

# Managerial Solutions that Increase the Effect of Group Synergy and Reduce Social Loafing

Reduction of social loafing in the organization and increase of group synergy are integral objectives of human resource management, setting high requirements to the quality of managerial solutions. The purpose of this research is to develop managerial solutions that increase the effect of group synergy and reduce the spread of social loafing. The article analyses the concept of the social loafing phenomenon distinguishing the essential motivators in work groups of organizations. The reasons of occurrence and existence of social loafing are analysed as well, differentiating them into groups. The authors also discuss beliefs and behaviour of employees in organizations that lead to the emergence and (or) suppression of the social loafing phenomenon. Based on a comparative and systemic logical analysis of scientific literature, as well as the results of empirical research, there are developed managerial solutions using the modelling method.

**Keywords:** social loafing, group work, group synergy, managerial solutions.

Socialinio dykinėjimo organizacijoje mažinimas ir grupės sinergijos didinimas yra neatsiejami žmoniškųjų išteklių valdymo uždaviniai, keliantys aukštus reikalavimus vadybinių sprendimų kokybei. Šio tyrimo tikslas – suformuoti vadybinius sprendimus grupinės sinergijos efektui didinti mažinant socialinio dykinėjimo paplitimo mastą. Atlikta socialinio dykinėjimo reiškinių sampratos analizė ir išskirti esminiai demotyvatoriai organizacijų darbo grupėse. Taip pat išanalizuotos socialinio dykinėjimo reiškinių atsiradimo ir egzistavimo priežastys, sujungus jas į grupes. Aptarti organizacijos darbuotojų įsitikinimai ir elgsenos, lemiančios socialinio dykinėjimo reiškinių atsiradimą ir (arba) slopinimą. Atliktos mokslinės literatūros lyginamosios, sisteminės loginės analizės bei empirinio tyrimo rezultatų pagrindu suformuoti vadybiniai sprendimai pateikiami naudojant modeliavimo metodą.

**Raktiniai žodžiai:** socialinis dykinėjimas, darbas grupėse, grupės sinergija, vadybiniai sprendimai.

## Introduction

**The relevance of research.** In many areas of organizational activity, it is difficult to do without the concentrated efforts of employees. However, the effectiveness of the group activities varies, therefore, unity and

synergy are often one of the main tasks of group work organization, which both the heads of the group and the entire organization have to solve. Research shows that synergy not only helps to achieve a better result of activities, but it also motivates employees, and, in this context, the group activity

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exceeds the individual activity of a member of the group (Baruah, Paulus, 2009; Meslec, Curşeu, 2013; etc.). However, already long time ago it was noticed that the group may suppress individual initiative (Latane et al., 1979). This suppression occurs not only as problems caused by the group, but also as specific individual reactions, because of which the efforts of a person working in a group are decreasing (Czyz et al., 2016). This phenomenon is observed not only in activities of sports teams, but in work organizations as well. Organizations in their activities often face a shadow consequence dictated by human psychology accompanying group work – a part of the staff tend to “hide” behind the colleagues’ backs, to idle, fake off or otherwise avoid contributing to work as many efforts as they could. In other words, the opposite of synergy, or the dark side of the group work is the so-called social loafing. This phenomenon can be defined as the use of colleagues’ results of activities by one or more members of the group, deliberately avoiding contributing as much effort as other members of the group when performing the tasks assigned to them. Of course, groups are not homogeneous, individual employees have different skills, innate physical and intellectual capabilities, but a distinctive feature of social loafing may be named as a social toadyism. And, if synergy helps group members to further focus and motivates them, social loafing acts as a demotivating factor (van Dick et al., 2009).

**The problem of research.** One of often proposed solutions to overcome social loafing is the adequate evaluation of performance results of group members (Høigaard et al., 2006a, 2006b). There are currently a number of innovative IT products developed, very accurately measur-

ing individual employee performance and allowing calculating the remuneration adequate to contribution (Kovach, Cathcart, 1999; Strohmeier, 2012; etc.). However, such solutions perfectly measuring technical operations are of little help in areas where creative solutions and initiative, cooperation, interpersonal interaction, etc. are required. Finally, remuneration for the results is also far from being the main motivator. Therefore, the problem of the research is raised by the question: How to achieve greater synergy between members of the group seeking to reduce social loafing and what managerial solutions should be implemented to achieve this goal?

**The level of problem exploration.** A brief review of research of this complex problem carried out over the recent decades (Latane et al., 1979; Comer, 1995; Murphy et al., 2003; Stark et al., 2007; Meyer et al., 2015; etc.) and ideas expressed in them draws attention to three aspects: social loafing, group synergy and managerial solutions, which can enhance the synergetic effect of group interaction and reduce social loafing. Since our article is based on the research conducted in Lithuania, the results of the researches carried out in the Lithuanian population are discussed separately.

**Social loafing.** Social loafing has been abundantly researched both by organizational management researchers and psychologists for several decades (Karau, Williams, 1993; Guerin, 1999; Chen et al., 2014; Shih et al., 2017; etc.). The psychologists more often pay attention to individual stimuli of loafing, while the solution of the problem of social loafing when implementing organizational management changes is more relevant for the management professionals. From the

psychological point, behaviour of the members of the group can aggravate colleagues' work and encourage social loafing (Latane et al., 1979). Considering the results of the mentioned research M. A. Brickner et al. (1986) maintained that under conditions of low involvement, participants whose outputs were identifiable worked harder than those whose outputs were pooled. However, when the task was personally involving, the loafing effect was eliminated. In addition, participants whose outputs were pooled worked as hard as those participants whose individual outputs could be identified. Furthermore, the so-called *sucker effect* (Schnake, 1991) is identified as interference when co-workers perceive that some colleagues deliberately reduce their efforts, and therefore they also do not want to stand out, that is, to become "suckers" or, in other words, be exploited by co-workers. Ch. Lam (2015) pointed to poor communication within the group and a lack of attention for strengthening the cohesion of the members of the group. In addition, it is noticed that some individuals lack the ability to share the workload (Seltzer, 2016), and this can be solved by training.

**Group synergy.** The problems of synergy are highlighted when analysing problems posed by the differences between the members of the group and the ways to overcome them in various studies. A. Miura and M. Hida (2004) conducted an experiment in which the issues of synergy were analysed by estimating differences and similarities of members of the group. They confirmed the hypothesis that groups in which higher levels of both member diversity and similarity of thought categories were combined would show greater gains in creative performance. In addition, the homogeneity

of the group in respect of the gender has contributed to synergy. Another experiment showed that overcoming differences requires the efforts of the group members. Y. Gabriel and D. S. Griffiths (2008) investigated how groups of students of the different cultural composition interact. It was concluded that an ability of learning groups in transcending cultural and other difficulties depends crucially on their ability to enable all their members to discover a voice that is both heard and respected within the group. M. Yoshimura and K. Yoshikawa (1998) investigated the creation of new knowledge on the basis of knowledge possessed by participants of the group in creative processes. According to them, cooperative work is feasible only when each partner can mutually benefit from sharing their knowledge. In addition, Y. Zhang and M.-Y. Huai (2015) found that informational diversity affects individual task and creative performance through communication ties, whereas social diversity does not. One of connecting links between different members, promoting trust and sharing is the search for common values. The problem of the search for the value requires that the decision-makers could choose from alternative solutions, which differ depending on their value. The main aim is to discover the solution that has the greatest value (Larson, 2007). The author, modelling by computer software, has formulated three conclusions: diverse groups should perform better than homogeneous groups; diverse groups should perform better than even their best individual members; cooperative interaction between members during problem solving should benefit the performance of diverse groups but impair the performance of homogeneous groups.

**Managerial solutions.** Research shows that managers of organizations can be trained in how to deal with the issues of synergy in group activities (Diamond, 1987). Other researchers indicate a few essential guidelines to achieve the synergy effect and reduce social loafing in organizations. K. Szymanski and S. G. Harkins (1987) noticed the impact made by the possibility of self-assessment of a group member. They claim that the possibility that the opportunity for the participants to evaluate themselves would be sufficient to eliminate the loafing effect. Though, when the experimenter could not evaluate the participants' outputs, the potential for self-evaluation reliably improved participant performance. R. van Dick et al. (2009) offer to start from employee cohesion. According to the authors, it is necessary to select people who have a sense that team loyalty is valuable and important, introduce clear, commonly agreed goals and a long-time perspective to stress mutual interdependence and future-oriented investments by the team members, compare your team with others to stimulate constructive competition, and create identity by making the team visible to the team members and by designing meaningful tasks team members can be proud of. In another publication R. van Dick et al. (2009) maintain that rather than individuating group members or tasks to overcome social loafing, managers can increase group performance by focusing on group members' perceptions of their groups as important and salient. Monitoring of employees and sanctions are also proposed (Zoghbi-Manrique-Lara, Olivares-Mesa, 2010), especially in order to eliminate the damage caused by the sucker effect (Schnake, 1991). In

addition, attention is drawn to the fact that perceived loafing and evaluations of the team member were influenced by the type of account provided; concessions were more effective in decreasing perceptions of social loafing and increasing evaluations of the team member than excuses and justifications which, in turn, were more effective than refusals (Tata, 2002). However, when analysing the proposals of different authors, either high uncertainty or focussing on fairly fragmentary solutions becomes evident.

**Studies carried out in Lithuania.** In recent decades, a lot of studies were carried out in Lithuania, which dealt with various aspects of improvement of team work (Merkevičius, Uturytė-Vrubliauskienė, 2008; Zabelavičienė, 2009; etc.), which are more or less related to the problems of synergy, but the issues of social loafing in empirical context are analysed quite episodically, and theoretical studies often sum up the ideas expressed by foreign authors. V. Mikuličiūtė (2012) examined the problems of stress in soldiers, team cohesion and trust in the team. It was found that a greater coherence of the team, trust in it, perceived "self", and collective efficiency are significantly related to the greater effectiveness of the team activities. This research did not find a link between the stress experienced and the efficiency of activities. E. Jezerskytė and V. Žydzūnaitė (2005) carried out a research in educational institutions. They state that teamwork competencies of school administration are better developed than those of educators. School administration is capable of working in team more effectively, as the members of such teams help and support each other, commitment and responsibility are easier to

understand, the evaluation of ideas and input of the team members into common work is stronger, opposite opinions or attitudes are easier expressed. Beliefs of employees and resulting behaviour, determining the emergence and/or suppression of the social loafing phenomenon were discussed in another research (see Vveinhardt, Banikonytė, 2017a). That is, the individual factors are closely related to the organizational ones. In addition, after conducting the interviews with employees of the media companies, the fact that social loafing is characterized by the disguise effect was noted. It is stated that managers should pay attention not only to the size of groups, but also to the dynamics of relationships between the employees and the psychological pressure done by co-workers to those who show more initiative. The initiative of people working creative work is increased by favourable psychological climate, in which managers' confidence, openness, their increased participation in the working processes and the development of the values of congruence are distinguished. It was found that in some cases the measures of financial motivation fail to overcome impact of the phenomenon of social loafing on the employees' decisions to perform more tasks in order to get higher income from their work activities. On the one hand, the relation with the size of the work group was proved, on the other hand, the role of sexuality has been highlighted, as women were less inclined to social loafing.

**The object of research:** managerial solutions that increase the synergy of group activities and reduce social loafing.

**The purpose of research.** Having analysed conditions that determine the interaction between members of the group,

to offer managerial solutions that would increase the group synergy effect and reduce social loafing.

**The objectives of research:**

1. To analyse the conditions determining the interaction between members of the group.
2. To offer managerial solutions that increase the group synergy effect.

**The research methods.** The general research methods and a comparative and systematic logical analysis of scientific literature were used to analyse the phenomenon of social loafing and to distinguish the essential demotivating factors in working groups. Grouping, comparison and visualization were used to process and systematise the information. Managerial solutions were developed based on the results of research and were presented using the modelling method.

### Action programme to reduce the extent of social loafing

Theoretical aspects of social loafing are discussed in detail by the authors in the article published in Vol. 77 of this journal (*for more see Vveinhardt, Banikonytė, 2017a*); part of the empirical research results is published in other articles (*see Vveinhardt, Banikonytė, 2017a; Vveinhardt et al., 2017*). The research showed that action programmes designed for the reduction of social loafing should mainly involve the managers of companies (especially middle management). In order to reduce social loafing and to increase interaction between the members of the group seeking greater synergy, it is recommended to implement the action programme, which is schematically presented in Figure 1.

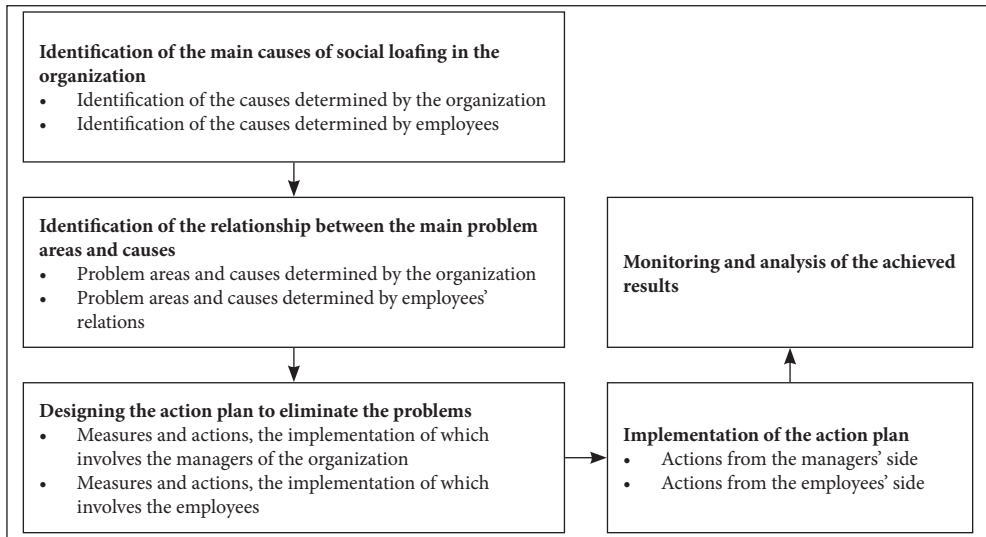


Fig. 1. Structured flowchart of the action programme to reduce social loafing

**Identification of the main causes of social loafing in the organization** (by surveying of employees). Identification of the causes can also be carried out considering the problems highlighted during the employees' annual talks with their managers. The main causes of social loafing highlighted during the research carried out in Lithuania are presented in Table 1. The identified reasons allow managers of organizations to develop relevant decisions, thus enabling to reduce undesirable behaviour of social loafing in the organization and removing the essential reasons to involve in the loafing.

**Identification of the relationship between the main problem areas and causes.** The relationship between the main problem areas and reasons in the organization allows identifying effective measures to remove (suppress) social loafing in the organization. Given the results of the analysis, it is possible to identify which problem areas are determined by the organization (corporate policy, managers' decisions, etc.), and which arise from the employees' side. In the case of the empirical research we discuss, the reasons determining the problem areas are the following:

The main causes of social loafing in group activities of manufacturing companies

Table 1

Determination	Causes
<i>Determined by the organization</i>	High workload; negative influence of managers; absence of a motivation system; lack of skills.
<i>Determined by the employees' relationships:</i>	Perceived loafing of colleagues; personal traits of employees.



*Determined by the organization:* Social loafing determined by relationships between the management and the employees (incorrect managers' behaviour with employees, managers' unrestraint from inappropriate comments towards employees); managers' partiality, etc; low level of satisfaction with the results of work; shortcomings in the company's motivation system; the lack of employees' skills and competencies, which affects the decline of employees' efforts.

*Determined by the employees' relationships:* Insufficiently cohesive groups of employees and formal employees' relationships (similarities are not characteristic of employees; members of the group little know each other, little time is spent together); low level of cohesion of the group (the team is not inclined to make friends, low level of trust in colleagues); weak relationship between the employees; low level of striving for good results (the orientation to achievement is not typical of employees); the impact of perceived social loafing on relationship between employees.

***Designing the action plan to eliminate the problems.*** Design of the action plan to eliminate the problems is carried out taking into account the highlighted problem areas in the organization and their possible causes. Designed solutions to eliminate the problems in the problem areas, where the source of origin of the problems is the organization (as a direct factor), should focus on the implementation of changes through the actions directed to the organization (e.g., redesigning processes, redesigning workplaces, redesigning tasks, improving motivation system, etc.). Designed solutions to solve the problems in the problem areas, where the source of origin of the problems is the staff (revealed through relationships

between employees, organizational climate, etc.), are directed to employees of the organization. The action plan is designed taking into account the aims of the organization, forming the sets of appropriate measures (Table 2).

***Implementation of the action plan.***

The implementation of the actions is carried out in accordance with the measures presented in the action plan and the set goals.

*Actions from the managers' side:* setting clear goals to lower-level employees and fostering certain employees' behaviours; encouragement of feedback, employees' trust and the analysis of the information received; monitoring of the set goals; the provision of means necessary for the implementation of change (the budget for training, empowerment to make decisions within the limits of the respective responsibilities, etc.); the inclusion of the employees (at all levels) in the development of solutions to eliminate the problems, allowing the employees to provide various alternative proposals, providing additional responsibilities to the employees; monitoring of progress and results of change and taking relevant action if needed.

*Actions from the employees' side:* provision of feedback; evaluation of the situation from the perspective of employees' groups, providing proposals for the management to consider, involvement in problem-solving; timely setting of problem questions and discussion with the managers.

Actions of managers and employees at this stage are closely related, as adequate and productive employees' reaction can be expected only when a high level of management is ensured after the implementation of the changes at the level of management.

Table 2

**Measures to implement the action plan in accordance with the position held in the organization**

Position	Measures to implement the action plan
<b>Top-level manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Meetings and focus groups.</i> Problem areas in an organization must be discussed with middle-level managers, focus groups have to be formed to formulate specific decisions and changes (intended to solve the identified problems);</li> <li>• <i>External training.</i> Training should be organised for managers of the groups (departments) to improve organizational climate and mutual relationships with subordinates;</li> <li>• <i>Presentation of the employees' position.</i> Introduction of the position of the employees to the managers of departments in respect of their role and the focus of the role of the relationship between the managers and social loafing to the middle-level (i.e. direct) managers;</li> <li>• <i>Goals and clear position of the organization.</i> Setting clear goals for the managers and presentation of a clear position of the company in respect of the problem;</li> <li>• <i>Change monitoring, data analysis, feedback.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Middle level managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The action plan.</i> Pursuit of the goals set by the top-level management and design of the measures to achieve the set goals;</li> <li>• <i>Meetings, talks with employees.</i> Formulation of clear goals and emphasizing the importance of change to direct subordinates;</li> <li>• <i>Changes in performance records.</i> Increasing the visibility of the work tasks, increasing the comparability of performance in the work groups;</li> <li>• <i>Changes supported by analysis.</i> (Re)designing equal work groups and reviewing workloads (if necessary, redesigning jobs);</li> <li>• <i>Training and improvement of qualification.</i> Training and improvement of qualification of the direct subordinates, facing the difficulties resulting from the lack of competencies and skills;</li> <li>• <i>Introduction of innovation.</i> Application of the skills, acquired during the training, in work groups (to improve relationships between the employees, organizational climate and mutual relationship with subordinates, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Lower level managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feedback.</i> Familiarization of the employees with the results of change, employees' performance results, feedback to direct subordinates about the importance of the change in respect of the problem of social loafing;</li> <li>• <i>Monitoring.</i> Monitoring of employees' motivation and mutual relations;</li> <li>• <i>Promotion of trust.</i> Encouragement and receiving feedback from the employees, and transfer to higher level managers. Formation, introduction of the system for receiving regular feedback, and involvement of employees.</li> <li>• Monitoring of the implementation of change, analysis of processes and feedback to the top manager.</li> </ul>
<b>Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feedback and initiative.</i> Discussion of results, identification of problems, formulation of proposals and observations, stressing the missing skills and competencies to direct superiors.</li> <li>• <i>Talks.</i> Participation in talks with direct superiors.</li> </ul>

**Monitoring and analysis of the achieved results.** Monitoring results should be based on the accumulation of feedback from employees in the most acceptable ways to the organization (depending on the existing system, and in the absence of the system it should be

created), on the analysis of the information received, observation of changes, and comparison of the implemented goals.

In accordance with the provided programme of action, constant focussing on feedback and employees' trust and understanding of the benefit of change (not only



to the organization, but also to the relationships and quality of work) is important. Therefore, the organization should review the system of internal communication. Following the developed guidelines, middle managers of the company would have the largest share of responsibility and the role of agents of change that requires the employees' trust and leadership skills of the managers, thus, before the implementation of the relevant change in the company, top level managers should evaluate the competencies and skills of middle managers needed to implement these changes.

### **The model of reduction of social loafing in the group activities of organizations**

Based on the discussed thoughts of researchers, the results of empirical research and the authors' insights, the model for reduction of the analysed phenomenon has been designed (Figure 2). This model distinguishes the three main groups of activities – the stages, which are elaborated by steps, providing the persons responsible for implementation and the necessary means.

In accordance with the model presented in Figure 2, the following main stages and respective steps in them must be implemented in the organization:

#### **1. Initiation of change (preparation).**

The following steps are carried out in the organization:

*The need to research the extent of social loafing in the organization is identified.* This need may be based on the results of observation of employees' behaviours carried out by personnel managers of the organization, conversations with employees

and other methods of data collection that can show signals, allowing identification of the first signs of social loafing in the organization (e.g., perhaps the employees are characterized by frequent chats in the corridors, kitchen, at the coffee machine, smoke "breaks", etc., the employees can also be characterized by a continuous search for pretext and excuses, constantly being late – the features that are most commonly attributed to individuals who tend to engage in social loafing).

*Preparation of the research.* The instrument developed by the authors of this article and tested in Lithuania and/or help of external consultants can be used.

*The research instrument is formed.* The research instrument developed by the author of the paper, prepared on the basis of the research carried out by foreign authors and adjusted for research of the extent of social loafing in Lithuanian organizations, can be used to carry out the research. The instrument can be modified if there is a need.

#### **2. Beginning of change.** The following steps are implemented during this stage:

*The encoding of groups is carried out.* Taking into account the key conditions necessary for the phenomenon of social loafing (i.e., work in groups, with a view to a common goal), the encoding of employees in accordance with the departments, shifts, or other structural units of the organization, where employees work in groups with a view to a common goal) must be carried out in the organization. On the basis of the existing lists of employees the personnel manager should establish the procedure to conduct the employee survey.

*The survey of employees of the organization is carried out.* In order to avoid

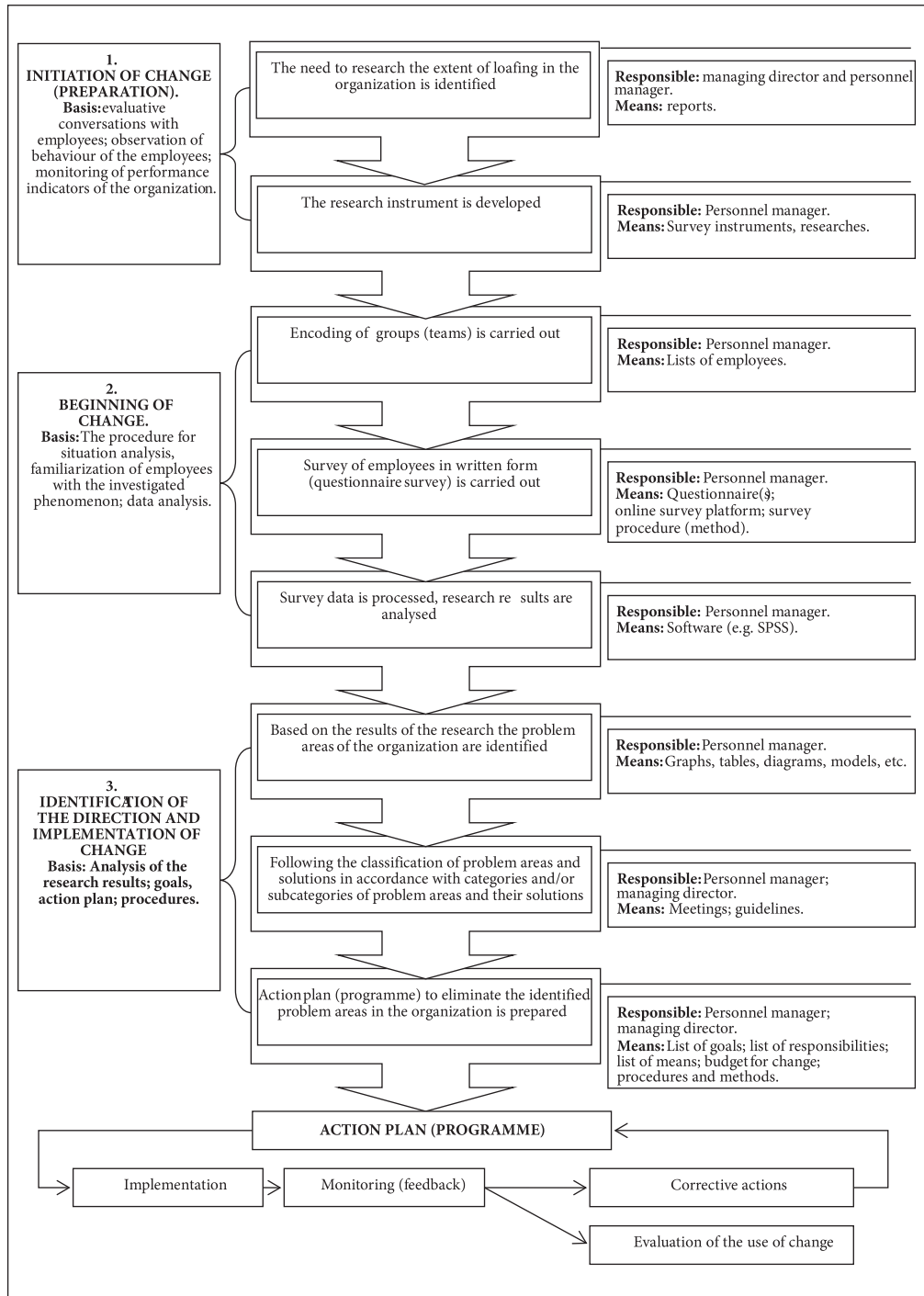


Fig. 2. The model of managerial solutions to reduce social loafing

employees' preconceptions in respect of the phenomena analysed, the employees must be assured that their individual responses will not be identified. The personnel manager should familiarize the employees with the analysed phenomenon and its importance for activities of each organization and its results, and stress the importance of honesty and sincerity of the employees also ensuring that the potential change related to the conducted research is intended to achieve mutual benefit. It is recommended to present the questionnaire for the employees either by electronic means (e.g., using electronic survey platforms) or by giving paper questionnaires to the employees (depending on the opportunities of the organization). Regardless of the method selected, the employees must be guaranteed their personal anonymity (a possible alternative is an external evaluator, recruiting organizations conducting research (e.g., university researchers, private businesses, etc.)).

*The results of the empirical research are analysed.* After the survey of employees, the analysis of the survey data is carried out (using the statistical software packages, depending on the opportunities of the organization and the resources available). A possible alternative is to subcontract research data processing (in the cases when the personnel manager (or other responsible person) does not have the competencies necessary for data processing, presentation and interpretation of the results of the research, i.e., the subcontracting of services). It is recommended to analyze the research data in respect of both work groups and in the various layers of sociodemographic indicators, which can direct to certain problem areas in an organization.

### **3. Identification of the direction and implementation of change.** The following steps are implemented during this stage:

*Based on the results of the research the problem areas in the organization are identified.* On the basis of the results of the questionnaire survey, the problem areas and their reasons in the organization are identified. The research instrument has to identify problem areas in the following directions: the effect of employees' reputation, image, and goals to social loafing; social loafing that occurs as activities unrelated to work; the perceived extent of social loafing and diagnostics of the extent of individual social loafing in the organization; identification of the effect of justice to social loafing through the roles of the managers (leaders), interaction with the manager and satisfaction with management; identification of the effect of the commitment to the organization and co-workers on social loafing; evaluation of the influence of the group support (that occurs as trust and friendship with colleagues and the support of team members in the organization) on social loafing; identification of the level of group coherence in the organization (through group links, cooperation and relationships between the employees within the group) that has a significant impact on social loafing in organizations; evaluation of the effect of results of the group (i.e., satisfaction with the work process and outcomes) on social loafing and orientation of the employees of the organization to the achievement and the level of cooperation. The analysis of the relation between the scales of the instrument showing the links between the effects of some possible designed solutions on other problem

areas is also important for identification of problem areas. Clear ways to provide structured information (graphs, tables, diagrams), allowing to group the problems respectively, in relation to the scales of the research instrument should be used to highlight the problem areas.

*Following the classification of the problem areas and solutions to identify possible solutions.* At this stage, the personnel manager of the organization, together with the head of the organization, have to discuss the problem areas that have been highlighted and prepare the guidelines (consistent with the capabilities of the organization in respect of the available

resources) to eliminate the problems in the organization. During the meeting, the priorities should be arranged, the current situation in the organization critically evaluated and the draft of the situation to aim at are prepared.

*The action plan (programme) to eliminate the identified problem areas in the organization is prepared.* In accordance with the presented classification of possible problem areas according to the designed instrument and possible solution alternatives (Table 3), the plan of specific actions is prepared (carried out by the head of the organization and the personnel manager).

Table 3

### Classification of possible problem areas and solution alternatives

Subscales	Problem	Solution	Subscales
Activities not related to work	Social loafing in conditions of group work.	Solution: to monitor whether the conserved resources (energy stock) are transferred to the work activities.	Bluhm (2009)
		In the cases when the visibility of the task is low, employers are recommended to maintain a high level of involvement of employees. This can be done by redesigning tasks, communicating the importance of the tasks carried out for the success of the group and the entire organization to the employees. Also, it should be noted that some of the work (tasks) can be very tedious, boring, but too simple to be worth redesigning them. In such cases, it is necessary to monitor the outcomes, to increase the visibility of the task, to form as small groups as possible, and to highlight the employees' responsibility for the tasks performed.	George (1992)
Perceived social loafing	It is understood that there are some loafers among colleagues.	The perceived loafing of colleagues causes revenge motives. Researchers suggested reducing the loafing opportunities for loafers by emphasising the significance of their work and objectives.	Hung et al. (2009)
		Since the knowledge of members of the group about the loafers can affect their productivity (productivity of those who compensate), it is recommended to make the results of the contribution public and apply sanctions to the loafers.	Chen, Bachrach (2003)
		The research has confirmed that both the perceived productivity norms and perceived social support norms suppress the perception of social loafing. Productivity norms are related to the task-oriented motivation directed to performance and a high level of effort. Solution: teambuilding, which emphasizes different aspects of the relationship combined with activity norms.	Hoigaard et al. (2006b)

*continuation of Table 3*

Subscales	Problem	Solution	Subscales
Identification of loafing	Disposition to loafing.	In the cases when the visibility of the task is low, employers are recommended to maintain a high level of involvement of employees. This can be done by redesigning tasks, communicating the importance of the tasks carried out for the success of the group and the entire organization to the employees. Also, it should be noted that some of the work (tasks) can be very tedious, boring, but too simple to be worth redesigning them. In such cases, it is necessary to monitor the outcomes, to increase the visibility of the task, to form as small groups as possible, and to highlight the employees' responsibility for the tasks performed.	George (1992)
Individual aspirations	Loafing of individuals because of the disposition to personal aims.	Solution: to increase the visibility of tasks and individual contribution of the groups, in which there are persons who are inclined to highlight their ego and individuality, by providing feedback for all groups; to introduce the system of incentives based on the possibility to form the desired image (the team of the month, the team leader of the month, etc.).	Woodman et al. (2011)
Personal image, reputation	Loafing because of unsatisfied need of personal image formation.	To create the environment where high performers should be mentors of "loafers" in the teams, which are characterized by a variety of activities.	Rubino et al. (2014)
		Feedback from all members of the group is necessary. Feedback may create the possibility of social comparison for all, and reduce loafing.	Suleiman, Watson (2008)
Role of the manager (leader)	Loafing determined by an unclear role of the manager in the group.	If the goals are not clear, the structure is not strict, there is a lack of coordination and the employees don't know how to complete the tasks, the leader should provide clear instructions, in this case a directive leadership will improve the employees' satisfaction and performance.	Lee et al. (2015)
Fairness of the interaction (interaction with the supervisor / manager)	Loafing because of inappropriate behaviour of the manager (leader of the group).	To increase the coherence, cohesion between the employees and the degree to which the members of the group identify themselves with this group.	Karau, Williams (1995)
		Leaders, who treat team members with respect and take into account proposals of the team members are more likely to face a better performance of their group members than the leaders who are rude with their group members and do not take into account the efforts of the group. Solution: to encourage cooperation of the leaders and members of the group by obliging the group leaders to form the groups based on coherence.	Ferrante et al. (2006)
Satisfaction with authority and governance	Negative approach towards the manager(s) and decisions the manager(s) make.	Managers must understand what kind of behaviour they want to foster in each specific team task and apply the appropriate system of incentives. In the cases where precision and help to colleagues are less important than the speed and focus on individual contribution, mixed or individual reward system may be used. In the cases where precision and help to colleagues are crucial, a mixed reward system can cause the opposite effect than expected.	Barnes et al. (2011)
Commitment to the organization	Low employee commitment to the organization.	Organizational commitment reduces social loafing. Managers should seek to actively identify employees' intentions of turnover and reduce them by increasing the satisfaction with fairness and effective commitment.	Luo et al. (2013)

*continuation of Table 3*

Subscales	Problem	Solution	Subscales
Commitment to colleagues	Low employee commitment to colleagues.	Previous team sports (and their code) experience of individuals affects the reduced social loafing, as the success achieved by the team is also the individual success of each member of the team. Solution: to organize team sports events, competitions, teambuilding for employees of the organization.	Czyz et al. (2016)
Atmosphere of the group	Low employees' trust in colleagues.	Previous team sports (and their code) experience of individuals affects the reduced social loafing, as the success achieved by the team is also the individual success of each member of the team. Solution: to organise team sports events, competitions, teambuilding for employees of the organization.	Czyz et al. (2016)
Cohesion of the group	Distrust in colleagues.	Dehumanization is a significant predecessor of social loafing, as individuals who do not realize that interaction should be personalized and human generated fewer ideas than individuals with lower levels of dehumanization during the research. Solution: to weigh the costs related to the relocation of employees (in respect of distance) and losses because of decreased employees' productivity. When the distance between the employees is unavoidable, employers have to ensure that understanding of humanization would be maintained in groups (i.e., that the colleagues would understand about feelings, emotions, etc. of remote colleagues). To seek that employees would know one another.	Omar et al. (2010)
Group links	Relationships between colleagues do not exist.	Social identity theory argues that similarities encourage trust, communication and mutuality between similar individuals, which results in strong social links (i.e. the relationship), positive attitudes and mutual support. Solution: to encourage as much face-to-face employees' work as possible in order to form strong social connections.	Perry et al. (2016)
Group cooperation	The employees are not likely to help each other to achieve a common goal.	Selection of employees to groups where teamwork is important should be based on the employees' disposition to work in groups, and paying attention to whether an employee is orientated to achievement.	Stark et al. (2007)
Relationships in the group	Inconsistent relationships between members of the group.	Social identity theory argues that similarities encourage trust, communication and mutuality between similar individuals, which results in strong social links (i.e. the relationship), positive attitudes and mutual support. Solution: to encourage as much face-to-face employees' work as possible in order to form strong social connections.	Perry et al. (2016)
Satisfaction with the work process	Satisfaction with the work process is not felt in the group, and there is no tendency to strive for great results.	Leader (acting as a coach) Solution: to enable members of the group to make more decisions; communicate with team members on a regular basis in order to avoid the formation of subgroups and identify problems at an early stage. To transfer responsibility for the maintenance of certain standards and requirements to the members of the group. To create opportunities for the group to improve focussing on improvement of colleagues' skills as well as on their own ones (team development tasks). To create opportunities to develop the team's coherence and interrelationship. To create competitive environment (within the limits of common sense) that would encourages the members of the group to get involved and feel satisfaction with work outcomes.	Jones et al. (2014)



*continuation of Table 3*

Subscales	Problem	Solution	Subscales
Satisfaction with the result of work	There is no satisfaction with the results in the group.	Understanding of individuals that their tasks are important and unique is important. This is confirmed by the fact that the results of participants, who are given a complex aim, surpass those who are simply asked to do the job as good as they can. Solution: to communicate to the members of the group about the importance and meaning of the tasks carried out.	Chen et al. (2014), Seitchik, Harkins (2014)
Cooperation, collaboration	Members of the group are indisposed to cooperate and help one another.	Previous team sports (and their code) experience of individuals affects the reduced social loafing, as the success achieved by the team is also the individual success of each member of the team. Solution: to organise team sports events, competitions, teambuilding for employees of the organization.	Czyz et al. (2016)
Orientation to achievement	Individuals are unwilling to achieve the best results.	Solution: create the conditions for the groups to compete at the same level of capacity, i.e., to select and form equal groups.	Heuze Brunel (2011)
		Selection of employees to groups, where teamwork is important, should be based on the employees' disposition to work in groups, and taking into account whether an employee is orientated to achievement.	Stark et al. (2007)

Source: J. Vveinhardt, J. Banikonytė (2017b).

Having identified the main problem areas and their interconnections with the reasons of social loafing, as well as taking into account the organization's capacities (financial, human, etc. resources), an action plan (programme) is prepared. In accordance with it, the relevant actions and changes related to the reduction of the scale of social loafing in the organization are implemented. With a view to the efficient outcome, it is purposeful to provide for the indicators, following which it would be expected to carry out the monitoring and evaluation of compliance of the objectives set and the results achieved by the organization. During the implementation of the action plan, it is purposeful to carry out the assessment of the employees' competencies based on which the change agents in the organization would be selected. Since the reduction of the extent of social loafing should

mainly include direct superiors, it is necessary to assess whether the current managers have sufficient competencies (emotional intelligence, leadership skills, social intelligence, etc.), necessary to implement the mentioned change. The implementation of the action plan (programme) and its results must be continuously monitored and the benefit they provide must be evaluated. This can be done by introducing the employees' interim conversations with the personnel manager, using the relevant measurement parameters (such as employee engagement level, satisfaction index, the average duration of the employee's service in the organisation, etc.) and carrying out the evaluation of the change in work outcomes (for a specified period). In the cases when the change deviates from the aims set by the organization, it is purposeful to carry out the corrective actions, revise the relation

between the causes and the problems (by carrying out the monitoring of employees and middle level managers, talking with employees occasionally, monitoring the work environment, etc.) and to develop new solutions for the implementation of change.

Implementation of the prepared model for reduction of the scale of social loafing in the organization is the main responsibility of the organization managers (the personnel manager, the top and middle level managers). Depending on the main problem areas identified and their relationship with the reasons of social loafing, the top manager of the organization must assess whether the competencies and skills of the employees implementing organizational change (the personnel manager, middle level managers) are suitable to implement the measures and actions provided in the action plan (programme).

To sum up, it can be stated that the designed solutions for the reduction of the scale of social loafing in Lithuanian organizations mostly affect the direct superiors of the organization and their impact on the employees of the organization, employees' relationships and the organizational climate. The implementation of the designed solutions in the organization inevitably initiates the change that can be directed both to the employees and to the organization and its managers. When eliminating the reasons that influence social loafing, a greater synergy of group activities can be expected.

## Conclusions

Academic literature contains a lot of insights, which help to identify the behaviour characteristic to social loafers, high-

light the personal qualities that enable organizations to identify primary characteristics of loafers and make assumptions about employees potentially involved in social loafing. However, the amount of research on social loafing that directly analyse these problems and findings that might be helpful designing managerial decisions to increase the group synergy is not abundant. This is particularly obvious in studies carried out in Lithuania, therefore, this article contributes to the broadening of knowledge about the phenomenon. Moreover, it provides knowledge about the reasons of social loafing and the ways to overcome it so that to increase the efficiency of group work.

Having identified problem areas, there have been developed solutions and the action programme, indicating the specific means for reduction (elimination) of social loafing in the analysed organization. Seeking to reduce the impact of the perceived social loafing to employees in an organization, it is purposeful to reduce possibilities of loafing, stressing for employees the importance of their work and aims; it is advisable to make the results of the input public and apply sanctions on loafers. The departments of the organization, where social loafing is especially pronounced, should increase visibility of tasks, providing the results of the group for public comparison; to form the team, emphasising different aspects of relationship that combines with the norms of activity.

Seeking to reduce the extent of social loafing in the organization it is necessary: to identify attitudes and approaches of the existing managers to organization of group work and motivation of employees; to analyse managers' approaches to the

current organization of group work, identifying the main problem areas in the organization; to organise training for managers (especially middle-level) to improve employees' relations, organizational climate and reciprocity with subordinates; if the aims are not clear, the structure is not strict, if there is a lack of coordination and employees do not know how to complete the tasks, the leader must provide clear instructions; to encourage cooperation of leaders and members of the group so that to oblige them to form groups based on interpersonal coherence.

In order to reduce social loafing and increase commitment it is purposeful: to observe the employees' behavior and identify the first signs of intentions to leave the organization on time (i.e., increase the direct responsibilities of managers associated with the employees' motivation, and involvement in monitoring of these factors); managers should seek to actively identify the risks of employees turnover and reduce them by increasing the satisfaction with justice, increasing the commitment to the organization; the employees' trust in the direct superiors, allowing to identify the employees' problems, to present alternative solutions to these problems before an employee finally

decides to leave the organization, must be strengthened.

The main solutions that can strengthen the coherence of the employees and productive relationships within an organization include: organization of events for employees, treating the result achieved by the group as individual success of every member of the group; promotion of strong social relationships in the organization, taking into account the interests of employees and similarities that promote trust, communication and reciprocity between similar individuals, which results in strong social relationships (i.e., cohesion), positive attitudes and mutual support.

Solutions aimed at increasing the employees' desire to achieve the best results include the following: to create conditions for groups to compete at the equal level of capacities, i.e., to select and create equal groups; selection of employees into groups, in which teamwork is important, should be based on employees' tendency to work in groups, paying attention to whether the employee is oriented to achievement. This is particularly relevant for the groups of employees whose work results are the most important indicator for the organization activities (e.g., sales, production, etc.).

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## VADYBINIAI SPRENDIMAI GRUPINĖS SINERGIJOS EFEKTUI DIDINTI, MAŽINANT SOCIALINĮ DYKINĖJIMĄ

### S a n t r a u k a

Mokslinėje literatūroje pateikiama nemažai įžvalgų, kurios padeda identifikuoti socialiniams dykinėjimams būdingas elgsenas, išryškina asmenines savybes, suteikiančias organizacijoms galimybę identifikuoti pirminius požymius ir daryti prielaidas,

kad organizacijoje yra darbuotojų, galimai įsitraukiančių į socialinio dykinėjimo elgsenas. Tačiau yra nedaug tyrimų, kurie tiesiogiai nagrinėtų socialinio dykinėjimo problematiką, o jų išvadas būtų galima panaudoti projektuojant vadybinius sprendimus



grupių sinergijai didinti. Ši problema ypač išryškėja Lietuvoje atliekamų tyrimų kontekste, todėl pastarasis straipsnis prisideda plečiant žinias apie tiriamai populiacijai būdingas socialinio dykinėjimo priežastis bei jų įveikimo būdus, kurie gali padidinti grupinio darbo našumą.

Identifikavus problemines sritis, suformuoti projektiniai sprendimai bei parengta veiksmų programa, nurodant konkrečias priemones, skirtas socialinio dykinėjimo mastui tiriamoje organizacijoje mažinti (eliminuoti). Siekiant sumažinti suvokiamo socialinio dykinėjimo poveikį organizacijos darbuotojams, tikslinga mažinti dykinėjimo galimybes, akcentuojant darbuotojams jų darbo ir tikslų reikšmingumą; rekomenduotina viešinti indėlio rezultatus ir dykinėtojams taikyti sankcijas. Organizacijos padalinuose, kuriems būdingas ryškus suvokiamas socialinis dykinėjimas, turėtų būti didinamas užduočių matomumas, pateikiant grupių rezultatus viešam palyginimui; komanda formuojama, pabrėžiant skirtingus ryšio aspektus ir derinant su veiklos normomis.

Siekiant sumažinti socialinio dykinėjimo mastą organizacijose, būtina: identifikuoti esamų organizacijos vadovų požiūrį ir nuostatas į darbo grupės organizavimą, darbuotojo motyvavimą; vadovų požiūrį į esamo darbo grupės organizavimą, supažindinti su pagrindinėmis nustatytomis organizacijos probleminėmis sritimis; organizuoti vadovų (ypač vidurinėsios grandies) mokymus, darbuotojų santykių, organizacinio klimato bei tarpusavio sąveikos su pavaldiniais gerinimui; jei nėra aiškūs tikslai, negriežta struktūra, stinga koordinavimo ir darbuotojai nežino, kaip užbaigti užduotis, lyderis turi pateikti aiškias instrukcijas; skatinti lyderių ir grupės narių bendradarbiavimą įpareigojant grupės lyderius formuoti tarpasmeninę darną pagrįstas grupes.

Siekiant mažinti socialinį dykinėjimą ir didinti įsipareigojimą, tikslinga: stebėti darbuotojų elgesnį ir laiku identifikuoti ketinimo keisti organizaciją pirmuosius požymius (t. y. didinti tiesioginių vadovų atsakomybes, susijusias su darbuotojų motyvacija, išitraukimu ir šių veiksmų stebėseną); vadovai turėtų siekti aktyviai identifikuoti darbuotojų pokyčio rizikas ir mažinti jas didindami pasitenkinimą teisingumu, įsipareigojimą organizacijai; turi būti stiprinamas darbuotojų pasitikėjimas tiesioginiais vadovais, leidžiantis identifikuoti darbuotojų problemas, pateikti galimus alternatyvius šių problemų sprendimus, kol darbuotojas galutinai apsispręs palikti organizaciją.

Pagrindiniai sprendimai, galintys stiprinti darbuotojų darną ir produktyvius santykius organizacijoje, apima: darbuotojus sutelkiančių renginių organizavimą, grupės pasiektą rezultatą traktuojant kaip kiekvieno jos nario individualią sėkmę; stiprių socialinių ryšių organizacijoje skatinimą, atsižvelgiant į darbuotojų interesus ir tarpusavio panašumus, kurie skatina pasitikėjimą, komunikaciją ir savitarpiskumą tarp panašių individų, tai lemia stiprius socialinius ryšius (t. y. ryšį), teigiamą požiūrį ir abipusę paramą.

Sprendimai, kuriais siekiama didinti darbuotojų norą siekti pačių geriausių rezultatų, apima: sudaryti sąlygas grupėms varžytis vienodu pajėgumų lygmeniu, t. y. atrinkti ir sudaryti lygiavertes grupes; darbuotojų atranka į grupes, kuriose svarbus komandinis darbas, turi būti pagrįsta atsižvelgiant į darbuotojų polinkį dirbti grupėse bei atkreipus dėmesį į tai, ar darbuotojui būdinga orientacija į laimėjimus. Tai ypač aktualu darbuotojų grupėms, kurių darbo rezultatai yra svarbiausias rodiklis organizacijos veiklai (pvz., pardavimas, gamyba ir pan.).