 16 per cent greater compliance with the critical request to go for screening. Using the FITD technique has also been shown to increase blood donations and the willingness to be an organ donor.

The FITD technique is most powerful when the person’s self image is related to the request. This means that the request needs to be kept close to issues which the person is likely to care about, such as helping the environment.