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Future Lock-In: Future Implementation Increases Selection of 'Should' Choices

by Todd Rogers and [Max H. Bazerman](#)

Abstract

People often experience tension over certain choices (e.g., they *should* reduce their gas consumption or increase their savings, but they do not *want* to). Some posit that this tension arises from the competing interests of a deliberative "should" self and an affective "want" self. We show that people are more likely to select choices that serve the should self (should-choices) when the choices will be implemented in the distant rather than the near future. This "future lock-in" is demonstrated in four experiments for should-choices involving donation, public policy, and self-improvement. Additionally, we show that future lock-in can arise without changing the structure of a should-choice, but by just changing people's temporal focus. Finally, we provide evidence that the should self operates at a higher construal level (abstract, superordinate) than the want self, and that this difference in construal partly underlies future lock-in.

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