

Your tools are as good as you think they are

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This is Prof. Dov Eden from Tel Aviv University. Credit: AFTAU

Your office or firm might not own -- or be able to afford -- the latest software or computers. But that may not impair the productivity of your workers, concludes a new Tel Aviv University study.

More important than the tools themselves is the belief in their effectiveness, says leading management specialist Prof. Dov Eden of TAU's Faculty of Management. His advice may spare a vulnerable company the costs of expensive technology upgrades in these tough economic times or help companies smoothly transition through mergers. His study will soon be published in the [Journal of Management](#).

The power of belief

For the study, Prof. Eden and his colleagues split a group of 240 physics students in half. Both groups were able to access the same online tools on the course Web site, but the students in the test group were convincingly told how useful the tools were for course success. These students significantly outperformed their peers on exams by about five points on a 100-point scale.

"Our emphasis on the superiority of the accompanying course Web site got students to believe in it and expect that it would work for them. By believing in the tools more, they used the tools more often and performed better in the course itself," says Prof. Eden.

The study adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that managers can strengthen their workers' belief in the utility of their tools to promote successful performance. "It was well documented with the M16 rifle in the Vietnam War," says Prof. Eden, who is now on sabbatical at Baruch College-CUNY in New York City. "If the M16 fails a soldier and the other soldiers in the unit find out about it, commanders see high rates of demoralization and poor combat performance in that unit. While offices and factories aren't exactly war zones, we've learned from this new study that the faith individuals have in their tools may be just as important as the tools themselves."

An easier "merge"

Prof. Eden notes that getting employees to believe in their resources can radically improve the transitions when companies go through mergers and acquisitions, especially when the different companies involved use different accounting and management systems.

"If employees believe they have competent managers supporting them, excellent equipment in their hands, and helpful staff to work with, their

performance at work will be energized," says Prof. Eden, who has carried out more than three decades of research on expectations and performance in the workplace. This particular study was done in collaboration with Prof. Yoav Ganzach, Rachel Flumin-Granat and Tal Zigman, all from the Faculty of [Management](#) at Tel Aviv University.

Source: Tel Aviv University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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