

Are charismatic leaders born or made?

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Are leaders successful because of their charisma? Or do they develop charisma by being good leaders?

That is the chicken-and-egg question addressed by Prasad Balkundi, assistant professor of organization and human resources in the University at Buffalo School of Management, in a recently published paper in [*The Journal of Applied Psychology*](#).

Balkundi and his co-authors studied how leaders interact with subordinates when they work with small groups and how the leader's interaction affects the group's performance.

Several prior studies have shown that the higher the charisma of the leader, the more productive the team. But the nature and factors that predict charisma remain unclear.

"Charismatic leaders are typically depicted as extraordinary individuals capable of inspiring their subordinates," Balkundi says. "However, our research shows that it is often the team members who attribute charisma to their leaders through their informal interactions with them."

The researchers found that team leaders can develop socially relevant aspects of their personalities through frequent interaction with their subordinates, such as the giving and receiving of advice. The leader's willingness to have [social interaction](#) with team members leads to positive experiences for the team, which, in turn, leads team members to see the leader as charismatic. This eventually increases team

performance.

"While it is true there is a link between charismatic leaders and positive team performance, our research shows that the leader's [charisma](#) may not be inherent, but rather a product of their social interactions," Balkundi says.

The practical implications of this research can be to encourage [leaders](#) to have more interaction with subordinates in order to build up their "social capital" and be seen as charismatic individuals.

Balkundi conducted his research with Martin Kilduff, Diageo Professor of Management Studies, Judge Business School, Cambridge University, and David A. Harrison, Charles and Elizabeth Prothro Regents Chair, McCombs School of Business, University of Texas at Austin.

Provided by University at Buffalo

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