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Managing employee silence

A work environment that is perceived as fair can help reduce employee silence about critical work issues.

When there is a problem in the workplace, employees have two options: remain silent or speak up. Unfortunately, many employees choose to remain silent, to the great detriment of the organizations for which they work.

Employees remain silent about conflicts with co-workers, disagreements about organizational decisions, potential weaknesses in work processes, illegal or dangerous behaviors, and individual grievances. Their silence keeps management from receiving critical information that would allow their organizations to improve or address problems before they have adverse effects.

Reducing employee silence, then, is a key concern for managers. Subrahmaniam Tangirala, assistant professor of management and organization, with co-author Rangaraj Ramanujam, Vanderbilt University, examined how the effects of individual-level variables such as professional pride, loyalty to the organization and individual perceptions of organizational fairness and supervisor status affected employee silence. They also looked at the effect of a group-level variable, a climate of fairness in the workplace.

The authors used data from a survey of front-line nurses in several large Midwestern hospitals. They chose nurses as their study group because employee silence in a hospital context can have serious and even fatal consequences for patients, with as many as 98,000 Americans dying each year from preventable medical errors. Why would nurses, whose professional identity is bound up in patient care, choose to stay silent even in a life-or-death situation?

The answer appears to be twofold, says Tangirala. People don't speak up because they fear retaliation against themselves, or because they are hesitant to point out the flaws of their peers.

Surveys were mailed to 850 nurses, each of whom had at least six months tenure with the hospital. The nurses were part of 30 different nursing departments, each headed by a nurse-supervisor. The survey consisted of four separate mailings with a response rate of 72 percent. Nurses were asked to rate themselves on how closely they identified with their workgroup, their professional commitment, the perceived status of their supervisors, and their perception of fairness in the workplace.

The authors found that nurses were less silent when they identified with their workgroup, felt proud of and attached to their profession, and perceived a high level of fairness in the workplace.

"Developing both organizational attachment and professional attachment is very important for reducing employee silence," says Tangirala. "Organizations that want to reduce employee silence need to enhance organizational pride by increasing employees' satisfaction at work. Managers must also increase employees' pride in their profession—tell them what

Research by Subra Tangirala

the end product of their work is, and train them constantly, so they feel they are at the cutting edge in their occupation. Help them see the significance of their tasks: *You're not just cutting stone, you're building a temple.*"

But to the authors' surprise, they found that these factors were not sufficient to reduce employee silence unless they were accompanied by a group-level perception of a fair work environment.

"Nurses are known to have great pride in their profession, and we found that many had great attachment to their organizations. But rather than confront a problem head-on, they would try in small ways to tackle the problem because they were afraid of speaking up," says Tangirala.

However, if everyone in the workgroup feels that the supervisor is fair, employees worry less about personal retaliation and about creating problems for their co-workers when relating information about problems to a supervisor. This creates a climate where employees feel more comfortable speaking up.

The authors also found that the higher the supervisor's status, the more likely the nurses were to

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remain silent. This highlighted the unintended consequences of a current trend in hospital management to give nurse-supervisors more authority.

"In a lot of literature it is recommended that nurse-supervisors be given more power and authority within the organization because they play a crucial role in spearheading organizational initiatives to improve patient safety," says Tangirala. "But our research shows that the more power a supervisor is perceived to have, the less likely it is that nurses will share critical information. High supervisor status seems to prevent lower-level employees from sharing information—an aspect that hospitals should be mindful of."

"Employee Silence on Critical Work Issues: The Cross Level Effects of Procedural Justice Climate" was published in Personnel Psychology. For more information about this research, please contact stangirala@rhsmith.umd.edu.

The mysteries of mimicry

Mimicry can give consumers more favorable preferences, and even change what they consume.

Consumers often feel like they are in control of the purchasing process. But in fact there are many ways in which consumer behavior is influenced without the consumer's knowledge and outside their control. Mimicry—that human tendency to mirror the behavior of others around us—has some significant effects on consumer choice and preference. How this happens is the subject of a new study by Rosellina Ferraro, assistant professor of marketing, with co-authors Robin J. Tanner, Tanya L. Chartrand and James R. Bettman of Duke University; and Rick Van Baaren of the University of Amsterdam.

The authors examined the ways mimicry influences both product preference and the way consumers choose products. There are two pathways by which mimicry can influence people: the mimicking consumer path, when consumers echo the consumption behavior of others, and the mimicked consumer path, where the consumer is the one being echoed by another.

In one experiment, participants watched a video that included a person eating one of two types of crackers. Some participants were given access to the same two snacks when they were watching the video. Other participants did not have access to snacks. Of those provided with crackers, the participants' snacking behavior mimicked that of the person in the video.

Cracker preferences were also measured by a survey given before and after the experiment. Ferraro found that the participants' preferences were influenced by the behavior of the person on the video, but only if the participant had access to the same snack and was able to mimic the behavior he or she saw onscreen. Mimicking the behavior affected the participants' product preference.

Consumers also appear to like a product more when it is introduced to them by a mimicker. In a second series of experiments, participants were part of a mock market-research interview for a new sports drink. In some instances the interviewer mirrored the posture and movements of the participant after a short 1-2 second delay. The interviewer also mimicked the key elements of the participants' responses, using identical words and similar phrasing in replies. In other instances the interviewer either maintained a neutral body position or took on the opposite position of the participant, and verbally responded to participants with general or neutral phrasing. Participants who were mimicked physically and verbally were more likely to prefer the product.

In a follow-up experiment, the mock-market research interview was for a snack product, and the interviewer either indicated that he was invested in the success of the manufacturer's product, or that it didn't matter to him. Ferraro found that participants who had been behaviorally mimicked displayed a more positive

Research by Rosellina Ferraro

attitude toward the product, especially if they thought the mimicking person had a stake in the outcome.

This was a counter-intuitive finding for Ferraro. "In that case you imagine that people would think, *okay, this person is trying to change my mind,*" says Ferraro. "What we found is that actually consumers end up liking the product more in that case. What seems to be happening is that mimicry creates a rapport, and so you want to help that person who is invested in the product."

These processes are automatic, and happen below a consumer's conscious level of thought. Ferraro believes these findings add to the growing body of research that suggests that consumer behavior is often driven by processes outside of "awareness, intent and control."

These studies took place in a controlled environment, not in a chaotic retail setting full of outside influences. But there may be situations where mimicking behavior may be effective, particularly in an environment where there is prolonged face-

Participants who had been behaviorally mimicked displayed a more positive attitude toward the product, especially if they thought the mimicking person had a stake in the outcome.

to-face contact with a consumer. Car salespeople negotiating with consumers or business-to-business sales personnel might find mimicry useful in creating a rapport with the consumer, so that he or she feels invested in helping the salesperson to succeed. But it will only work if the consumer remains unaware that he or she is being mimicked, warns Ferraro. "Once the person is aware that they are being mimicked, it would interfere with the process, because then you start thinking about it," she says.

"Of Chameleons and Consumption: The Impact of Mimicry on Choice and Preferences" was published in the Journal of Consumer Research. For more information about this research, contact rferraro@ rhsmith.umd.edu.

Revenue management with minimal demand information

A new model allows demand-driven industries to manage revenue with minimal demand information.

Airlines want to sell their seats to the right customers at the right time for the right price. The more fare classes or products they have, the more difficult it is to optimize the revenue for each product. So, airlines have turned to complex mathematical models for revenue management.

Hotels, cruise lines and car rental companies all use similarly complicated models for revenue management. These models require information about how many people are going to want those airline seats in the future, so companies need to forecast demand for their product into the future. Unfortunately, forecasting is notoriously difficult and demand estimates are inaccurate. The state of the economy, seasonal variations in travel demand and even the competitive actions of other airlines make finding reliable information even more difficult.

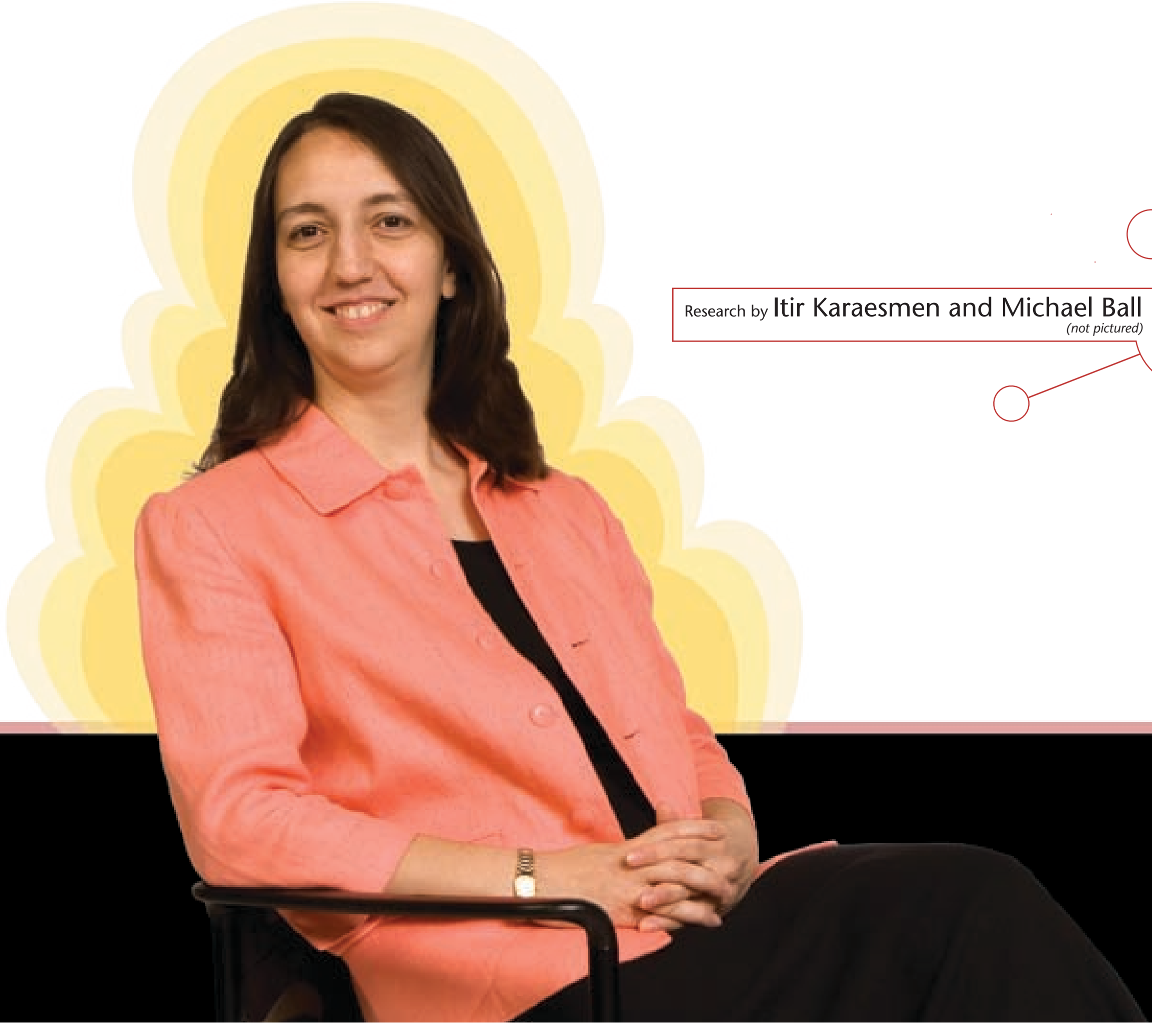
The inherent challenges in creating accurate demand forecasts has been a key factor limiting the realistic application of revenue management within new industries, and can cause problems for new products within these industries, such as new airline routes or new properties in a hotel chain.

Side-stepping the problem of demand forecasting can provide a robust solution to these difficulties, according to research by Michael Ball, Orkand Corporation Professor of Management Science, and Itir Karaesmen, assistant professor of management science, with doctoral students Yingjie Lan and Huina Gao, who have developed models that use minimal demand information for revenue management.

Rather than try to create a better forecasting system, the authors worked with the least amount of information to provide robust methods that match demand with supply effectively. They created a model that maximizes revenue under the worst-case scenario for an airline without extensive demand information. In fact, the model does not need any information about demand or the arrival process beyond a simple upper and lower bounds that represent the aggregate demand; this type of information is easier to obtain from expert judgment when there is no historical sales data. The approach relies on competitive analysis of online algorithms, and focuses on "regret" which measures the loss in performance due to lack of information, comparing what the seller can do with limited information versus what he could have done if he had perfect information on-demand.

The policies derived from the model are robust, since they guarantee a certain performance level under all possible demand scenarios. And the average revenues from these policies are comparable to other well-known procedures, even though they use less information.

"Using less information, we can still get very good results that will allow airlines to make very good



Research by Itir Karaesmen and Michael Ball
(not pictured)

decisions," says Karaesmen. "In some cases you will never have good data. Can you actually make decisions without good data? This paper shows that you can, and in a way that is much faster than existing methods."

New and smaller airlines, such as Virgin America, or airlines that are opening new flights, might find this model useful because it allows for reliable revenue management without requiring a stream of pre-existing data to fuel demand-forecasting models.

"Forecasting is a challenge because airlines and hotels only have data on what they have sold. They don't know what they could have sold," says Karaesmen. "This is a very safe way of starting a business, until you get to a point where you have lots of data and can use more sophisticated methods."

But it could also be used as a quality control method by airlines that have made significant investments in demand forecasting. Ball and Karaesmen's model could run in the background as a type of quality control; if the actual performance differed greatly from the results given by the model, managers could identify errors before they became problematic.

Using less information, we can still get very good results that will allow airlines to make very good decisions. This paper shows that you can make good decisions without good data, and in a way that is much faster than existing methods.

This work builds on prior research by Ball (with Maurice Queyranne of University of British Columbia), who used competitive analysis of online algorithms to produce policies that did not rely on any demand information. Future papers will add a layer of complexity to the problem by considering the problem of overbooking and the effects of competition on this model.

"Revenue Management with Limited Demand Information" will be published in Management Science. This research was funded in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation. For more information about this research, contact ikaraes@rhsmith.umd.edu or mball@rhsmith.umd.edu.

Leadership Development from Research to Practice

The Smith School's Center for Human Capital, Innovation and Technology (HCIT) explores issues at the intersection of these three key management resources and leverages this knowledge to help organizations develop their leaders to their fullest potential.

"The center is interested in how human capital, technology, and innovation come together to provide competitive advantage. This may take many different forms, such as how knowledge workers' expertise and skills are brought together collaboratively through technology, how organizations can create a climate and culture that supports innovation, and how organizations use technology to fuel and drive innovation," says Paul Tesluk, professor of management and organization, chair of the management and organization department and co-director of HCIT with Susan Taylor, Smith Chair of Human Resource Management and Organizational Change and the Smith School's senior associate dean. Most of the center's research projects have a human capital component, an innovation component or outcome, and a technology component.

HCIT draws on the technical expertise of Smith's management faculty, as well as faculty from across the Smith School and the University of Maryland, and partners with organizations in both the private and public sectors. One fruitful long-term relationship has been with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. An HCIT team working with the department's Division of Parole and Probation Services developed a front-line leadership development program for the Division's first- and second-level supervisors. The goal of the program was to provide front-line leaders of the division with leadership skills to enable much-needed innovation and change to the state's parole and probation system, by moving away from merely monitoring the convicted felons for whom the officers were responsible to a more engaged type of management.

Large-scale organizational change is one of the most difficult processes for leaders to manage, and working with organizations that are moving through such changes has provided interesting sources of data for the center.

For the past several years HCIT has also conducted a multi-element leadership program with Anne Arundel Medical Center, working with their top leadership team through in-class sessions, executive coaching, and action learning projects within the organization. "That project focused on leadership in the midst of large-scale organizational change as the organization has grown and expanded to move from a local to regional major healthcare provider," says Taylor.

Through working with these organizations, the center has gained insights into key factors that affect how organizations deal with change, such as employee resistance to change and how leader behavior can affect employee resistance across the entire organization, not just within the top management group.

Tesluk and Taylor have found the Smith School's executive coaching program, which is part of the Executive MBA curriculum, to be a ready-to-hand source of data about an increasingly important tool in the leadership development arsenal. When executives enter the program they are given an extensive set of assessments—skills, personality, videotaped simulations of their presentation and problem-solving styles—and then work with their coaches on personal development plans. Between 60 and 80 executives who are taking part in the Smith School's Executive MBA program participate in executive coaching.

This has allowed intensive data gathering on coaching, which Tesluk and Taylor are using in current and future research projects. "Coaching is one of the more effective tools organizations can invest in to develop leadership capabilities within their organizations. But we understand very little about how it works: how do you structure coaching, what kinds of coaching behaviors are most critical to helping leaders develop difficult-to-acquire leadership skills, what kinds of things make for a good fit between an executive and a coach? The center has a good combination of people who both provide executive coaching but who are also interested in studying it," says Tesluk.

On November 14, 2008, HCIT will hold an all-day executive conference on leading radical change from all levels of an organization, featuring Jim Parker, former CEO of Southwest Airlines, as a keynote speaker. In spring 2009 the center will hold its first conference on executive coaching intended for both academics and practitioners.

For more information about the center's research and conferences, please visit rhsmith.umd.edu/hcit, or contact Taylor at staylor@rhsmith.umd.edu and Tesluk at ptesluk@rhsmith.umd.edu.

Faculty Awards and Honors

A paper by **Sandor Boyson,** research professor and co-director of the Supply Chain Management Center, titled "Unified Communications: Leading Advances in Global Decision Making & Economic Development," was published in the World Economic Forum's 2008 Global Information Technology report.

Gilad Chen, associate professor of management and organization, received the 2008 Cummings Scholar Award for early- to mid-career scholarly achievement, given by the Organizational Behavior Division of the Academy of Management.

Hugh Courtney, associate dean of executive education, was elected chairman of the board for D&E Communications. Courtney also maintains an active consulting and executive education practice focused on business strategy formulation in highly uncertain and competitive markets. Prior to joining the Smith School in 2002, he was a leader in McKinsey & Company's Global Strategy practice, where he served clients on six continents on a wide variety of strategy development and implementation issues.

Anil Gupta, Ralph J. Tyser Professor of Strategy and Organization, has been elected to the board of directors of OriGene Technologies, a pioneer in the development of patented processes for the isolation of full-length cDNA and rapid expression profiling techniques.

Dilip Madan, professor of finance, received international recognition for his research by being awarded the Medal of Science from the University of Bologna's Institute of Advanced Studies.

Roland Rust, David Bruce Smith Chair in Marketing and chair of the marketing department, has been named Distinguished University Professor. It is the highest honor presented by the university; only 50 have been awarded since the award's inception 28 years ago. The title of Distinguished University Professor recognizes the influence of Rust's body of research and the impact he has made on the field of marketing, particularly in the area of service.

Debra Shapiro, Clarice Smith Professor of Management and Organization and director of the Smith School's doctoral program, has had two papers accepted for presentation at the Academy of Management meeting in August and has been invited to serve as a faculty-representative on the Junior Faculty Consortium for the Academy of Management's Organizational Behavior Division.

Ken Smith, Dean's Chaired Professor of Business Strategy, is current past president of the Academy of Management and a member of the editorial board of *Strategic Management Journal and Academy of Management Journal.*

Gilvan Souza, associate professor of operations management, co-authored a paper titled "Multi-Period Remanufacturing Planning with Uncertain Quality of Inputs," which won the Wickham Skinner Best Unpublished Paper Award from the Production and Operations Management Society (POMS).

Michel Wedel, PepsiCo Professor of Consumer Science, received the American Marketing Association's Gilbert A. Churchill Award for lifetime achievement in the academic study of marketing research. Wedel received his award at the American Marketing Association's Summer Marketing Educators' Conference in San Diego on August 9.

Editorial Appointments

Gilad Chen, associate professor of management and organization, was appointed associate editor of the *Journal of Applied Psychology.*

Hugh Courtney, Professor of the Practice in management and organization, was appointed associate editor of *Long Range Planning.*

Martin Loeb, Professor of Accounting and Information Assurance and a Deloitte & Touche Faculty Fellow, has been invited to be an associate editor for a special issue of *MIS Quarterly* on "Information Systems Security in a Digital Economy."

Conferences

The Smith School's department of decision, operations and information technologies hosted the ninth INFORMS Telecommunications Conference, April 2-4. Approximately 125 participants from around the world joined the group. The event was chaired by **Bruce Golden,** France Merrick Chair in Management Science, and **Raghu Raghavan,** associate professor of management science.

Anil Gupta, Ralph J. Tyser Professor of Strategy and Organization, and **Chris Bingham,** assistant professor of management and organization, co-chaired the fourth annual Smith Entrepreneurship Research Conference, held April 11-12.

New Faculty

The Smith School is pleased to welcome the following new faculty for the 2008-2009 academic year.

ACCOUNTING AND INFORMATION ASSURANCE

Rebecca Hann, associate professor, PhD University of Pennsylvania-Wharton
Hemantha Herath, visiting associate professor, PhD Auburn University
Lei Zhou, visiting assistant professor, PhD University of Maryland, Business & Management

DECISION, OPERATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Il-Horn Hann, associate professor, PhD University of Pennsylvania
Yi Xu, assistant professor, PhD University of Pennsylvania

FINANCE

Michael Falkender, assistant professor, PhD Northwestern University
Sudip Gupta, assistant professor, PhD University of Wisconsin-Madison

LOGISTICS, BUSINESS AND PUBLIC POLICY

T. Leigh Anenson, associate professor, JD University of Akron
Gideon E. Mark, associate professor, JD University of California, Hastings
Yue Maggie Zhou, assistant professor, PhD, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

MARKETING

Tao Chen, assistant professor, PhD Carnegie Mellon University
Anastasya Pocheptsova, assistant professor, PhD Yale University
Will Rand, assistant professor, PhD University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Rafael Corredoira, assistant professor, PhD University of Pennsylvania
Hui Liao, associate professor, PhD University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
Matthew J. Pearsall, assistant professor, PhD University of Arizona
Vijaya Venkataramani, assistant professor, PhD Purdue University

Featured Researchers

Michael Ball, Orkand Corporation Professor of Management Science, holds a joint appointment within the Institute for Systems Research (ISR) at the A. James Clark School of Engineering and received his PhD from Cornell University. His research interests are in network optimization and integer programming, particularly as applied to problems in transportation systems and supply chain management. He is co-director of NEXTOR, the National Center of Excellence for Aviation Operations Research. He also has extensive consulting experience, which in certain cases has led to the development and successful implementation of major software systems.

Rosellina Ferraro, assistant professor of marketing, received her PhD from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. Her research focuses on consumer behavior, and specifically, the effects of nonconscious social influence on choice and preference and the effects of external threats on consumption behavior.

Itir Karaesman, assistant professor of management science, received her PhD from Columbia University. She works in the area of operations management, with applications in revenue management, service operations and supply chain management, with interests in decision making under uncertainty. Her ongoing research on design of dynamic service networks is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Subra Tangirala, assistant professor of management and organization, received his PhD from Purdue University. His research focuses on interpersonal communication in organizations. He studies how technology is influencing the way employees communicate with each other. Recently, he has also explored reasons why employees often remain silent despite having information, concerns or suggestions to share, and what organizations can do to facilitate candid exchange of ideas at the workplace.

CEOs on the Edge: Earnings Manipulation and Stock-based Incentive Misalignment

Publicly traded companies have long used stock options as a form of executive compensation, with the goal of discouraging undesirable behavior by tying a CEO's personal interests with that of shareholders. But the impact of stock options may be more negative than positive, according to research by Kathryn M. Bartol, Robert H. Smith Professor of Management & Organization, and Ken G. Smith, Dean's Chaired Professor of Business Strategy, with co-authors Dmitry M. Khanin, Cal State, Fullerton; Michael D. Pfarrer, University of Denver; and Xioameng Zhang, American University.

Previous research focused on earnings manipulation at the industry or firm level, but Bartol and Smith looked at CEO compensation. They analyzed data from 2,532 public companies from 1996 to 2001, using a U.S. General Accounting Office restatement database to identify restatement announcements from 225 companies. Since earnings manipulation occurs before restatement announcements, the authors conducted additional medial and financial statement research, identifying 365 earnings manipulation cases.

The authors drew on existing theories centered on stock-based managerial incentives to create seven hypotheses. Agency-based theory predicts self-interested individuals will behave in a way that maximizes their personal utility, which may cause harm to shareholders. Thus, stock-based incentives are advocated as a method that aligns a CEO's self-interests with that of his or her shareholders. Prospect theory argues decision makers are loss averse, because they will forgo the risk of a gain if it incorporates the perceived potential for loss relative to their current position.

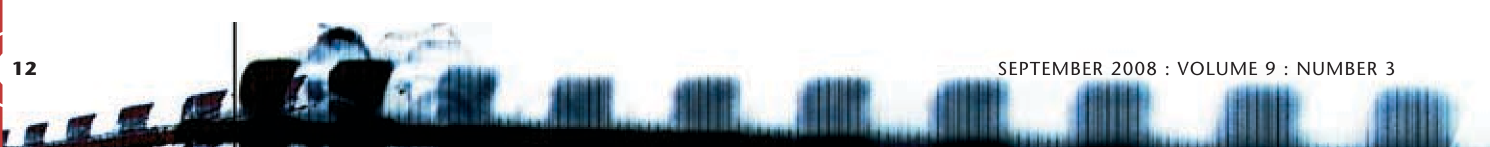
The intersection of prospect and agency theory leads to the insight that a decision maker's risk preferences are heavily influenced by their fear of loss relative to their existing wealth. And as a result, incentives like stock options may not serve as the desired "risk preferences," instead leading to financial misalignments.

"CEOs on the Edge: Earnings Manipulation and Stock-based Incentive Misalignment," is the first paper to demonstrate that out-of-the-money and in-the-money options have different impacts on earnings manipulation as it involves CEOs. It also examines the effects of firm performance and CEO tenure on CEO decisions to engage in earnings manipulation. CEOs were more likely to manipulate firm earnings when they had higher levels of out-of-the-money stock options, and when they had lower levels of stock ownership.

This suggests that under certain conditions, stock-based managerial incentives can cause CEO incentive misalignment, which can lead to negative consequences including earnings manipulation.

The study concluded that out-of-the-money options were positively related to earnings manipulation. These options place executives in a perceived loss situation, making CEOs more likely to take aggressive actions to minimize losses. When firm performance was considered, CEOs with larger amounts of out-of-the-money options under low performance conditions were most likely to engage in earnings manipulation. Surprisingly, the authors found longer-tenured CEOs, instead of newly appointed CEOs with larger amounts of out-of-the-money options, were the most likely to manipulate firm earnings.

Future research might consider top management executives' pay packages, since earnings manipulation is likely to involve multiple players. It may also investigate differences in pay packages among CEOs who are promoted to their positions versus external candidates.



2008

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The University of Maryland, College Park, is one of the nation's top 20 public research universities. In 2007, the University of Maryland received approximately $407 million in sponsored research and outreach activities. The university is located on a 1,250-acre suburban campus, eight miles outside Washington, D.C., and 35 miles from Baltimore.

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The Robert H. Smith School of Business is an internationally recognized leader in management education and research. One of 13 colleges and schools at the University of Maryland, College Park, the Smith School offers undergraduate, full-time and part-time MBA, executive MBA, MS, PhD, and executive education programs, as well as outreach services to the corporate community. The school offers its degree, custom and certification programs in learning locations on three continents—North America, Europe and Asia. More information about the Robert H. Smith School of Business can be found at www.rhsmith.umd.edu.

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