

Second wave of goal-setting: An explanation on the robustness check 2025

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1 Robustness check

With many thanks and much appreciation to seminar participants, Alessandro Buccioli, Pol Campos-Mercade, Tom Lane, Simone Quercia, and Julien Senn, we hope to incorporate many of their suggestions in this second wave of goal-setting study. For example, for enhanced generalisability, we will send the goal-setting forms to a larger sample of debt collectors, rising from around 670 agents to over 1,200 across the firm. We will also be sending the goal-setting forms at 4pm in the late afternoon. In response to the concern that the previous ‘social image’ treatment could be interpreted as the effect of authority following, we hope to test a new social image treatment in the form of a message on the goal-setting forms: “Your decision to set goals and your goals will be visible to your team members.” In stead of showing the face image of the CEO as we did previously, we show this social image-relevant message. There are now 4 experimental groups in total:

- The control group that receives the generic goal-setting form (no change made).
- The self-image group that receives the form with their own face photo on top (no change made).
- The self-social image group that receives the form with their face photo on top AND a message saying “Your decision to set goals and your goals will be visible to your team members.”
- The (updated) social image group that receives the form with a message saying “Your decision to set goals and your goals will be visible to your team members.”

Similarly, we check the impact of these treatment on the willingness to set their goals given there is no tangible penalty on non-completion, we also check how image concerns affect the ambition of goal-setting, the definition of ambition remains the same as in the main experiment conducted in 2023.

This extension of the main experiment can be seen as a robustness check and a replication. It is a robustness check because we try to find out if the impact of the social image treatment remains when we change the design of how we *intensify* the subjects’ social image concerns with a larger sample size. It can be seen as a replication because we are repeating most of the experimental design, keeping the self-image design identical.

The hope is to have it implemented on the 03 of March 2025 at 4pm, accompanied with the same HR notification to all the subjects. A reminder to set the goals will similarly be sent in the same format three days later on Thursday.

If you are interested, I will be very happy to hear from you, I am always happy to talk to people who are interested in field experiments and I still have so much to learn (lidingrong.huang@gmail.com).

Thank you and greetings from tropical Manila.