

Be Precise or Round it up: How Roundness of Goals Influence Goal Progress Perceptions

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Abstract

Research shows that because precise numbers are usually used for smaller magnitudes, they are expected to have smaller magnitudes. Are precise goals expected to have a smaller magnitude and thus considered easier to achieve? We show, on the contrary, precise goals are perceived to be more difficult, effortful and time-consuming than round goals. We argue that individuals think of precise (vs. round) goals to be psychologically closer, thus processing them more concretely (vs. abstractly), making precise (vs. round) goals appear to be more difficult to achieve. We identify two moderators—1) estimation of effort required to do per unit of the task, which abates the difference between the effect of precise and round goals on goal progress perceptions; 2) mindset, such that precise (vs. round) goals are perceived to be more difficult when processed with abstract (vs. concrete) mindset. Implications arise in setting effective goals and loyalty programs.

Keywords: *Round and Precise Numbers; Goals; Concrete and Abstract Processing*

Track: Consumer Behaviour