

Sales performance and goal orientations for task and social achievement

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Employers today seek better methods of discriminating between effective and ineffective employees. Achievement goal orientations, or why individuals engage in achievement tasks, seem a possible candidate for doing so. Research generally has examined three such goals: The desire to master a new task, the desire to perform better than others, and the desire to not fail. Achievement goals have successfully predicted many organizationally relevant outcomes such as performance. Past research conducted in work setting, has tended to focus on individuals' goals towards their work tasks. However, research in educational settings has recently shown that achievement goals apply to achievement in social interactions. This study examined the impact of both social and task related achievement goals on task performance and social performance. Thus, performance was conceptualized to include both the adaptation of new sales techniques and the development of social ties, in addition to task performance. One hundred volunteer insurance sales people completed structured questionnaires assessing their achievement goals and performance, using a rating scale format. Regression analysis was conducted for each of the three performance variables as dependent variables, and the three task related achievement goals and three social achievement goals as predictors. The results revealed that task performance was positively related to the desire to avoid failure on both the task and socially. Further, adopting new sales techniques was positively related to social mastery goals, and establishing social contacts was positively related to both task mastery and a desire to avoid social failure. The results indicate that achievement goals towards social interactions may provide a useful selection device. Implications will be discussed.

Key words: Achievement, Goals, Job, Performance, Social behavior

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