

Authors

Ximena Cadena
Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público

Alexandra Cristea
University of Warwick

Heber M. Delgado-Medrano
ideas42

Antoinette Schoar
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

FIGHTING PROCRASTINATION IN THE WORKPLACE:
AN EXPERIMENT

Ximena Cadena
Antoinette Schoar
Alexandra Cristea
Heber M. Delgado-Medrano

Working Paper 16944
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w16944>

NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH
1050 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
April 2011

We would like to thank Jordan van Rijs for outstanding collaboration as project associate during the implementation and data analysis of the project and for his excellent contributions to the research, and the participants at the NBER Conference of the Organizational Economics Working Group in December 2010 and at the World Bank's New Ideas in Business Growth Conference 2011 for their comments and suggestions. We thank also Bancamía for their support at all levels and for welcoming us as part of their team during the implementation of the program. We thank the IFC for financial support for the project and ideas42 for funding and operational support. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

© 2011 by Ximena Cadena, Antoinette Schoar, Alexandra Cristea, and Heber M. Delgado-Medrano. All rights reserved. Short sections of text, not to exceed two paragraphs, may be quoted without explicit permission provided that full credit, including © notice, is given to the source.

Fighting Procrastination in the Workplace: An Experiment

In this paper we test whether procrastination and planning problems affect the performance, compensation and work satisfaction among employees. We conducted a randomized controlled experiment with a bank in Colombia to change the frequency and intensity with which employees received reminders about goal achievements. We also provided small in-kind prizes every week to remind employees of their goal achievement. Loan officers in the treatment group showed strong improvements in their goal achievements, better work load

distribution, and higher monthly compensation (not including the value of the small prizes). The intervention also improved worker satisfaction and reduced stress levels, without affecting the quality of the loan officers' portfolios. We show that including branch managers (the supervisors of the loan officers) in the intervention was central in achieving these results, since they played a key role in reinforcing the reminders and helping employees with planning problems.

April 01, 2011