￼￼￼￼￼“The Support of Others Improves Our Chances of Accomplishing Our Goals”

Myth or Science?

need the help of others. But keep that help focused on specific questions and not on advice for attaining the general goal.

Sources: H. B. Kappes and P. E. Shrout, “When Goal Sharing Produces Support That Is Not Caring,” Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 37, no. 5 (2011), pp. 662–673; P. E. Shrout, N. Bolger, M. Iida, C. Burke, M. E. Gleason, and S. P. Lane, “The Effects of Daily Support Transactions During Acute Stress: Results from a Diary Study of Bar Exam Preparation,” in K. Sullivan and J. Davila (Eds.), Support Processes in Intimate Relationships (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 175–199.

Surprisingly, this statement appears to be false.

There is some research on how team goals facilitate team performance. However, until recently, we knew very little about whether others help or hinder our individual chances of meeting a goal.

Generally, whether it’s reaching a weight loss goal, successfully com- pleting an undergraduate course, or completing a work task, help and support from others actually appears to hinder our chances and make us feel worse rather than better.

Why? First, research has found that help is often, well, unhelpful. Advice

and direction from others is seldom well suited for accomplishing our goal. If you’re trying to meet a work deadline using your approach, it’s not often useful for a co-worker to advise you to use his or her method instead. Second, such advice and assistance generally makes us feel less confident and positive about achieving the goal. The more help is offered, the more negative feelings and stress we have about the goal.

The upshot? Generally, you’ll do a better job of meeting your individual work goals if you “just do it” by your- self. Of course, sometimes you do

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1. Herzberg’s methodology is limited because it relies on self-reports. When things are going well, people tend to take credit. Contrarily, they blame failure on the extrinsic environment.

2. The reliability of Herzberg’s methodology is questionable. Raters have to make interpretations, so they may contaminate the findings by interpreting one response in one manner while treating a similar response differently.

3. No overall measure of satisfaction was utilized. A person may dislike part of a job yet still think the job is acceptable overall.

4. Herzberg assumed a relationship between satisfaction and productivity, but he looked only at satisfaction. To make his research relevant, we must assume a strong relationship between satisfaction and productivity.

If individuals pursue goals because of an intrinsic interest, they are more likely to attain their goals and are happy even if they do not. Why? Because the process of striving toward them is fun. In contrast, people who pursue goals for extrinsic reasons (money, status, or other benefits) are less likely to attain their goals and less happy even when they do. Why? Because the goals are less meaningful to them.23 OB research suggests that people who pursue work goals for intrinsic reasons are more satisfied with their jobs, feel they fit into their organizations better, and may perform better.24