

THE EFFECTS OF THE DIARY METHOD ON TEAM PLAYERS AND SOCIAL LOAFERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the use of group and individual diaries to control social loafing on the group project. Classes of students were assigned to either a "no diary" requirement (the control group), a group diary requirement, or an individual diary requirement. Although both diary methods were designed to prevent social loafing, neither appeared to do so.

After students used the individual diaries, it was discovered that peer evaluations were at their lowest level and firings were at their highest level. One interpretation of these results is that the individual diaries caused students to misbehave on the project, resulting in the low peer evaluations and a high number of firings. Another interpretation – one that this author believes is more tenable – is that the individual diaries had no effect on the students' tendency to loaf on the group project. In other words, this author believes that the tendency for students to loaf on the project was the same among the control group (where no diary was used) and the two diary groups. And, while neither the group diary nor the individual diary was able to prevent social

loafing, the individual diary dramatically affected the majority of the class, i.e., the "team players," in a way that was unforeseen. That is, the individual diary and the proactive manner in which it was implemented not only made the "team players" extremely alert to problems caused by their loafing partners, but it also made the "team players" intolerant of errant behavior. For this reason, the individual diaries resulted in poorer peer evaluations and more firings than either the control group or the group that was required to maintain a group diary. It appears the real value of the individual diary and the manner in which it was implemented is that it causes the "team players" to be constantly aware of the follies of their errant partners. This vigilance makes the "team players" intolerant of any social loafer's shortcomings and empowers the "team players" to effectively deal with the problem

This paper shows how the individual and group diary methods affect peer evaluations and group behavior, investigates the convergent validity of the individual diary, and summarizes students' attitudes toward the diary method.