

# Lecture 11: Wells Fargo and Multitasking

Compensation in Organizations

Jacob Kohlhepp

January 29, 2026

# Recall: Tayan (2019)

(Note: popular press article not peer reviewed research)

## Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

- ▶ Output depends on a productive and destructive task:

$$y = 1 + ae_1 - be_2, a > 0, b > 0$$

- ▶ The 1 is just profit from operating at all.
- ▶ The cost of effort is:

$$c(e_1, e_2) = (e_1^2 + e_2^2)/2$$

- ▶ We measure and pay only based on total effort:

$$m = e_1 + e_2$$

$$w(m) = \alpha + \beta m$$

## Destructive Effort

Solve on the board!

# Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

## Theorem 1

*If marginal destruction outweighs marginal production ( $a - b > 0$ ) the optimal wage is  $\beta^* = (a - b)/2$ . If not, the firm pays a flat salary:  $\beta^* = 0$ .*

- ▶ Incentives are not always optimal.
- ▶ Sometimes a flat salary is more profitable.
- ▶ What happens if the firm can prohibit destructive effort?

# Modeling Wells Fargo: Destructive Effort

## Theorem 1

*If marginal destruction outweighs marginal production ( $a - b > 0$ ) the optimal wage is  $\beta^* = (a - b)/2$ . If not, the firm pays a flat salary:  $\beta^* = 0$ .*

- ▶ Incentives are not always optimal.
- ▶ Sometimes a flat salary is more profitable.
- ▶ What happens if the firm can prohibit destructive effort?
- ▶ If the firm can prohibit  $e_2$ , everything is “resolved.”

## Wells Fargo and the Model

- ▶ Destructive task: opening fake accounts.
- ▶ Productive task: opening real accounts.

## Table of Contents

Another Example of Destructive Multitasking

Recall: Alexander (2020)

## Alexander (2020): Comorbidity of Admitted Patients

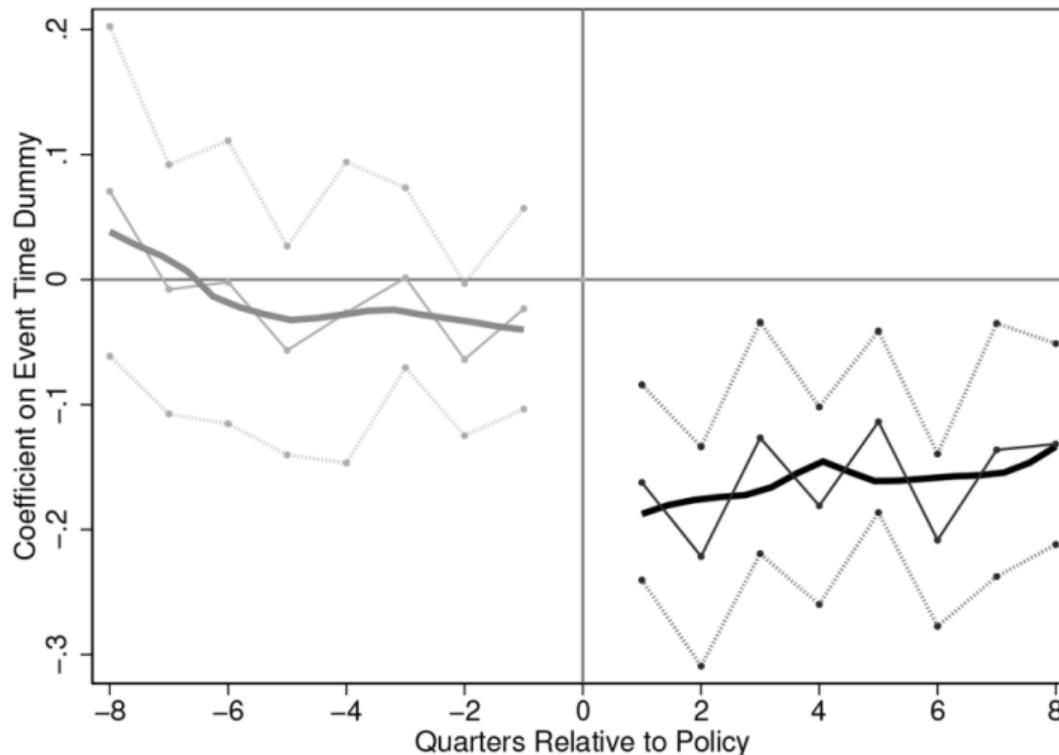


FIG. 8.—Healthier patients sent to participating hospitals: Charlson comorbidity index for medical patients. Event study plot created by regressing the Charlson comorbidity index on a full set of event time indicators, as well as hospital, quarter, type (APR-DRG by SOI), and doctor fixed effects. Plotted are the coefficients on the event time indicators,

Ockenfels, Sliwka, Werner (2024)