
Research Sponsorship

The Center for Advanced Hindsight is a behavioral science research lab at Duke University. Since its inception a decade ago, more than one hundred behavioral researchers, PhD students, post-doctorates, interns, volunteers, and generally interesting people from across the globe have called the Center home. The Center is led by Behavioral Economics Professor Dan Ariely, who has written three New York Times bestsellers, including *Predictably Irrational*. Visit our website: advanced-hindsight.org to learn more.

WHAT DOES SPONSORSHIP MEAN?

The work of the lab is supported and expanded through research sponsors. Sponsors tend to have a vested interest in research related to health and financial behaviors at home and abroad. While each sponsorship is tailored to the needs and abilities of the sponsoring organization, there tend to be one to three typical areas that a sponsor supports and benefits from:

Fundamental Research

The Center for Advanced Hindsight conducts basic research related to the psychology of money, health, happiness, and more. This area of research explores the fundamental mechanisms to explain and change behavior through traditional lab experiments with consented subjects (online or in-person). This work leads to white papers, academic publications, or other thought pieces.

Applied Research on Sponsor's Products and Services

Some sponsors use this opportunity to optimize their existing products and services or design new products and services to improve their client behavior for better outcomes for both the sponsor and their clients. This work leads to customized and easily scalable interventions that are tested with the sponsor's clientele.

Applied Research with Third Party Providers

The Center also tests ideas on *real* people and *real* behavior with other organizations that provide a sample and track data. This allows the Center to test ideas on real people and real behavior without drawing on additional time and development resources from the sponsor. This work leads to relevant best practices with a growing base of evidence for adaptable solutions.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SPONSORSHIP?

In addition to early access to research findings across the lab, sponsors typically also receive:

- Input and direction for a relevant research agenda, often directly related to their own products or services
- Workshops on behavioral science to build internal capacity for applying behavioral insights and experimentation
- On-call advice and feedback from behavioral experts in the lab
- Thought leadership in the field
- A variety of written reports, papers or press related to the research findings

EXAMPLES OF WORK WITH HEALTH SPONSORS

Fundamental Research

As part of a sponsorship supported by Envolve Health, a company that offers innovative healthcare solutions designed to make healthcare simpler, more effective, and affordable, we conducted basic research on how people make decisions about what and how much to eat.

Consumers may have the right intentions, but their intuitions often result in poor eating choices. For example, when people make decisions about what or how much to eat, they rely on “food stereotypes” rather than actual nutritional information. In one study, we asked participants to estimate the caloric contents of a smoothie, which had either five ingredients, or the same five ingredients plus a sixth: kale. Despite the fact that the kale *added* calories (about 30) to the smoothie, participants thought that the kale smoothie had about 60 *fewer* calories than the smoothie without kale, demonstrating that the presence of a food stereotyped as extremely healthy changes our interpretation of the food item as a whole. As a result, people have a hard time learning how to calibrate their caloric intake across meals. We are building on this research to design interventions that help people make better eating decisions.

Applied Research on Sponsor’s Products and Services

As part of a sponsorship with Discovery Health, the largest private health insurer in South Africa, we tested an element of their opt-in rewards-based program where members earn points for healthy behaviors like exercise, purchasing healthy foods, and getting routine biometric screenings. In turn, these points translate to gym discounts, airline tickets, movie passes, and even 5-25% off of healthy groceries.

We were interested in how pre-commitment could encourage their members to make healthier food purchases. Program participants were offered the opportunity to pre-commit to increasing their healthy food purchases at the grocery store by 5% each month, or else lose their pre-existing healthy food cash-back bonus. In total, 36% of eligible households chose to pre-commit to the program, increasing their healthy food purchases by 3.5% in each of the study’s six months. Thus, we found the commitment device to be an effective tool to help activate and maintain self-control with food purchases.

Applied Research with Third Party Providers

As part of a sponsorship with Novartis, a global healthcare company that provides solutions to address the evolving needs of patients worldwide, we partnered with Pattern Health, a health technology company, on a study of adherence to positive health behaviors.

We assessed a variety of incentives to encourage participants from a community population to follow a multivitamin regimen, exercise daily (tracked with Fitbit devices), and photograph their meals. The intervention included social accountability (sharing progress on Facebook), a points system (where, depending on their behaviors and study condition, participants could win or lose money), and “app control” (where a subset of participants’ smartphone apps were blocked if they failed to complete their daily tasks). We found that the intervention was not only largely effective at increasing adherence, but also embraced by participants – an important metric given that the intervention was the foundation of a large-scale clinical trial in conjunction with the Duke Clinical Research Institute, aimed at improving outcomes in heart failure patients from over 160 hospitals across the United States.

Curious to learn more? Contact Julie O’Brien (julie.obrien@duke.edu) to discuss how your organization can benefit from sponsoring health research at the Center for Advanced Hindsight.