

Why close-knit teams don't always win

You've spent lots of time building team closeness and cohesiveness. You might've spent a lot of money on it, too. Maybe that was a bad idea. New findings suggest that close-knit teams are often *less* competitive than teams in which camaraderie is weak.

Sociologists at the University of California and elsewhere see some compelling reasons why friendly teams finish last:

- **Individual accountability** is stronger in a "loner" team. When a player's performance sags, he or she is more likely to say "It's my problem, and I'll fix it." That happens more quickly than in teams in which everybody has to talk about problems.
- **Arguments are less likely** to divide a "loner" team into rival camps. The battle plays out purely between the combatants. Sometimes, other teammates don't even care who wins.
- **Leadership resides** more in each player and less in the coach. That may be one reason why individual leaders are more likely to emerge in a "loner" team.

— Adapted from "Close Doesn't Always Count in Winning Games," Benedict Carey, *New York Times*.