

# THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

## Departmental Research Seminar

### Aspirational Goal Communications on Sales Agents' Behavior: Insights from a Field Experiment By

**Dr Doug J. Chung**  
**The University of Texas at Austin**



**Date : 31 May 2024 (FRI)**  
**Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon**  
**Venue : M802**

#### **Abstract**

This study examines the role of aspirational-goal communications on sales agents' motivation and their information-acquisition behavior. To do so, we collaborate with a major Nordic sales organization to conduct a field experiment communicating agents' goals so that they are more aspirational than their status-quo ones. The field experiment involved more than 400 sales employees across 100 retail stores. The results indicate that aspirational-goal stimuli have a positive effect on performance, specifically for low-performing agents through an increase in their motivation. Information acquisition, in the form of goal-progress monitoring, can help agents with their effort provision. However, aspirational-goal communications suppress agents' willingness to acquire information—the ostrich effect—and, thus, can adversely affect their performance.

**Dr Doug J. Chung** is an associate professor of marketing in the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin. He teaches Sales Management and Strategy in the second-year MBA elective curriculum. He was on the faculty at Harvard University for 10 years, where he taught Sales Strategy, B2B Marketing, Marketing Strategy, and Marketing Models in the MBA and executive education programs. Chung focuses his research primarily on business/sales strategy, sales force management, and incentive compensation. He has worked with companies worldwide to develop effective employee incentive compensation systems, and his work has been published in *Marketing Science*, *Management Science*, *Journal of Marketing Research* and *Harvard Business Review*. His current work examines how specific elements of an incentive compensation system affect the performance and selection of various types of sales employees. He received a Ph.D. from Yale University and completed his undergraduate studies at Korea University. He currently serves as a senior external adviser for McKinsey & Company's sales and marketing practices. Before pursuing a career in academics, Chung served as a platoon commander in the South Korean Special Warfare Command.

**All interested are welcome.**



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