

USING PEER EVALUATIONS TO ASSESS INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCES IN GROUP CLASS PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

The use of group projects of one type or another is common in many different types of marketing courses. Groups are used in such learning experiences as presenting and discussing cases, undertaking class projects such as developing marketing and/or advertising plans, role playing situations, marketing research studies, and other similar projects. A major problem in all group activities is the equitable assignment and allocation of grades to the group members.

This paper discusses a process to facilitate more equitable grading using peer evaluations to assess individual performances. Since groups by their very nature, involve numbers of members, those members often do not contribute the same to the overall group effort. Some will contribute much more than might be expected while others become "social loafers" and "free riders." This paper provides an approach to using peer evaluations to more fairly evaluate individual performances within a group so that grades may be assigned in the most equitable manner.

An instrument is developed to employ the peer evaluation process and measure individual contributions. This instrument is based on the criteria of an individual member's dependability/availability; input and work quality; peer group equity and interaction; and an overall evaluation. The instrument uses a scale of nine semantic differential items scored on seven points within the previously discussed criteria. Each group member rates himself or herself on the nine items and then rates each of his or her peers. Thus, there is a peer group rating on each member on each of the nine items in addition to that member's rating of his or her own performance. The mean of the peer rating is then compared with the rating the group member has given to himself or herself.

Using members of one group from a Marketing Management class project at San Diego State University, the results of the use of the instrument

are revealed. As might be suspected, some will rate themselves higher than do their peers while others will rate themselves lower than do their peers. Still others give themselves rating quite consistent with the ratings of their peers. This comparative rating process shows clearly the performances within a group as seen by their peers and allows the instructor to more equitably grade each member.