

The Power of Social versus Financial Factors in Behavior Change
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Decision-makers can focus too much on financial/economic factors when seeking to motivate others. Often overlooked in this regard is the power of social norms, which refer to what most people do (descriptive social norms) and what most people approve/disapprove (injunctive social norms). Studies in several environmental contexts (e.g., home energy conservation, household recycling, hotel conservation efforts) show that persuasive communications that employ social norms-based appeals for prosocial behavior are superior to those that employ traditional appeals. Yet, the motivating power of social norms is rarely (and sometimes incorrectly) used in programs designed to increase desired conduct.