

Study examines why motivation comes and goes

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Whether you have a business goal of increasing market share, hope to lose 20 pounds, or have vowed to read Moby Dick, you may have noticed that somewhere around midway to your goal, motivation wanes. According to new research by Stern School of Business assistant marketing professor Andrea Bonezzi, this sort of fourth-inning slump is a common, predictable pattern.

In a new study titled "Stuck in the Middle: The Psychophysics of [Goal Pursuit](#)," Bonezzi and co-authors C. Miguel Brendl and Matteo De Angelis show that people's [motivation](#) to continue pursuing their goals wanes about halfway through and doesn't pick up again until the end is in sight.

Motivation reaches its nadir roughly halfway through, because both the initial and the end state seem distant, and this creates the impression that the effort expended is not paying off. Take Moby Dick: Reading 10 additional pages after having read the first 20 seems worth the effort, says Bonezzi. "Reading 10 additional pages when only 20 are left also seems worth doing," he adds. "But roughly halfway toward the goal, when both the initial state and the end state are distant, reading the same 10 additional pages does not seem to get us anywhere. As a consequence, we might lose motivation to keep working toward that goal."

Organizations can use this information to create timely programs that encourage employees to keep pursuing organizational goals. The insights are also relevant for companies that offer reward programs in which

customers have the opportunity to earn points to redeem toward prizes.

Provided by New York University

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