

**THE JOY AND THE PAIN OF WORKING IN TEAMS: EFFECTS OF PERSONALITY
CHARACTERISTICS AND STUDENTS' MAJOR ON STUDENT ATTITUDES
ABOUT TEAM PROJECTS**

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have documented the increased use of group projects in the marketing curriculum. A special issue of the *Journal of Marketing Education* was devoted entirely to the topic of experiential learning, usually accomplished through group projects (Frontczak and Kelley 2000). The use of such projects is not an educational fad, but is grounded in pedagogical research demonstrating that students are more likely to understand and retain knowledge learned in class assignments involving collaborative learning and group projects (McAlpine, Maguire, and Lee 2005; Scribner, Baker, and Howe 2003; Yazici 2004). In addition, group projects are viewed as crucial learning experiences by businesses looking for employees who can work effectively in teams (Gardner and Korth 1998; Varvel, et al. 2004). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), reflecting the importance of adopting appropriate pedagogies for the educational training of a new generation of business leaders has stated that, "Regardless of the delivery mode of the program, students should have opportunities to work together on some learning tasks" (AACSB 2005, p. 53).

Unfortunately, there are numerous studies that have documented that team projects are fraught with personality problems and concerns about equitable contribution. Bacon and Stewart (1998) pointed out that low-contributors to student projects, also called "free riders" or "social loafers," affect the performance of other students who do not want to carry the load for those non-contributors by being "suckers." The effect of low-contributors was also documented by McCorkle, et al. (1999) who found that the presence of "free riders" creates negative attitudes towards teamwork. Ashraf (2004) documented that less motivated students take away from the performance of highly motivated students and indicated that team projects may not always be as beneficial as commonly believed.

The effect of the personality of student members on the attitude of group members, however, has not been adequately researched. Varvel, et. al. (2004) studied the effects of personality on the effectiveness of engineering design teams using the

Myers-Briggs personality dimensions and found no statistically significant differences between the effectiveness of different groups. However, Amato and Amato (2005) using the same personality test to match students into compatible and complementary groups found that student personalities had a significant effect on team functioning for some groups of students. Many research findings on the effects of personality on group effectiveness have not been consistent. Some research indicates that groups that consist of heterogeneous personalities perform better on problem solving tasks (Guzzo and Shea 1992), while other studies have found that groups consisting of people who like one another (high social density) perform better than groups with low social density (Lucius and Kuhnert 1997).

This study focuses on the effects of students' personality and their major on their attitudes towards group projects. The findings indicate that most business students have positive attitudes towards group projects, but are concerned about the equitable distribution of work and usage of time. However, students with personalities that are less responsive or "people-oriented" are less likely to have positive attitudes about group projects. Not surprisingly, students' personality and choice of major are correlated. Students who are less "people-oriented" are more likely to be in the quantitative disciplines of accounting, economics, and finance, while marketing and management majors are significantly more likely to be "people-oriented." Students in the quantitative business disciplines voice the most concerns about such projects and appear to gain less satisfaction from group activities. Conversely, marketing majors have the most positive attitudes towards group projects. Marketing majors believe they learn more on group projects than by studying for exams, they enjoy creative problem solving, and appreciate the camaraderie of the other students on their team. The article includes suggestions on how marketing educators can make team projects more enjoyable for different groups of business students.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST