

Bad Ideas Attract Attention While Good Ideas Are Ignored

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Both generating and evaluating new ideas are important competitive advantages for organizations. Our research investigates how negativity bias impacts idea evaluation. We find bad ideas receive disproportionate focus at the expense of promising ones. We propose that when presented with a set of ideas, there is a tendency to devote resources to criticizing obviously bad options instead of developing the most promising options. We demonstrate this effect by studying how individuals evaluate recommendations generated by their peers across two contexts. Finally, we demonstrate that calling attention to the amount of time spent evaluating sub-optimal ideas increases focus on more desirable options. Our findings indicate that evaluators over-invest in critiquing bad ideas but recognize their lesser value, revealing a bias in evaluation, but can be directed to correct this behavior.

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