Finding Excuses to Decline the Ask

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Abstract

A growing body of empirical evidence documents a reluctance to give. Individuals avoid donation asks, and when asked, give less by viewing factors – such as ambiguity or risk – in a self-serving manner. By considering donation asks that do not introduce or highlight such factors, this paper explores whether self-serving tendencies may arise from the mere expectation of the ask, or opportunity for individuals to find their own excuses, when the ask is unavoidable. Our field experiment supports this extension of self-serving tendencies: prosocial behavior reduces by 20% when the ask is explicitly forecasted and thus expected. Additional results provide insight into the conditions and types of individuals contributing to this finding. While self-serving responses persist when information on why to give is not provided or can be easily avoided, the provision of unavoidable information proves effective. The need to counteract self-serving responses to the expectation of the ask, moreover, is most relevant among individuals who have not previously supported the non-profit organization in question.

Keywords: charitable giving, prosocial behavior, self-serving biases, excuses
JEL codes: D64, C93

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1 Introduction

One need not look far to see evidence of charitable acts. Volunteerism and giving in local communities is common. Social media, through campaigns such as #GivingTuesday, highlight giving opportunities online. Giving USA recently reported the highest level of (inflation-adjusted) charitable giving in their 60-year history: $358.38 billion in 2014. Over 70% of this giving comes from individuals, as opposed to foundations, bequests, or corporations. The recipients of giving are also increasingly diversified; while about one-third of donations benefit religious organizations, other popular sources range from education to the environment and animals (Giving USA Foundation, 2015). Many situations remain, however, where individuals appear reluctant to give.

If given the chance, individuals often avoid the ask. They walk in a different direction than solicitors (Andreoni, Rao and Trachtman, 2011; Trachtman et al., 2015), do not answer their door for solicitors (DellaVigna, List and Malmendier, 2012), and opt-out of future mail campaign solicitations (Kamdar et al., 2015).[1] Individuals are also sensitive to (potentially) negative attributes associated with the giving opportunity. They give less when the outcome may rely on chance or others' decisions (Dana, Weber and Kuang, 2007; Andreoni and Bernheim, 2009; Linardi and McConnell, 2011; Falk and Szech, 2013), the use of donations may be undesirable (Fong and Oberholzer-Gee, 2011; Li et al., 2013; Gneezy, Keenan and Gneezy, 2014; Batista, Silverman and Yang, 2015), or the involved organization has poor performance metrics (Yörük, 2013; Brown, Meer and Williams, 2014; Gneezy, Keenan and Gneezy, 2014; Meer, 2014). Evidence even exists for individuals developing self-serving assessments of factors, such as ambiguity (Haisley and Weber, 2010), risk (Exley, Forthcoming), and charity performance metrics (Exley, 2015), as excuses not to give.[2]

To consider the boundaries of the self-serving literature in particular, this paper explores if a reluctance to give arises even in situations that do not highlight or introduce factors that can be viewed self-servingly. In particular, this paper tests whether prosocial behavior is less likely when individuals expect to be asked to give, or when individuals have a greater opportunity to find and develop their own excuses. If so, the extent of self-serving behavior – evidence for which is largely limited to identifying self-serving responses to particular factors – may be underestimated.

Individuals' opportunity to develop excuses may be greatest when they can avoid the ask and

[1] Relatedly, individuals desire to avoid others knowing they were asked to give (Dana, Cain and Dawes, 2006; Broberg, Ellingsen and Johannesson, 2007; Lazear, Malmendier and Weber, 2012) and benefit from avoiding prosocial decisions via delegating their decisions to others (Hamman, Loewenstein and Weber, 2010; Coffman, 2011; Bartling and Fischbacher, 2012).

[2] Similarly, Konow (2000) shows that individuals appear to avoid cognitive dissonance by adhering to a self-serving fairness norm even after it is no longer self-serving. Andreoni and Sanchez (2014) and Di Tella et al. (2015) document how individuals change their beliefs about others when doing so can help to justify more selfish actions on their behalf. Klinowski (2015) even shows that the timing of the information can relate to excuse-driven behavior; in a two-stage donation ask, information on a large previous donation discourages giving if provided before the final ask but not if provided during the final ask.

thus ensure that they do not give – for instance, they may overweight their dislike of the ask or exaggerate the extent to which they are too busy to face the ask. Avoidance of the ask, however, may also reflect a dislike of the ask absent any desire to avoid giving per se, perhaps due to the role of social pressure (Meer, 2011) or empathetic triggers (Andreoni and Rao, 2011).[3] To preclude this potential confound, this paper therefore focuses on whether less prosocial behavior results when the ask is more expected but is not avoided.

That is, we implement a field experimental design where the ask is either a surprise or announced, yet neither negative attributes of the giving opportunity are mentioned nor is the ask avoided. Many environments are not conducive to such a design. When individuals receive fundraising mail or are approached by solicitors, a surprise or unexpected ask is likely impossible. Manipulating expectations about future donation requests is more feasible, for instance, by varying whether a charitable event is publicized or whether flyers alert you to the time during which solicitors will knock at your door. Advance notice of donation requests, however, often result in individuals avoiding the ask.

To create an environment conducive to our design, we therefore embed our field experiment as part of an online voting contest for a favorite animal rescue group. Via a three-step voting registration process, individuals are unlikely to expect an ask when they begin the first step, the expectation of an ask is manipulated in the second step, and the ask itself follows in the third step. Strong treatment effects and attrition of only 1% further validate this design choice. The use of an online voting contest also helps to ensure our study occurs in a natural environment where individuals are not directly informed of, and likely remain unaware of, the on-going research.[4]

More specifically, upon arriving at the contest webpage, individuals learn that they must complete a three-step registration process for their vote to count. The first step involves selecting their favorite animal group, and the third step requires them to decide whether to click-through to the donation page of their favorite animal group. The second step varies according to which of the six conditions they are randomly assigned. These conditions vary on two dimensions.

Our first and most important condition varies the expectation of the ask. When the ask is "expected" the second step mentions the upcoming donation ask but no such mention is made when the ask is "unexpected." Our second condition considers how to counteract any negative impact from the expectation of the ask, particularly as charities may be unable to created surprise solicitations. We test the effectiveness of information on why to give by varying whether the second step displays no information, unavoidable information, or avoidable information. The information on why to give involves a successful adoption story about a rescued dog to keep in

[3]We leave for future work the disentangling of a dislike of the ask from the overweighting of a dislike of the ask as an excuse to avoid it.

[4]Indeed, online voting contests are common. In one Google Consumer survey we ran in October 2015 (n=500), the majority of individuals responded yes when asked "Have you ever voted in an online contest or poll?" In a second Google Consumer survey we ran in October 2015 (n=500), over a quarter also responded yes when asked "Have you ever voted in an online contest to help a charity or deserving individual(s) to win a prize or recognition?"

line with industry practice. In addition to its policy relevance, the variation in how information is provided sheds insight into whether information avoidance depends on the expectation of needing excuses or reflects a broader aversion to information. This distinctions relates to the underlying mechanisms in the moral wiggle room literature (Dana, Weber and Kuang, 2007; Bartling, Engl and Weber, 2014).

Our contest yielded approximately six-thousand participants with various levels of prior support for the animal groups. When no information on why to give is provided, we find that the mere expectation of the ask causes click-through rates to fall by 22%. That is, individuals appear readily able to find their own excuses or reasons not to give when given the opportunity to do so prior to the ask. The introduction of attributes, such as risk or ambiguity, that can be viewed self-servingly are not needed for evidence of excuse-driven behavior to arise.

Providing unavoidable information on why to give proves effective at counteracting this drop; click-through rates do not differ according to the expectation of the ask. While a promising finding for charities that often bundle donation requests with information on why to give, this strategy is sensitive to how the information is delivered.

When the information on why to give is avoidable, the click-through rates again fall when the ask is expected – this time by 15% relative to when the ask is unexpected. That is, individuals choose to acquire information in a manner that allows them to maintain excuses not to click-through when the ask is expected. While selection prohibits the identification of how information acquisition leads to reduced click-throughs, additional evidence is suggestive. First, information acquisition choices are consistent with an avoidance of information as an excuse not give: the percentage of individuals viewing the story drops from 22% to 17% when the ask is expected. Second, viewing time behavior supports the possibility that individuals spend time deliberating over the information to find excuses not to give. Among individuals who view the information and do not click-through, their viewing time is longer when the ask is expected. The opposite pattern emerges among individuals who view the information and click-through, while no changes are observed when the information is instead unavoidable. As discussed later, these findings relate to the growing literature on response time (Rand, Greene and Nowak, 2012; Tinghög et al., 2013; Recalde, Riedl and Vesterlund, 2014; Krajbich et al., 2015; Kessler, Kivimaki and Niederle, 2015).

In considering the potential heterogeneity in our results, we note that there is likely a spectrum of individuals ranging from those who never give to those who always give. While excuses not to give are not relevant for either extreme, excuses are likely more relevant for those closer to the never-give side. A closer examination of our results supports this possibility. Self-serving responses are largely driven by new potential supporters as opposed to previous supporters, the former of which is likely closer to the never-give side.[5] Previous literature also supports

[5]This consideration may be best thought of from a charity-specific perspective, as where individuals fall on the spectrum of willingness to give may depend on the charity in question.

this possibility, as Exley (Forthcoming) documents more excuse-driven responses to risk among participants who are more selfish, and Karlan and Wood (2014) find that large previous donors increase their giving while small previous donors decrease giving in response to information on aid effectiveness.[6] How best to target potential donors or develop theories related to self-serving biases may therefore benefit from this growing evidence of self-serving or excuse-driven "types" of individuals.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents design, Section 3 discusses the collected data, Section 4 details the results, and Section 5 concludes.

2 Design

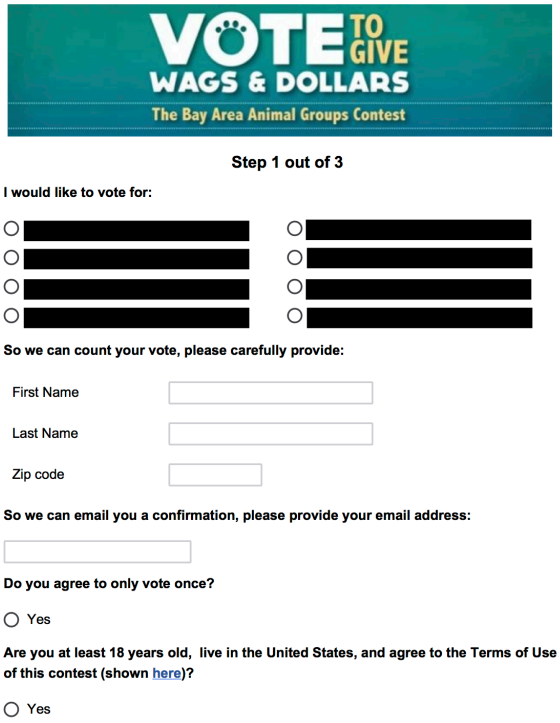
The following subsections detail the three-step voting registration process for the online contest. Section 3 will turn to the procedure for and data from recruitment and participation.

2.1 First Step - Vote for your favorite group

For the first step (see Figure 1), an individual votes for her favorite animal group and provides her first name, last name, email address and zip code. She also confirms her eligibility by agreeing to the terms-of-use and stating that she is 18 years or older, resides in the US and will only vote once. An individual only views information that this contest is related to a research study if she chooses to click on the terms-of-use hyperlink, and in the 4% of cases where this occurs, note that this hyperlink click precedes the treatment variations shown in the second step.

[6]The voting literature presents similar heterogeneous findings. For instance, Gerber and Rogers (2009) finds that turnout among regular voters is similar in response to messaging that focuses on high turnout (HTO) or low turnout (LTO). However, for infrequent voters, the HTO messaging is more effective than the LTO messaging, perhaps because the LTO messaging provides an excuse not to vote – i.e., others are not voting either.

Figure 1: Screen shot of first step of the voting contest



2.2 Second Step - Information on relationship to favorite group and treatment variations

In the second step, the top portion of the page requests information on how the voter knows her favorite group – e.g. whether she has adopted from them, attended one of their events, donated money to them, used their services, volunteered for them, worked as a staff member, never interacted with them, and/or interacted in some other way.

The bottom portion of the page displays any information related to the treatment group. The six treatments vary on two dimensions: whether the upcoming ask is foreshadowed or not, and whether information on why to give is not provided, is unavoidable, or is avoidable.

Figure 2 displays the first two "No Information" treatments, which only vary by whether a short message at the bottom of the second page highlights the upcoming donation request. That is:

> **No Information-Unexpected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Register your vote in the next step!"

> **No Information-Expected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Register your vote in the next step, and if you want to, donate to them!"

Figure 2: No Information-Unexpected (left) and No Information-Expected (right) treatments

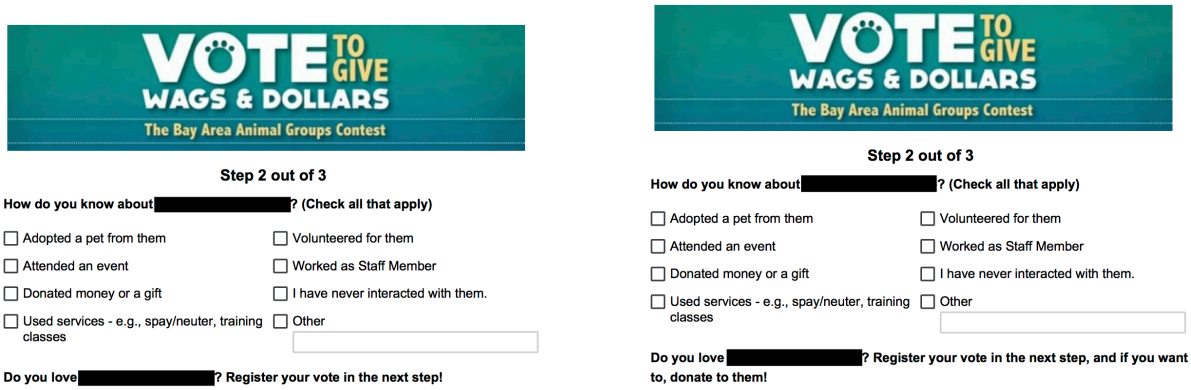


Figure 3 displays the two "Unavoidable Information" treatments, which add in information on why an individual might want to donate to her favorite animal group. This information takes the form of a real adoption story of a dog rescued by her favorite group. Depending on her favorite group, the adoption story always features one large photograph or two small photographs, along with 140-170 words describing how the dog was rescued. The adoption story follows the message that varies the expectation of the ask. That is:

> **Unavoidable Information-Unexpected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Read '[dog name]'s Story' below about a pup they saved, and register your vote in the next step!"

> **Unavoidable Information-Expected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Read '[dog name]'s Story' below about a pup they saved, register your vote in the next step, and if you want to, donate to them!"

Figure 4 displays the final two "Avoidable Information" treatments. An individual can click to reveal the information or not click to avoid the information. The opportunity to view this information follows the message that varies the expectation of the ask. That is:

> **Avoidable Information-Unexpected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Click to read '[dog name]'s Story' below about a pup they saved, and register your vote in the next step!"

> **Avoidable Information-Expected Ask Treatment:** "Do you love [group name]? Click to read '[dog name]'s Story' below about a pup they saved, register your vote in the next step, and if you want to, donate to them!"

Figure 3: Unavoidable Information-Unexpected Ask (left) and Unavoidable Information-Expected Ask (right) treatments

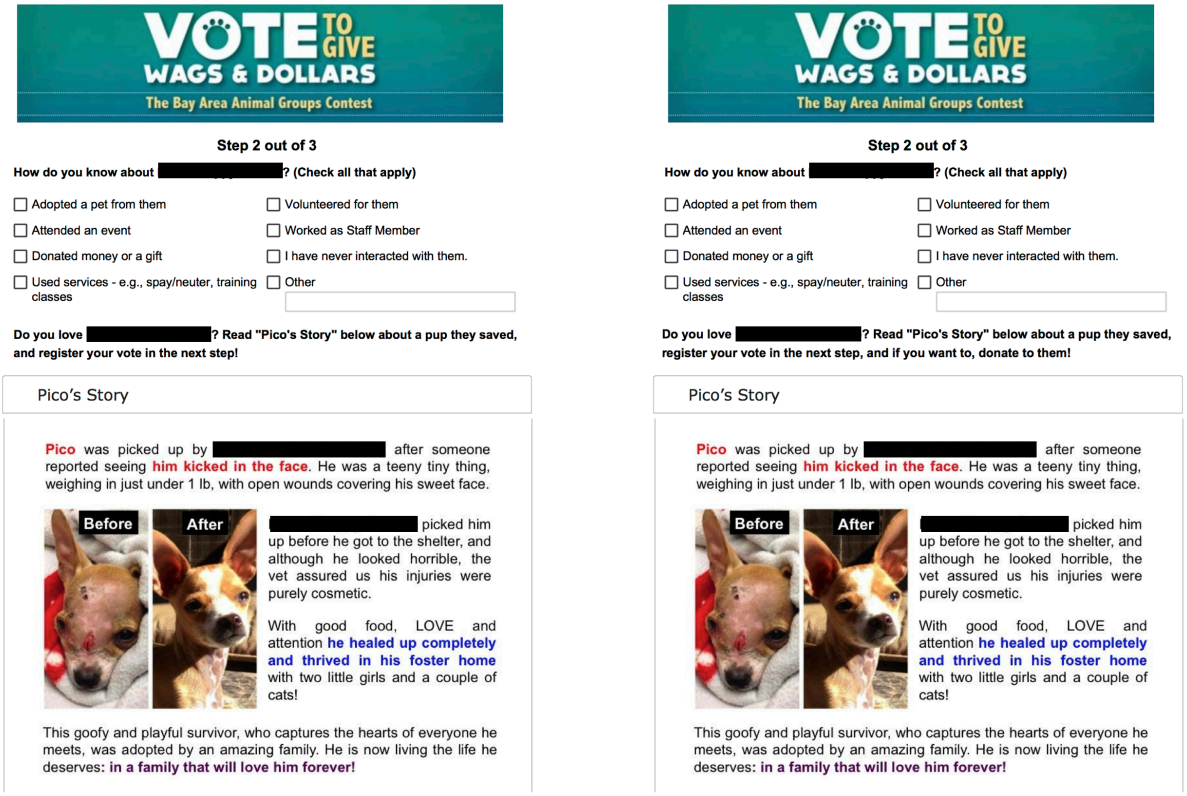
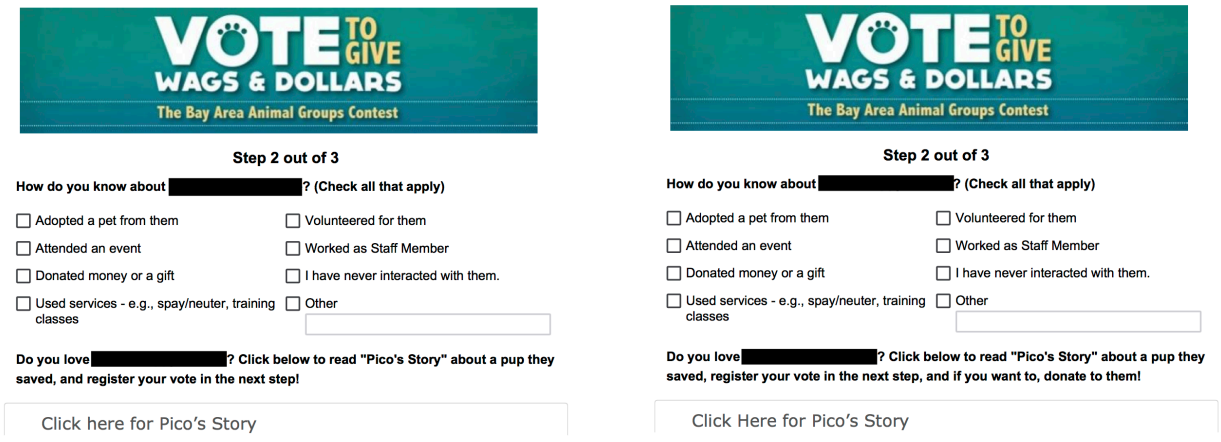


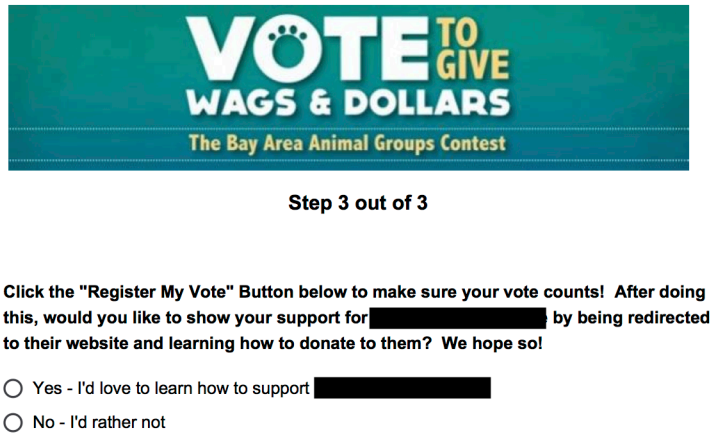
Figure 4: Avoidable Information-Unexpected Ask (left) and Avoidable Information-Expected Ask (right) treatments



2.3 Third Step - Choose whether to click-through to donation page of favorite group

As shown in Figure 5, during the third and final step, an individual must decide whether to click-through to her favorite group's donation page. To ensure an individual makes an active decision about clicking-through to her favorite group's donation page, notice that she must indicate this decision before clicking on the "register my vote" button. After clicking this button, a screen appears confirming the vote has been registered and a confirmation email is sent. If the voter chooses to click-through to the donation page of her favorite animal group, she is automatically redirected to that page.

Figure 5: Screen shots of third step of the voting contest



3 Data

3.1 Participant Recruitment

From March 9th to 22nd of 2015, individuals could vote for one out of eight participating Bay Area animal groups. To encourage participation, the group with the most votes by the end of the contest won $4,000. Additionally, one voter was chosen at random, and the group that individual voted for won $1,500. This smaller prize provided an incentive for all individuals to register a vote, even if their favorite group was unlikely to have enough supporters to win the larger prize.

The contest was hosted via a Qualtrics survey on the website of an organization that helps people find dogs for adoption (www.wagaroo.com) from animal shelters, rescue groups, or families needing to rehome their dogs. The hosting organization did not participate in the contest. Groups participating in this contest, however, had interacted with the hosting organization before, mostly

by posting profiles of their dogs available for adoption on the hosting organization's website. This relationship helped to ensure supporters of the participating groups about the legitimacy of the contest. Figure 6 shows how the landing page for the contest appeared.

Figure 6: Voting Contest Landing Page

To facilitate the recruitment of voters, participating groups were provided with professionally designed promotional materials to use during the contest. Some examples of these are shown in Figure 7. Groups were free to use these materials as well as any of their own materials to promote this contest via outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, their own web page, and email lists.

Figure 7: Some Promotional Ads Used During the Contest

3.2 Participant Completion

Out of the 6,664 individuals who began the three-step voting registration process, only 4% failed to complete all three steps. This attrition may in part be attributed to individuals starting to register a second vote but then quitting when they remembered that only one vote per person was allowed. Indeed, excluding individuals with a duplicate name and/or email address reduces the rate of attrition to only 1% of the remaining 6,059 individuals who began the registration process. Neither the winner of the contest nor our results that follow are sensitive to excluding individuals on the basis of duplicate names and/or email addresses.[7] The rate of attrition also remains constant at 1% across all treatment groups. The analyses that follow excludes all potential duplicates and focuses on the 5,976 unique and successfully cast votes. This yields 980 - 1,005 in each of our six treatment groups.

3.3 Description of the Data

For the 5,976 participants, our data consist of information directly inputted as part of the three-step voting registration process and the amount of time participants spent on each step. In the Avoidable Information treatments, we additionally have data on whether individuals clicked to reveal the adoption story, and if so, for how long the story was revealed.

On the first step, the median voter spent 44 to 45 seconds across all treatment groups. Their votes from this step resulted in the winning group garnering 20% of all votes. While the second through seventh placed group each had from 7% - 18% of all votes, the eighth placed group only earned 1%. The distribution of votes aligns with the substantial heterogeneity in the size and available resources of the participating animal groups. From the names inputted in the first step, computer code that predicts gender from a database of names indicates 83% of participants were female, 14% were male, and 4% were not known.

On the second step, the median voter spent 25 seconds. The amount of time varied across the treatment groups in the direction one would expect: 19-21 seconds in the when no information was provided, 26-27 seconds when information could be easily avoided, and 31-32 seconds when information was unavoidable. Their answers to how they knew the group they voted for are as follows: adopted a pet from them (26%), donated money or a gift (22%), attended an event (17%), volunteered for them (15%), used a service such as spay/neuter or training classes (10%), or worked as a staff member (1%). We refer to the resulting 54% of participants who interacted with the group in at least one of these specified ways as *previous supporters*. The remaining 46% of *new supporters* either indicated that they have never interacted with their voted for group (15% of the 46%) or had only interacted with the group before in some other way (85% of the

[7] This is important as it is indeed possible that some individuals shared the same name as another participant, or that more than one individual shared a particular email address, such as a family email address.

46%). Free responses indicate that the vast majority of such other interactions involved liking their posts on Facebook. Appendix Table A.1 shows that the frequency of these interactions, as well as predicted gender, are not different across the treatment groups.

On the third step, the median voter spent 11 seconds on this page, a time that did not vary across the treatment groups. The choice on the third step is the focus of this paper: whether individuals chose to click-through to their favorite animal group after voting for them.

Click-through rates are the metric of behavior we can fully observe from our field experiment. If a voter chose to click-through, she was redirected away from the contest page to the donation page of the group she voted for. Subsequent behavior, including donation decisions, was only observed by the involved animal groups. Data collection from the animal groups unfortunately resulted in noisy and non-standardized information. Even if we consider this data, the observed level of 1-2% click-through rates leaves us underpowered to detect any significant differences across our treatment groups.[8]

Click-through rates, or targeted website traffic to donation pages, are highly valued metrics. The importance of these metrics is perhaps best known in the voting literature. In their survey paper on political campaigns, Nickerson and Rogers (2014) discuss how "data collected from online activities can be of particular value" as the barrier to entry is low and the tracking of micro-level behavior can facilitate predictions about levels of support and likelihood of subsequent actions. The importance of these metrics is also increasingly known in the nonprofit sector. Out of the 84 nonprofit organizations (netting over $400 million dollars in 2014) featured in the 2015 M+R Benchmarks Study, 76% paid for web marketing.[9] This investment aligns with the continued growth of online revenue and strong correlation with website traffic and donations. For every 1,000 website visitors, the M+R Benchmarks Study reports an average of $610 dollars in donations. This compares to only $40 for every 1,000 fundraising emails sent and thus highlights the potential value of driving website traffic.

It is therefore encouraging to note that we observe an average click-through rate to donation pages of 46%. This average compares favorably to several benchmarks. The M+R Benchmark Study reports a click-through rate of 0.48% from fundraising emails, with only 14% even being opened. MailChimp reports a click-through rate of 2.89% from large email campaigns initiated by nonprofit organizations, with only 25.45% of emails being opened.[10] Silverpop reports that even the top-quartile of nonprofit organizations only have a click-through rate of 4.8% and opening rate of 27.3%.[11] It is worth noting that while we view click-through rates from emails as a useful

[8] Although noisy, it is interesting to note that rates conditional on being asked are typically around 2% for mail campaigns (Huck and Rasul, 2011; Karlan and List, 2007; Karlan, List and Shafir, 2011; Eckel and Grossman, 2008) and via social media (Castillo, Petrie and Wardell, 2014).

[9] For details, please see http://mrbenchmarks.com.

[10] See http://mailchimp.com/resources/research/email-marketing-benchmarks.

[11] See http://www.silverpop.com/Documents/Whitepapers/2013/WP_EmailMarketingMetricsBenchmarkStudy2013.pdf.

benchmark, this is only due to the absence of a benchmark for expected click-through rates as part of an online voting contest. The more important question – how click-through rates change in response to our treatment variations – is explored in the next section.

4 Results

4.1 Impact of expecting the ask and interactions with information provision

In the No Information - Unexpected Ask treatment, voters are reminded to register their vote in the next step. Alerting voters to the upcoming donation ask by the addition of 8 words to this reminder in the No Information - Expected Ask treatment has a substantial impact. Figure 8 shows that the mere expectation of the ask, or opportunity to find and develop one's own excuses prior to the ask, causes click-through rates to significantly decrease from 51% to only 40%. Columns (1) and (2) of Table 1 confirm the significance of this 11 percentage point drop via Probit regressions of the likelihood to click-through on expecting the ask, both when there are no controls included and when controls are included for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they know their selected animal group. This finding supports the extension of self-serving biases to a setting that does not introduce or highlight factors that can be viewed self-servingly.

In the presence of unavoidable information on why to give, there is no longer a negative impact of expecting the ask. In the Unavoidable Information treatments, click-through rates remain at 47% regardless of whether the ask is expected or unexpected. Columns (3) and (4) of Table 1 show this null effect with and without controls. Columns (5) and (6) further show that providing unavoidable information counteracts the negative impact of expecting the ask that arises absent any information.[12]

In considering why unavoidable information effectively counteracts the expectation of the ask, several mechanisms may be relevant. On one hand, unavoidable information may increase the difficulty with finding excuses or counter the desire to find excuses in the first place.[13] This possibility could perfectly explain why, relative to no information, unavoidable information increases click-through rates when the ask is expected (and excuses may be relevant) but has no impact when the ask is unexpected. On the other hand, unavoidable information may cause individuals to expect the ask even absent an explicit forecast of the ask. Recall that in the Unavoidable Information - Unexpected Ask treatment voters read text that says "Do you love

[12]We fail to reject that the sum of the coefficients on *Expected Ask* and *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* is different than 0 ($p = 0.91$).

[13]A potential reduction in the salience of the text that mentions the upcoming ask may directly decrease the focus on finding excuses.

Table 1: Click-through Regressions

Information:	Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of Click-through									
	None		Unavoidable		None or Unavoidable		Avoidable		None or Avoidable	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Expected Ask	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.00	0.00	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.11***	-0.11***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Unavoidable Information					-0.04	-0.04				
					(0.03)	(0.03)				
*Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information*					0.11***	0.11***				
					(0.03)	(0.03)				
Avoidable Information									-0.03*	-0.03*
									(0.02)	(0.02)
*Expected Ask*Avoidable Information*									0.04	0.03
									(0.03)	(0.02)
Controls	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	1989	1989	1984	1984	3973	3973	1998	1998	3987	3987
Click-through rates	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	0.44	0.44	0.45	0.45

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to click-through to the donation page of voted for animal group. *Expected Ask*, *Unavoidable Information*, and *Avoidable Information* are indicators for when the ask is expected, the information provided is unavoidable, and the information provided is avoidable. *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* and *Expected Ask*Avoidable Information* are interaction variables of these indicatorsControls include indicators for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they knew their selected animal group.

[group name]? Read '[dog name]?s Story' below about a pup they saved, and register your vote in the next step!" Although this text does not include the additional message of "and if you want to, donate to them," the mention of a successful rescue may cause individuals to expect the ask. This could in turn cause equal click-through rates in Unavoidable Information - Unexpected Ask treatment and Unavoidable Information - Expected Ask treatment. Even in this case though, the higher click-through rates in the Unavoidable Information treatments relative to the No Information - Expected Ask treatment would imply an additional mechanism related to the effectiveness of unavoidable information when the ask is expected. Other possibilities – such as ceiling effects or the potential for no more than 50% of voters ever being willing to click through – could also be relevant.[14]

In the presence of avoidable information on why to give, click-through rates more closely mirror the No Information treatments: expecting the ask causes a significant reduction from 48% to 41%. Columns (7) and (8) of Table 1 confirm this 7 percentage point decrease with and without controls. Columns (9) and (10) also show that providing avoidable information does not counteract the negative impact of expecting that ask observed in the No Information treatments.[15] If anything, relative to no information, providing avoidable information has a marginally significant discouragement level effect.

The findings in the Avoidable Information treatment show that individuals acquire information in a manner that allows them to find and maintain excuses to avoid prosocial behavior. While we cannot further identify how this information acquisition drives the reduction in click-through rates, the following discussion will present suggestive evidence.

Viewing decisions include both the extensive margin decision about whether to reveal the information and the intensive margin decision about how to consider the information when revealed. The moral wiggle room literature (Dana, Weber and Kuang, 2007; Bartling, Engl and Weber, 2014; Grossman, 2014) suggests a prominent role of individuals' extensive margin decisions. If information avoidance is broadly desired in this setting, then it may exist both when the ask is expected and unexpected. If information avoidance relates to a particular desire to maintain excuses or "wiggle room" to justify less prosocial behavior, then it should be more likely when the ask is expected. Our results support both possibilities: only 22% of participants reveal the information when the ask is unexpected and this reevaluation rate further decreases by over 20% to only 17% of participants when the ask is expected.[16] The first two columns of

[14] Alternatively, different types of information may have been even more effective and led to unambiguously higher click-through rates in the Unavoidable Information treatments. For instance, results from Levine and Kam (2015) indicate that the focus on past success as opposed to future need (by featuring a successful adoption story in the unavoidable information) may suggest that the organizations can succeed without further support.

[15] We reject that the sum of the coefficients on *Expected Ask* and *Expected Ask*Avoidable Information* is different than 0 ($p = 0.0004$).

[16] While expecting the ask does cause individuals to reveal information less often, and may naturally relate to the corresponding reduced click-through rate, we again stress that we cannot confidently draw this connection.

Figure 8: Fraction that Click-through to Donation Page of Voted-for Group

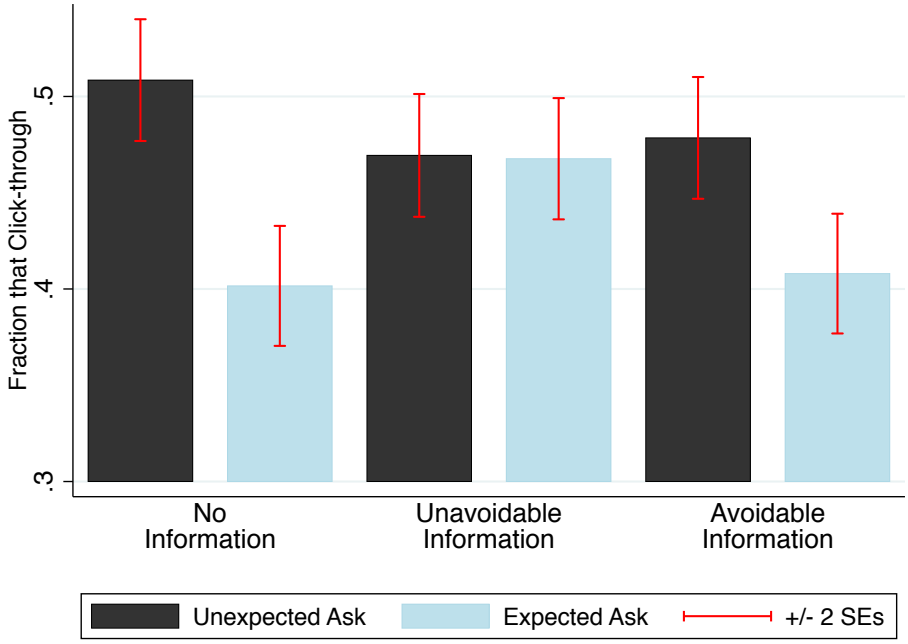


Table 2 confirms the significance of this drop.

The self-serving literature further suggests a role for the intensive margin viewing decisions. Indeed, individuals often may view the same information in a more self-serving manner when they stand to profit from doing so (Konow, 2000; Haisley and Weber, 2010; Exley, Forthcoming). Narrowing in on individuals' intensive margin viewing decisions in the Avoidable Information treatments is difficult, however. Unlike the extensive margin viewing decision, there is no clear measure of individuals' intensive margin viewing decision. In focusing on one observable measure – how long individuals spend viewing the information – columns (3) and (4) of Table 2 show that viewing time drops by an average of 2 seconds when the ask is expected. Given the average viewing time of 5 seconds, this drop is substantial although only marginally significant. This finding, however, may mechanically result from the extensive margin decisions as individuals are less likely to view the information in the first place when the ask is expected. Meanwhile, conditioning on those who reveal the information introduces selection concerns when comparing across the Avoidable Information - Expected Ask treatment and Avoidable Information - Unexpected Ask treatment. We thus present two sets of results, which even taken together, are at best suggestive.

First, Appendix Table A.2 presents (a proxy of) viewing time behavior in the Unavoidable

Table 2: Viewing Behavior Regressions

	Probit of Reveal Information		OLS of Time Viewing Information	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Expected Ask	-0.04***	-0.04***	-1.83	-1.93*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.97)	(0.95)
Constant			6.06***	3.23***
			(0.98)	(0.67)
Controls	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	1998	1998	1998	1998
Reveal rates	0.19	0.19		
Average times			5 seconds	5 seconds

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results in the first panel are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to reveal the information. The results in the second panel are from OLS regressions of seconds spent viewing the story in the Avoidable Information treatments, which equals 0 if the story is not revealed. If the story is revealed, we define the time spent viewing the story as the amount of seconds that elapses between participants clicking to reveal the story and their final click on the page to continue to the next step (or in rare cases, their click to close the story after choosing to reveal it). *Expected Ask* is an indicator for the Expected Ask treatments. Controls include indicators for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they knew their selected animal group. Data include the observations from the Avoidable Information treatments, with the third panel restricting to individuals who chose to reveal the story.

Information treatment, where selection into viewing the story is not a concern. The average viewing time does not differ according whether the ask is expected or unexpected.[17] The only pattern that emerges is individuals who click-through spend more time viewing the story than those who do not click-through. This correlation may simply arise from individuals who care more about dogs being more willing to spend time reading about dogs and more willing to click-through to donation pages directed to help such dogs.

Second, Table 3 presents the viewing time behavior in the Avoidable Information treatments. While evidence remains for individuals who click-through spending more time viewing the information when the ask is unexpected, this no longer holds when the ask is expected. This change appears to relate to viewing time reducing among individuals who click-through and increasing among individuals who do not click-through when the ask is expected or other-regarding motives

[17]Since voters do not have to click to reveal the information in the Unavoidable Information treatment, we define the time voters spend viewing the information as the amount of seconds that elapses between their first click on the page (presumably from answering the question about how they know their favorite animal group) and the final click on that page to continue to the next step.

are introduced. Such a possibility is loosely consistent with a dual self model where individuals intuitive and fast selfs are generous but deliberate and slow selfs are selfish. The following section presents more suggestive evidence in this vein by examining the potential for heterogeneous effects arising from different types of individuals. The section also expands the discussion to the related literature on response times.

Table 3: Conditional on revealing information, average number of seconds individuals spend viewing information in Avoidable Information treatments

Ask:	Unexpected or Expected	Unexpected	Expected
Overall	26	28	24
(a) If click-through	29	33	22
(b) If do not click-through	24	22	26
Observations	390	215	175

We define the time participants spend viewing the information as the amount of time that elapses between participants clicking to reveal it and their final click on the page to continue to the next step (or in rare cases, their click to close the information after choosing to reveal it). A similar pattern in viewing behavior results if one instead defines the time participants spend viewing the information as the amount of time that elapses between their first click on the page (presumably from answering the question about how they know their favorite animal group) and their final click on that page to continue to the next step.

4.2 Heterogeneous effects by level of prior support

Charities often consider how to target fundraising appeals towards new potential supporters versus previous supporters. Past literature lends support to such considerations as individuals with more previous support for a charity appear less likely to engage in excuse-driven behavior, such as reacting to risk (Exley, Forthcoming) or information on aid effectiveness (Karlan and Wood, 2014) in a self-serving manner.

To consider the potential for heterogeneous effects by the level of prior support in this study, we turn to the gathered information on how voters know their favorite animal group. We classify 54% of voters as *previous supporters* as they have previously adopted from, donated to, volunteered for, attended an event of, used services of, or been a staff member for their favorite animal group. The remaining 46% of *new supporters* include anyone who has not engaged in those forms of previous support. New potential supports have never interacted with their favorite animal group, or have only interacted in some other way. Other ways largely involve small interactions, and in particular, liking the group on Facebook.

Table 4 displays the main click-through regression results separately for new supporters and old supporters. As shown across the columns, our results indeed support the possibility that new supporters are more excuse-driven than previous supporters. New supporters are 15-16

percentage points less likely to click-through if the ask is expected, or if given the opportunity to find excuses. The click-through rate for previous supporters, by contrast, only decreases by 7 percentage points in response to expecting the ask and remains insignificant.

New supporters are also more responsive to the provision of information. Providing unavoidable information to new supporters, although it has a significant negative level effect, effectively counteracts the negative impact of expecting the ask.[18] Providing avoidable information to new supporters, although it has a similar significant negative level effect, does not fully counteract the negative impact of expecting the ask.[19] Neither the provision of unavoidable nor avoidable information, however, influences the click-through rates of previous supporters.[20] Appendix Tables A.3 and A.4 present similar patterns of results when separately considering the different types of support - i.e., comparing non-adopters to adopters, non-donors to donors, non-attendees of events to attendees of events, non-volunteers to volunteers, and non-users of services to users of services. As in Exley (Forthcoming), differential evidence for excuse-driven behavior by gender is not observed (see Appendix Tables A.5).[21]

As with the overall results, we cannot identify the underlying components of how individuals acquire information (when it is avoidable) in a manner that allows them to maintain excuses. In the following discussion, however, we will show that the related suggestive evidence for self-serving information acquisition (extensive margin decisions) and viewing time behavior (intensive margin decisions) appears more relevant among new supporters than previous supporters.

As shown in the first four columns of Table 5, expecting the ask significantly discourages new and previous supporters from revealing the information. The relative increase in this information avoidance is notably larger for new supporters. For new supporters, expecting the ask causes the revelation rate to decrease by 28%: from 18% when the ask is unexpected to 13% when the ask is expected. For previous supporters, expecting the ask causes the revelation rate to decrease by only 16%: from 25% when the ask is unexpected to 21% when the ask is expected.

This reduced revelation rate does not translate into reduced time viewing the story for new or previous supporters (see the last four columns of Table 5). Conditional on revealing the information though, Table 6 demonstrates that viewing time behavior is more nuanced.

Among the selected individuals who choose to reveal the information when the ask is unexpected (see second column of Table 6), both new supporters and previous supporters who click-through spend more time viewing the information than their counterparts who do not

[18] We fail to reject that the sum of the coefficients on *Expected Ask* and *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* are different than 0 ($p = 0.80$).

[19] We reject that the sum of the coefficients on *Expected Ask* and *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* are different than 0 ($p = 0.02$).

[20] This may result from previous supporters being more familiar with the available information on how their favorite group rescues dogs.

[21] While the results for women are more statistically significant, note that this likely reflects the fact that our sample consists of nearly six times as many women then men.

Table 4: By Type of Supporter: Click-through Regressions

	Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of Click-through							
Information:	None or Unavoidable				None or Avoidable			
Supporters:	New		Previous		New		Previous	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Expected Ask	-0.16***	-0.15***	-0.07	-0.07	-0.15***	-0.16***	-0.07	-0.07
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Unavoidable Information	-0.09***	-0.08***	0.00	-0.00				
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)				
Expected Ask	0.15***	0.15***	0.07	0.07				
**Unavoidable Information*	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.05)				
Avoidable Information					-0.06***	-0.06***	-0.00	0.00
					(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Expected Ask					0.09**	0.09**	-0.01	-0.01
**Avoidable Information*					(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Controls	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	1799	1799	2174	2174	1810	1810	2177	2177
Click-through rates	0.44	0.44	0.48	0.48	0.44	0.44	0.45	0.45

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results in the first panel are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to click-through to the donation page of voted for animal group. *Expected Ask*, *Unavoidable Information*, and *Avoidable Information* are indicators for when the ask is expected, the information provided is unavoidable, and the information provided is avoidable. *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* and *Expected Ask*Avoidable Information* are interaction variables of these indicators. Controls include indicators for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they knew their selected animal group.

click-through. This pattern is consistent with the notion that those who like reading successful dog adoption stories are also the ones who would be more likely to support the organization. This pattern is also consistent with the viewing time behavior in the Unavoidable Information treatments (see Appendix Table A.6) both for when the ask is expected and unexpected. There is only one treatment group where this pattern does not hold: when individuals select into revealing the information and the ask is expected (see third column of Table 6).

A closer examination of what may drive this shift is interesting. Among those who click-through, new and previous supporters spend less time viewing the information when the ask is expected as opposed to unexpected. This faster viewing time is more pronounced for previous supporters who spend 13 fewer seconds than new supporters who spend 7 fewer seconds. Among those who do not click-through, new and previous supporters spend more time viewing the information when the ask is expected. This slower viewing time is more pronounced for new supporters who spend 10 more seconds than previous supporters spend 2 more seconds.

A large literature (see Zaki and Mitchell (2013) for a review) documents empirical patterns consistent with prosocial tendencies being intuitive and fast while selfish choices are more deliberate and slow. In considering how viewing time behavior appears to change when the ask is expected or other-regarding motives are introduced, our evidence is consistent with generous types (those who click-through) making their decisions more quickly and selfish types (those who do not click through) dwelling on their decisions for longer. The generous-fast finding seems particularly relevant for previous supporters while the selfish-slow finding is particularly relevant among new supporters. This again adds to the suggestive evidence for excuse-driven behavior being more likely among new supporters than previous supporters.

Given this hetorogeneity, our findings may better relate to the literature that considers how confounds may influence the relationship between time and prosocial tendencies. For instance, Rand, Greene and Nowak (2012) present results suggesting that humans are intuitively generous, but subsequent research suggests that this result may depend on the selection of individuals (Tinghög et al., 2013), the complexity of the environment (Recalde, Riedl and Vesterlund, 2014), the strength of preferences over the available choice set (Krajbich et al., 2015), and the cost of being generous (Kessler, Kivimaki and Niederle, 2015). While we find the potential relationship to this literature interesting, it is worth reiterating that our evidence is at best suggestive given the comparison of selected samples inherent to this discussion of our results.

Table 5: By Type of Supporter: Viewing Behavior Regressions

	Probit of Reveal Story				OLS of Time Viewing Story			
Supporters:	New		Previous		New		Previous	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Expected Ask	-0.05**	-0.05**	-0.04***	-0.04**	-1.14	-1.29	-2.56	-2.71
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.95)	(0.96)	(1.61)	(1.61)
Constant					4.48***	3.01***	7.51***	4.56**
					(0.60)	(0.40)	(1.75)	(1.87)
Controls	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	923	916	1075	1075	923	923	1075	1075
Reveal rates	0.15	0.15	0.23	0.23				
Average times					4 seconds	4 seconds	6 seconds	6 seconds

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results in the first panel are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to reveal the information. The results in the second panel are from OLS regressions of seconds spent viewing the story in the Avoidable Information treatments, which equals 0 if the story is not revealed. If the story is revealed, we define the time spent viewing the story as the amount of seconds that elapses between participants clicking to reveal the story and their final click on the page to continue to the next step (or in rare cases, their click to close the story after choosing to reveal it). *Expected Ask* is an indicator for the Expected Ask treatments. Controls include indicators for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they knew their selected animal group. Data include the observations from the Avoidable Information treatments, with the third panel restricting to individuals who chose to reveal the story.

Table 6: Conditional on revealing story, average number of seconds spent viewing story in Avoidable Information treatments according to type of supporter

Ask:	Unexpected or Expected	Unexpected	Expected
New Supporters			
Overall	26	25	26
(a) If clicked-through	25	28	21
(b) If did not click-through	26	22	32
Observations	144	86	58
Previous Supporters			
Overall	27	30	23
(a) If clicked-through	31	36	23
(b) If did not click-through	23	22	24
Observations	246	129	117

We define the time participants spend viewing the information as the amount of time that elapses between participants clicking to reveal it and their final click on the page to continue to the next step (or in rare cases, their click to close the information after choosing to reveal it). A similar pattern in viewing behavior results if one instead defines the time participants spend viewing the information as the amount of time that elapses between their first click on the page (presumably from answering the question about how they know their favorite animal group) and their final click on that page to continue to the next step.

5 Conclusion

In a large field experiment using an online voting contest, we vary whether an upcoming donation ask is announced and expected or a surprise and (more) unexpected. We document a 20% reduction in prosocial behavior when individuals know an ask is coming and, thus, have the opportunity to find and develop excuses prior to facing the ask. This finding supports the extension of self-serving or excuse-driven behavior to situations that do not introduce or highlight factors that are often viewed self-servingly.

The negative impact of the ask persists when individuals can (and do) avoid information on why to give. Expecting the ask no longer has a negative effect, however, when information is instead unavoidable. Often constrained by situations where the ask is likely expected, these findings reinforce why nonprofit organizations may aggressively share unavoidable information on why to give with potential donors.

Our heterogeneous effects also provide insight into how nonprofit organizations may benefit from strategically targeting new versus previous supporters, as new supporters drive our observed evidence for excuse-driven behavior. Future work may consider ways to extend such heterogeneous considerations; the extent to which individuals are excuse-driven likely relates to a full distribution of types. Such a deepening of our understanding related to underlying motivations for prosocial behavior may help unify the literature and lead to more apt policy recommendations.

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Appendixes

(Not for Publication)

A Tables

Table A.1: Descriptive Statistics

Information	Any	None		Unavoidable		Avoidable	
Expected Ask		yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Adopter	0.26	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.23	0.28	0.24
Donor	0.22	0.24	0.21	0.22	0.23	0.23	0.21
Attendee of Event	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.16	0.18	0.16
Volunteer	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.13
User of Services	0.10	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.10
Staff	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Interacted in Other Way	0.44	0.43	0.42	0.44	0.43	0.43	0.46
Have Never Interacted	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.07
Previous Supporter	0.54	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.53	0.55	0.52
New Supporter	0.46	0.45	0.44	0.45	0.47	0.45	0.48
Female	0.83	0.85	0.82	0.83	0.82	0.82	0.84
Male	0.14	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.14
Gender Unknown	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.02
Observations	5976	991	1001	1005	980	1000	999

The first nine rows indicate the frequency with which the shown answers were provided in response to how a participant knew the animal shelter for which they voted. A previous supporter is any individual who indicated that they were an adopter, donor, volunteer, attendee of event, user of services or staff. A new supporter is anyone who did not indicate one of the aforementioned ways of knowing the animal group for which they voted. Computer code that predicts gender from names was used to classify participants as female or male, or unknown gender.

Table A.2: Average Number of Seconds Individuals Spend Viewing Information in Unavoidable Information Treatments

Ask:	Unexpected or Expected	Unexpected	Expected
Overall	28	29	28
(a) If click-through	31	32	30
(b) If do not click-through	26	26	25
Observations	1985	980	1005

We define the time participants spend viewing the information in the Unavoidable Information treatments as the amount of seconds that elapses between their first click on the page (presumably from answering the question about how they know their favorite animal group) and the final click on that page to continue to the next step.

Table A.3: By Interaction Types, Click-through Regressions when No Information or Unavoidable Information is Provided

	Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of Click-through									
Information:	None or Unavoidable									
Interaction:	Adopter		Donor		Attendee of Event		Volunteer		User of Services	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Expected Ask	-0.08	-0.12***	-0.11**	-0.11***	-0.05	-0.12***	-0.08	-0.11***	-0.09*	-0.11***
	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Unavoidable Information	-0.02	-0.04	-0.02	-0.05*	-0.03	-0.04	-0.02	-0.04*	-0.02	-0.04
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Expected Ask	0.10**	0.11***	0.08	0.12***	0.01	0.12***	0.05	0.11***	0.19***	0.10***
**Unavoidable Information*	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.09)	(0.03)	(0.12)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Observations	1062	2911	901	3072	669	3304	581	3392	388	3585
Controls	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Click-though rates	0.46	0.46	0.53	0.44	0.50	0.45	0.48	0.46	0.50	0.46

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to click-through to the donation page of voted for animal group. *Expected Ask* is an indicator for the Expected treatments, *Unavoidable Information* is an indicator for the Unavoidable Information treatments, and *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* is the interaction thereof.

Table A.4: By Interaction Types, Click-through Regressions when No Information or Avoidable Information is Provided

	Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of Click-through									
Information:	None or Avoidable									
Interaction:	Adopter		Donor		Attendee of Event		Volunteer		User of Services	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
Expected Ask	-0.08	-0.12***	-0.11**	-0.11***	-0.05	-0.12***	-0.08	-0.11***	-0.09*	-0.11***
	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.08)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Avoidable Information	-0.01	-0.04*	-0.00	-0.04	0.05	-0.04*	-0.02	-0.03**	-0.00	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)
*Expected Ask*Avoidable Information*	-0.04	0.07**	-0.03	0.06*	-0.05	0.05**	0.00	0.04	-0.07	0.05*
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)
Observations	1071	2916	885	3102	679	3308	594	3393	406	3581
Controls	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
Click-though rates	0.43	0.46	0.51	0.43	0.51	0.44	0.46	0.45	0.44	0.45

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to click-through to the donation page of voted for animal group. *Expected Ask* is an indicator for the Expected treatments, *Avoidable Information* is an indicator for the Avoidable Information treatments, and *Expected Ask*Avoidable Information* is the interaction thereof.

Table A.5: By Gender: Click-through Regressions

	Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of Click-through							
Information:	None or Unavoidable				None or Avoidable			
Gender:	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Expected Ask	-0.08	-0.07	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.08	-0.08*	-0.11***	-0.11***
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Unavoidable Information	0.00	0.00	-0.04	-0.04*				
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)				
Expected Ask	0.13	0.14*	0.10***	0.10***				
**Unavoidable Information*	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.03)				
Avoidable Information					0.04	0.04	-0.04**	-0.04**
					(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Expected Ask					-0.01	0.00	0.04	0.03
**Avoidable Information*					(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Controls	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Observations	541	541	3301	3301	544	544	3321	3321
Click-through rates	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors are clustered at the voted for animal group level and shown in parentheses. The results in the first panel are from Probit regressions (marginal effects shown) of likelihood to click-through to the donation page of voted for animal group. *Expected Ask*, *Unavoidable Information*, and *Avoidable Information* are indicators for when the ask is expected, the information provided is unavoidable, and the information provided is avoidable. *Expected Ask*Unavoidable Information* and *Expected Ask*Avoidable Information* are interaction variables of these indicators. Controls include indicators for each voter's gender, selected animal group, and ways in which they knew their selected animal group.

Table A.6: Conditional on revealing story, average number of seconds spent viewing story in Unavoidable Information treatments according to type of supporter

Ask:	Unexpected or Expected	Unexpected	Expected
New Supporters			
Overall	30	31	29
(a) If click-through	32	32	31
(b) If do not click-through	29	30	27
Observations	913	458	455
Previous Supporters			
Overall	26	27	26
(a) If click-through	30	32	29
(b) If do not click-through	23	21	24
Observations	1072	522	550

We define the time participants spend viewing the information in the Unavoidable Information treatments as the amount of seconds that elapses between their first click on the page (presumably from answering the question about how they know their favorite animal group) and the final click on that page to continue to the next step.