

# Consistent contributors = good team

Whether a group is dividing a restaurant bill or working on a shared budget, the more cooperative the group is, the more likely it can rise above a challenge. It helps a [leader](#) to understand, then, why some groups cooperate more than others.

In a new study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, two professors find that a “consistent contributor” makes all the difference.

“The consistent contributor looks for the collective good first and personal good second,” explains Keith Murnighan, a professor of risk management at the Kellogg School of Management.

The contributor initiates cooperation, leading others to follow suit.

“In a larger group, if someone consistently acts as a friend, it’s easier for others to act as friends and everyone benefits,” he says.

“In a budget meeting, for example, each person wants the most for his or her division or department,” says Murnighan. “One person asks, ‘What’s in the best interest of the organization?’ The marketing department head sees that R&D is on the brink of a major breakthrough and says, ‘We can make do with what we had last year, so let’s contribute all of the increase to R&D.’ ”

**Bottom line:** Encourage consistent contributors on your team—or add one: yourself.

— Adapted from “Consistent Contributors,” *Kellogg Insight*.