

Not all is Gold that Glitters

Response time & satisfaction rates in Yahoo! Answers

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Abstract

The study investigates the differences in response time and in the average number of answers between an asker's ranking of "Best Answer" (BA) and the community's BA and the impact of an explicit network on several implicit network activities.

The results imply that askers use response time as a parameter to choose the BA, whereas the community doesn't. Being a "fan" of the asker implies a long response time to the question. This finding might contradict the intuition that our friends are the first to provide answers to our questions.

Results

Best Answers chosen By:		Asker (N=1.3M)	Community (N=1.7M)	Total (N=3M)
Response Time (in Minutes)	Mean	232	615	444.2
	Std. Dev	614	1401	1136.4
	Median	17.8	20.8	19
No. of Alternative Answers	Mean	7	4.8	5.8
	Std. Dev	6.8	5.62	6.3
	Median	4.8	3	3.8

Relationships' type (asker, answerer)	Number of Cases	Response Time (in minutes)	Award, Time (in minutes)	Number of Stars
(-1, -1)	11,812	323	1,492	4.76
(-1, 1)	5,307	267	1,637	4.71
(-1, 99)	11,978	250	1,599	4.62
(1, -1)	4,556	393	1,418	4.79
(1, 1)	60,845	459	1,489	4.72
(1, 99)	25,980	439	1,462	4.66
(99, -1)	9,231	298	1,324	4.71
(99, 1)	28,604	283	1,585	4.71
(99, 99)	1,229,573	208	1,775	4.27

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1 - Both asker and community consider the answering response time to be a decisive parameter in their BA selection.

Hypothesis 2 - When asker and answerer know each other, the Average Response Time and the Average Award Time will be relatively short, and the Average Starring Response will be relatively high; all this is due to the mutual commitment between the asker and the answerer.

Hypothesis 3 - The Average Response and Award Time will be relatively long long between strangers. The Starring Response will be high due to "Strength of Weak Ties", according to which strangers might supply the most interesting/useful input.

The main findings

The Asker and the Community - A correlation was found between the speed of answering and the selection of an answer as a BA by the asker but NOT by the community.

Response Time - The shortest response time (208 minutes) was found between strangers*. The longest response time (459 minutes) was found between askers and answerers who were mutual friends in the explicit network.

Award Time - The longest award time was found between strangers (1775 minutes ~ thirty hours).

Number of Stars - The lowest satisfaction rate (4.27 stars) was found between strangers.

*Strangers= askers and answerers who didn't know each other at all.

Conclusions

The asker chooses the quickest answer, whereas the community does not take the speed of answering into consideration.

Yahoo! Answers' mechanism, the huge number of random users and the obligation of mutual friends to supply satisfying answers are several explanations for the longest response time between friends.

The "Strength of Weak Ties" theory does not hold for Yahoo! Answers. The asker tends to choose answers from strangers because they have the fastest response time. The satisfaction rate from these answers is the lowest. Apparently these fast answers do not really satisfy or prove of true benefit to the asker