

Slackers a drag at work

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Sole source of trouble ... one lazy worker can affect a whole team

New research from the Australian School of Business (ASB) indicates that having just one person who is lazy at [work](#) can drag down a high performing team.

Benjamin Walker, a PhD student at the ASB, is studying the impact of a single "difficult personality" member on team effectiveness.

"All the research indicates that a single lazy person drags the team down, reducing its performance and hence the [satisfaction](#) of the other members of the group," Mr Walker said.

"It can be someone who isn't proactive, someone who only does the minimum amount of work, or someone who is just plain disinterested in

the job at hand.

"Even being excessively keen but producing little is generally a negative trait within a group.

"It was previously thought that the average level of a [personality](#) trait – such as conscientiousness in a team – defined its success. However conscientiousness has two sides to it: one is discipline and a need for achievement and the other is being painstaking and careful."

Mr Walker also found that the person who contributes the least has a huge impact.

"Even if the rest of the team is generally pulling their weight, they won't be able to compensate for that member and they won't be happy about it," he said.

"It really does show that one bad apple in the barrel can spoil it for everyone else."

The study involved 158 students, divided into 33 teams, and examined how the dedication and hard work of individual team members affected the work of the entire group, concentrating on how just one member can influence the group.

Mr Walker presented the research at the ninth biennial Industrial and Organisational Psychology Conference, organised by the Australian Psychological Society, in Brisbane.

Provided by University of New South Wales

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