



White Paper Analysis

What One Million Tardies Reveal About Accountability

A Study of 1,000,000 Tardies Over a Three-Year Period

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What One Million Tardies Reveal About Accountability

This is the first in a series of reports that examine the results of over one million tardy slips issued at dozens of schools which utilized the rules-based software application system provided by eCampusUSA™. It assesses the impact of holding students immediately accountable for their behavior and, perhaps more importantly, whether that behavior can be influenced.

The Impact of Just Ten Minutes

One million tardies, each averaging ten minutes, add up to 166,667 hours of lost instruction. Considering an average of 875 hours of instruction in a school year, that equates to 190.5 years of lost instruction time.

This startling discovery was made while analyzing over one million tardies recorded with the eCampusUSA™ web application system of accountability. The impact might even be greater than calculated, because it does not take into consideration either the time lost due to class disruption or the time administration spends handling the problem. Still, administration will spend, at a minimum, 190.5 years addressing the issue of tardies. If that time could be reduced by half, almost 100 years can be saved.

How important is Accountability?

Almost all leadership experts agree that holding people accountable for their actions has an immediate impact on a group's ability to achieve its goals. However, a busy leader might feel that holding people accountable is a time-consuming activity and might lead to confrontations which he or she would rather avoid.

Holding people accountable is an important part of leadership instruction at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The Human Resource Practices Development Project Core Team Report in 1999 discusses the importance of holding people accountable. According to the report, accountability plays an important role in evaluating the leader's ability to accomplish projects.

The scoring is shown in the table below*:

Score	Type of Leader
-1	Does not hold others accountable for their actions.
0	This competency is not seen in this person.
1	Tells others what is expected in terms they can understand.
2	Notices factors that impede performance (i.e., lack of equipment, absence of training) and takes steps to address them.
3	Sets a high standard for the performance of others and defines it in terms of quantifiable, agreed upon measures.
4	Ensures that people are rewarded or held accountable when they either meet or fail to meet their expected level of performance.
5	Identifies people who are not meeting performance expectations and deals with them in a timely fashion.

*(Note: the data for this table has since been removed from MIT's website. The report in its entirety is still available.)

At MIT, students are shaped into future leaders in technology by being trained to run effective organizations. The university realizes that team member accountability is an important part of ensuring success.

The Challenge of Accountability

Despite the advantages of a system of accountability, the primary challenge in holding people accountable is conflict. If a person does not meet performance expectations, holding him or her accountable results in confrontation and dealing with the problem. This is a dilemma faced not only by business professionals, but also by teachers and school administrators.

Holding someone accountable becomes even more difficult when expected behavior is not specified or when consequences are not consistent. Any school seeking to improve its efficiency in reducing tardies must implement a system that consistently holds every student accountable with clearly specified consequences.

By having a well-structured system of accountability, the negative aspects of the confrontation are minimized. If done in the right manner, it can result in a positive, productive, and supportive situation.

Changing Behavior

The first step in changing behavior is for leadership to provide a systematic way to confront the problem and provide accountability. The second step is gathering historic information on a student's previous behavior trends, then analyzing and discussing underlying reasons for not meeting expectations. Both steps are essential to gaining common ground when meeting with the student.

If a face-to-face meeting proves necessary, asking the student "Why?" encourages him or her to think through the reasons and take responsibility for the behavior. This is necessary to achieve a willingness to work together to find a solution to real issues that a student might be facing.

Helping a tardy student understand the advantages of getting to school on time is an important part of the conversation, even if it simply conveys the message of, "If you get here on time, then you and I don't have to meet like this." There are also many other positive aspects for the welfare of the student that can be emphasized.

Summary of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed for 1,026,777 tardies in schools that had implemented the rules-based software application system provided by eCampusUSA™, which escalated consequences if the student failed to meet a school's expectations.

After examining the data for the three-year period, it was discovered that:

- The number of tardies is highest at the beginning of the school year.
- The tardy curve drops throughout the entire school year.
- There is a consistent 75-85% reduction in tardies when students are held accountable.
- A slight peak occurs after holiday breaks, but never achieves the level seen at the beginning of the year.
- The increase of tardies after a holiday break rapidly declines and quickly exceeds results for the first half of the year.

Conclusion

The most dramatic conclusion is that, if one million tardies are reduced by 75-85%, the net result is a minimum gain of approximately 125,000 hours of instruction. Divided by 875 hours of instruction in a typical school year, the result is 142.85 years of instruction.

Equally important to the 142.85 years of added instruction time provided by the reduction in tardies is the increase in saved administrative time. If 125,000 hours of administrative time at the rate of \$20

per hour was gained, it would result in a savings of \$2,500,000.00. Those 10-minute intervals for lateness add up. Even if the number is cut in half, it is still significant.

The gains from implementing a rules-based system of accountability reveal that student behavior is changed. It also shows that significant gains can be made in class instructional time and in reduction of administrative costs.