

Enightful with Michigan State University

Case Study

Key Insights

- Enightful reduced bias in the grading process and improved reliability of student-reported data.
- Enightful increased equality in student workload and individual contributions to the project.
- 75% of students reported that Enightful contributed to their project success.

Introduction

As a seasoned instructor at Michigan State University's Broad College of Business, Tom DeWitt has always been a huge advocate for team-based learning. However, he acknowledged that team-based learning comes with many challenges, including inequity in workload and a lack of transparency in team dynamics.

Tom piloted Enightful with his Key Account Management (MKT 430) course to restore equity and fairness in grading. The platform facilitated the class project throughout the semester by providing the tools to break down tasks and ensure equal workload. Enightful also helped Tom monitor the teams with ease and use hard data to evaluate the students' performance. The adoption of Enightful

resulted in streamlined project planning and increased transparency between team members.

Background

Tom is a firm believer in learning through teaching and group engagement. He believes that overreliance on lectures to deliver content can take away students' motivation to learn. The science behind team-based learning is that students can learn from multiple sources, including each other. This breaks up the monotony of teaching and provides students a reason to come to class and stay engaged alongside their teammates.

"Research shows that people learn very little from simply listening," Tom explains. "The closer you get to teaching, the higher the retention rate for students."

In this course, his students formed semester-long teams with 4 or 5 team members with a written report and a presentation as the final deliverables.



Tom Dewitt, an instructor @ Michigan State University's Broad College of Business

The Challenge: Equity in Workload and Fairness in Grading

The biggest challenge for Tom when it came to implementing team-based learning had always been ensuring equity in workload distribution and fairness in his grading process. He has tried numerous strategies including using peer evaluations, but issues did not surface often or early enough.

“I don't want team projects to be about stress and frustration. That comes from inequity... it's people not turning things on time, not doing their work, and not doing a good job.”



Tom Dewitt
MSU Instructor

Challenge #1: Equity in workload

Getting the students to distribute work equally was challenging. Occasionally, in teams, one or two students would take on most of the work. Some students came into the course with the expectation of achieving an A, while others aimed to simply pass the class. “Early on, I want the students to be honest with each other about how much effort they want to put in the project and what grade they are satisfied with,” Tom says. “If a student satisfied with a C is working with people aiming for an A, there should be a system in place that allows for that.” Otherwise, the pressure would be put on students who work harder and have to negotiate for their grades. Assigning students more work than they intend to take on would increase the possibility of free-riding.¹

Challenge #2: Fairness in grading

Grading each student's contribution was tricky when group evaluation could only be based on anecdotal experiences that were completely subjective and filled with third-party bias. There was a lack of transparency in the process and instructors were often left in the dark regarding the power dynamics in the team. One common way for instructors to get a glimpse of students' interactions was via peer evaluations. “Nine out of ten teams would return their contribution form saying that everyone was doing the same amount of work,” says Tom. However, towards the end of the semester, issues of free-riding would surface, contradicting what was reflected in the contribution form.

“Some people may not do anything and the instructor would never know.”

- MSU Student

Why Tom Chose Enightful

When Tom first saw the Enightful platform, he was immediately drawn to the level of transparency the tool provided. The shared task board and workload distribution chart between students and instructors provided him with insights on student teams that were previously not available.

Enightful's tailored product for academia is what sets the platform apart from all the other tools on the market. It empowers instructors such as Tom to see how much effort each student contributed throughout the project and adjust their grades accordingly.

¹ Free-riding in a group project refers to one or more students not contributing their fair share of the work and relying on other members to get the work done for them.

How Enightful Was Used

Tom introduced Enightful to his class as an optional tool, however, he stressed the importance of documenting their process and quantifying work distribution throughout the project. If the team chose not to use Enightful, he would not be able to adjust grades and everyone will receive the same grade. These strategies helped students understand the benefits of using Enightful, rather than perceiving it as just 'another tool'.

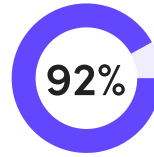
Tom divided his project into different benchmarks. For the first benchmark, Tom reminded the teams that had not created or assigned tasks on Enightful. In the future, Tom will be able to set automatic nudges to teams. Once the students got into the habit of using the platform, Tom would dedicate class time to planning and setting the tasks for the next benchmark. "It is important to use that class time to get [students] to set those tasks – it should not take more than 10 or 15 minutes," says Tom.

Tom also ensured there was an editor in every team - the role of the editor rotated every benchmark. Tasks must be ready and under review two days before the due date, allowing the editor to review and provide feedback before submissions were made to the learning management system (LMS). This system ensured that there was always a final person responsible for checking all the documents.

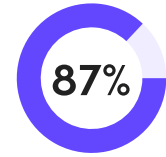
Tom also used Enightful as a way to communicate with his students - he required students to send him questions via the platform. He found this particularly useful when he needed to refer back to the conversations. Students also appreciated a faster response time from Tom when using the chat to ask questions.

Notable Outcomes

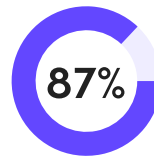
A feedback survey was conducted at the end of the semester. Of the 38 student responses,



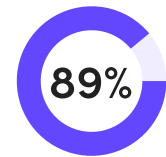
said it was useful for breaking down tasks



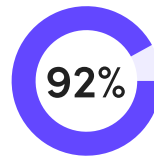
said it was useful in keeping track of their group project



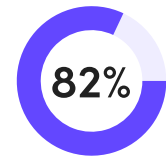
said it was easy to use



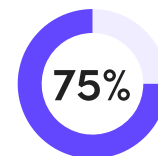
said it helped with coordinating group work



said it was helpful to assign tasks to one another



said it was useful breaking their project down into smaller tasks



would be disappointed if they could no longer use Enightful



I like that you could track contributions, it makes it extremely helpful in situations where full participation isn't there.

- MSU Student

The platform was easy to use, and students were able to achieve equity in workload distribution by discussing the amount of time and effort it takes to complete each task. They could also re-assign tasks if a student missed the task deadline or executed the tasks inadequately.

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Without Enightful, we would not have completed the project.

- MSU Student

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I cannot stress enough how helpful Enightful was for the class. It enabled me to have a more positive outlook on group work and made it less stressful.

- MSU Student

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The ability to assign tasks to each member ensured that each member of the team was carrying their weight.

- MSU Student

Since Enightful logged each team member's activity and contribution, students knew they would be rewarded for contributing more to the project. The stress of having grades dependent on other students was also minimized with each task being recorded and quantified.

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The workload index put pressure on people to up their game. They knew they were being held accountable at the task level, and they knew it was going to impact their grade. So it took subjectivity out of grading, and it took the unnecessary pressure off them.



Tom Dewitt
MSU Instructor

The data allowed Tom to make adjustments to students' grades to better reflect their contributions, turning complaints into appreciation and relief.

Overall, Enightful helped Tom streamline the grading process and saved him from team issues throughout the term with hard data and quantifiable analytics. Students also noted Enightful to be user-friendly, helpful with task breakdown, and improved group accountability.

To the Future

In the future, Tom plans to continue using Enightful for his undergraduate courses and make Enightful a requirement for group projects. He will also adopt Enightful for his Master's degree program with working professionals.

For more information on how Enightful can help you implement team-based learning, visit www.ensightful.us