

Can Motivational Interventions Improve User Performance in Massive Open Online Courses?

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Abstract

Despite their flexibility and ease of access, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) suffer from low user performance and involvement. We study the user performance in MOOCs and ask a fundamental question: can we improve MOOC learner performance using simple motivational interventions. We conducted a randomized field experiment with treatment interventions in a MOOC with more than 1000 students from 171 countries. We demonstrate that motivational treatments that emphasize effort and interaction with others positively stimulate performance across the board. We also find that targeting interventions based on users' prior behavior further improves the results.