

Innovative model to fund scientists

Opinion

Scientific research shapes our society and time and again it has proven to really improve our lives. At the same time, getting funding for scientific research is not an easy task. It has with time got more and more difficult. Only about 10 to 30% of funding applications are successful¹ and it is particularly difficult for scientists early in their career. There has been a lot of focus on trying to encourage more young people into science, but actually that is not the problem. There are a lot of people who want to do research; it is getting funded that is the issue. New funding models must be evaluated and embarked upon if scientists need to get out of these funding issues which doesn't look to improve anytime soon in near future.

One such impressive new model is the Télévie model that exists in the Francophone Belgium (Wallonia region in Belgium). The Télévie² is a charity event organized in the Francophone Belgium and the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg by RTL-TVI (a TV channel) since 1989 in cooperation with FNRS (main funding agency in the Francophone Belgium for scientific research like the NIH in USA or the CSIR in India). The funds raised annually are invested in scientific research for fight against cancer and Leukaemia in children and adults. It concludes with a closing ceremony which is televised live.

The total fund raised is paid each year to the FNRS, which organises the evaluation of scientific projects that are submitted to Télévie. While the selected projects receive full money raised, the assessment related costs are being borne by the own budget FNRS.

In 2015 alone, the Télévie was successful in raising funds of € 9,502,675. The total amount raised so far totals to 1523999182 euros which was donated to the FNRS. € 100million milestone was reached on 26th April 2009 and € 150million Euros was collected later till April 25, 2015.³ Since its inception, the Télévie programme not only plays a role in collecting funds but has been vital in the popularization of science and research in the society.

The fundraising is done by organising different fundraising events. The programme also includes selling of different stationary products (Products sold for Télévie 2015 are: The bag of candy: 2,5 €, Pin's : 2,5 €, The Ballpoint Pen 3 colour touch screen: € 3, The kitchen towel: 5 €, The CD Télévie 2015 : € 12, The DVD of the play "Face to Face":

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15 €, Clutch 12 crayons: 5 €, Key Ring Light: 6 €, The scarf: 8 €, The square microfiber 4 €). The best part of all this is that the graduate students funded by the Télévie grant have to do this. The students not only feel lucky being awarded the generous grant for research but also feel enthusiastic and happy contributing something in return.

Faced with the threat of budget cuts and intense competition for the money that exists, scientists around the world are instead turning directly to the public for the help they need. In the process, they are unlocking millions via crowdfunding model. Scientist must embrace these new innovative models as well along with an existing model of government funding model. Embracing these models is never a replacement to government funding but is complementary. A similar model like Télévie to raise fund in different parts of the world may be an interesting and new model that may serve wonderful results in future and would be a great thing to do in turbulent times of research funding. Masses won't just serve as great market to such events but the purpose will also serve in great endeavour of popularizing science in the society.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

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2. <http://www.rtl.be/televie/page/televie-faisons-gagner-la-vie/174.aspx>