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Humble leaders boost workplace results and other staff's potential

Dubbo Photo News, Dubbo



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EVER had a boss who seemed to always put the needs and requirements of staff, before their own ambition?

These leaders, new studies show, often get the best out of their workers, and are also the best leaders to bring out their staff's own potential.

There are many different types of workplace leaders, from those who prioritise the needs of team members and the organisation above their own, to authentic leaders who foster openness, trust, and transparency.

A recent study by the University of South Australia has highlighted the significant benefits of "humble leadership" in the workplace.

According to the study by UniSA's Dr Xiao Lin, humble leadership can effectively elevate the workplace status of employees, by boosting their sense of respect and prominence. It also leads to employees enhancing their own leadership potential by motivating them to lead and take charge.

Humble leadership is a workplace leadership behaviour characterised by leaders who view themselves accurately, appreciate the strengths and contributions of others and are open to feedback, even if it's critical.

Humble leaders practice "bottom-up leadership" that involves behaviours such as listening actively and valuing the input of employees, supporting professional devel-

opment of others and encouraging initiative within their workers.

Dr Lin, a member of UniSA's Centre for Workplace Excellence, is an expert in moral-based leadership styles and says understanding humble leadership is important in today's complex and competitive business environment.

"Understanding and implementing humble leadership is essential as it's been shown to positively impact individual and team outcomes in the workplace including work engagement, proactive behaviour, wellbeing and resilience and increased innovation, learning and performance," she says.

"Humble leadership is a powerful tool for lifting employees' status and unlocking their potential, leading to a more engaged, innovative and high-performing workplace. It can also help build a pool of effective leaders for the future. By fostering the leadership potential of employees, organisations can maintain competitive advantages," she added.

Humble leadership works when leaders provide 'status cues' to communicate their humility and approachability. This could include a leader demonstrating their own willingness to listen, learn and work with their employees instead of asserting dominance or superiority.

Another example is the practice

of 'role reversals' which allow employees to teach their leaders, driving them to exert more influence in the workplace.

Dr Lin says not all employees will respond to humble leadership behaviour in the same way and that it depends on their personal characteristics.

"Employees who focus on individual development, success and competition respond best to humble leadership behaviours. These are people who feel the need to be at the top, stand-out and be excellent employees so they have the chance to influence their leaders and become high-status team members," Dr Lin said.

"People who don't place as much value on their own development and success in the workplace are less likely to benefit from humble leadership behaviours. These sorts of employees will do whatever the leaders tell them. They have no interest in teaching their leaders or displaying their own strengths or contributions," she concluded.



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