Social Loafing in Teams

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Working in teams to achieve organizational goals is increasingly common in today's workplace. Working in teams provides synergistic benefits such as the combined skills and knowledge of all the team members, varied perspectives to improve innovation and creativity as well as increased motivation and satisfaction associated with being a part of a work team. Nevertheless, there is an associated downside for working in teams, the potential for Social Loafing. Social loafing occurs in situations where individuals put less effort into working to achieve goals when they are working within a team. For example, when there are one or two team members who are not pulling their weight or contributing significantly to the project when working in a team.

When working in teams, emphasis is placed on the achievement of group goals and not on the individual contributions. One possible reason for social loafing may be due to the lack of recognition for individual contributions within the team and therefore individuals may not be overly motivated to do their best. Such occurrences can be damaging to the overall group effectiveness and may lead to the failure of the team in achieving their goals.

To alleviate the negative issues associated with social loafing, the establishment of teams should incorporate measures to identify and record the efforts of each individual team member. By making individual efforts identifiable, each member of the team can be held accountable for their contributions to the team effort. In addition, high performers in the team can be identified and their contributions can be recognized through additional rewards or other benefits. Such measures would motivate team members to provide their best efforts to enable the team to achieve its goals.