Improving Recruitment and Retention of UW Green Laboratory Certification Program Participants
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Introduction:
The Green Laboratory Certification program on campus promotes campus laboratories to adopt sustainability practices in their everyday lab operations. Overall, the certification rate of campus laboratories has been around 1%. Using various persuasion techniques through recruitment and retention strategies, laboratories can have higher and continuing participation in the Green Laboratory Certification program. There are six common useful persuasion techniques: reciprocation, commitment and consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity. Using these techniques as the basis to evaluate the recruitment and retention efforts of the Green Laboratory Certification Program, areas for improvement of involvement within the program are revealed.

Methods:
I used interviews, and examined communication strategies (materials and media) used by the program. Interviews also explored then various communication and outreach strategies, employed by the program, to recruit and retain participants. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and together with other recruitment and retention materials and media, I coded the data by searching for evidence of the presence or absence of the following persuasion techniques: (i) Reciprocation, (ii) Commitment and Consistency, (iii) Social Proof, (iv) Liking, (v) Authority, and (vi) Scarcity.

Results:
I found that some efforts of the Green Laboratory Program use persuasion techniques in their disfavor. Many of the communication mediums and techniques were only beneficial to an audience that already had a green mindset. The main form of recruitment that could discourage interest in certification is their competition based prize system. Persuasion methods have shown that when people compete with one another, interest and involvement are diminished. Additionally, in their certification process the contrast principle works against them. The contrast principle states that people compare more harshly things that are consecutively placed together. Green Laboratory states their easier recertification option before their more difficult one, making it seem more extreme that it actually is. One positive aspect of persuasion that Green Laboratory uses is the reciprocation technique. Reciprocation occurs when someone gives you something, you feel obligated to give them something in return. Green Laboratory did this by supplying laboratories that had certified with UW Husky Grind coffee, which encouraged them to stay committed in the program.

Discussion & Recommendations:
I intended to provide recommendations to improve the Green Labs Certification Program’s recruitment and retention efforts. The primary suggestion for improvement would be to replace the competition with an overall goal for the laboratories to work for. This would help the laboratories feel connected by needing to work together. Working together for a goal enables Commitment and Consistency as well as Social Proof. I suggest to remove statistics for the amount of environmental damage and pollution that laboratories cause. It has been shown that people feel more responsible when convinced that something is wrong, rather than being told the consequences. When people feel responsible, it promotes the Commitment and Consistency theorem to stay true to oneself, thus encouraging further green actions. A final proposition for improvement would be to integrate persuasion techniques through face-to-face interactions. When physically speaking with someone, it is easier to use persuasion techniques such as rejection retreat and authority. Physical interaction also permits Commitment and Consistency along with Social Proof.

Conclusion:
Conservation Psychology, the science and practice of promoting pro-environmental behaviors, can help managers and policy makers meet their desired goals. When considering projects that require action from people on a personal level, employing Conservation Psychology can be invaluable.

Resources:

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