Almost everyone has coworkers, but how much do they matter for individual work experiences and performance? Does their impact extend beyond that of bosses? Does the strength of their impact depend on whether they're antagonistic, obstructing devils or supportive, facilitating angels? A quantitative summary of more than 150 studies involving nearly 80,000 employees answers these questions.

First, coworkers matter greatly -- in many ways more so than supervisors or leaders -- and in terms of virtually every aspect of employees’ responses to their work: role perceptions, job attitudes, withdrawal (absenteeism / turnover), and performance. The strongest coworker effects are for how much employees come to understand the requirements of, and get deeply engaged in or reduce their effort toward, their tasks. The weakest effects are for "citizenship" behaviors and loyalty directed toward the organization as a whole.

Second, it is apparent that "bad is stronger than good" for particular kinds of coworker effects. The devils of coworker antagonism have the advantage in confusing colleagues about job priorities and in sparking targeted, retaliatory behaviors. Still, the angels of coworker support can outshine others by improving colleagues’ satisfaction and generating general, "pay it forward" actions for the entire organization.