

up making substantially less money (about 15 percent less) than the participants who didn't have to deal with closing doors. The truth is that they could have made more money by picking a room—any room—and merely staying there for the whole experiment! (Think about that in terms of your life or career.)

When Jiwoong and I tilted the experiments against keeping options open, the results were still the same. For instance, we made each click opening a door cost three cents, so that the cost was not just the loss of a click (an opportunity cost) but also a direct financial loss. There was no difference in response from our participants. They still had the same irrational excitement about keeping their options open.

Then we told the participants the exact monetary outcomes they could expect from each room. The results were still the same. They still could not stand to see a door close. Also, we allowed some participants to experience hundreds of practice trials before the actual experiment. Certainly, we thought, they would see the wisdom of *not* pursuing the closing doors. But we were wrong. Once they saw their options shrinking, our MIT students—supposedly among the best and brightest of young people—could not stay focused. Pecking like barnyard hens at every door, they sought to make more money, and ended up making far less.

In the end, we tried another sort of experiment, one that smacked of reincarnation. In this condition, a door would still disappear if it was not visited within 12 clicks. But it wasn't gone forever. Rather, a single click could bring it back to life. In other words, you could neglect a door without any loss. Would this keep our participants from clicking on it anyhow? No. To our surprise, they continued to