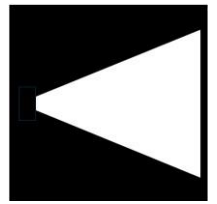


Yes but would did you lead ?



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Research Papers

Kleingeld, A., Van Mierlo, H., & Arends, L. (2011). The effect of goal setting on group performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(6), 1289.

Overview

This meta-analysis examines the impact of goal setting on group performance, updating and extending previous work by O'Leary-Kelly et al. (1994). The analysis synthesises findings across multiple studies to explore how specific and challenging goals influence group productivity and identifies moderating factors.

Key Findings & Insights

Ego centric individual goals have a negative impact on team performance compared with group centric individual goals

Specific and challenging group goals lead to significantly higher performance compared to non-specific goals (effect size: $d = 0.80$), emphasising collective success rather than individual contributions.

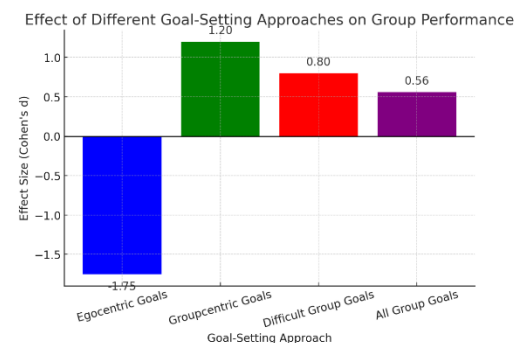
Note however that extremely difficult goals might backfire and so we need to be careful goals are achievable.

High commitment ensures all members align with the shared objective, reducing focus on individual competition.

The positive effects of goal setting are more pronounced in laboratory settings than in field settings.

Groups with high task interdependence benefit more from group-related goal setting. While individual goals may encourage competition and a focus on "what you led," aligning with team-level dynamics fosters collaboration and ensures that contributions align with collective success.

Social loafing may pose a risk to team-level goals, but this is mitigated by combining team goals with clear individual responsibilities and structured feedback. This approach keeps all members engaged, contributing meaningfully rather than focusing on showcasing their individual achievements.



Methodology

The meta-analysis includes 23 effect sizes from studies in both laboratory and field settings. It evaluates the influence of goal specificity, goal difficulty, group commitment, and task interdependence on group performance. A random-effects model aggregated data to calculate standardised effect sizes.

Conclusion

The study reinforces the robust benefits of specific and challenging group goals for improving performance, particularly when accompanied by high commitment and task interdependence. The findings strongly suggest that goal-setting strategies should prioritise team-level objectives over individual contributions to maximise effectiveness. Effective leadership in group settings requires a shift from asking "what did you lead?" to "how did you contribute to collective success?" Practical applications suggest tailoring goal-setting strategies to the context and group dynamics for maximum effectiveness. While laboratory studies show stronger effects, real-world application still demonstrates meaningful improvements. Future research should explore the interaction between individual and group-level goal dynamics.