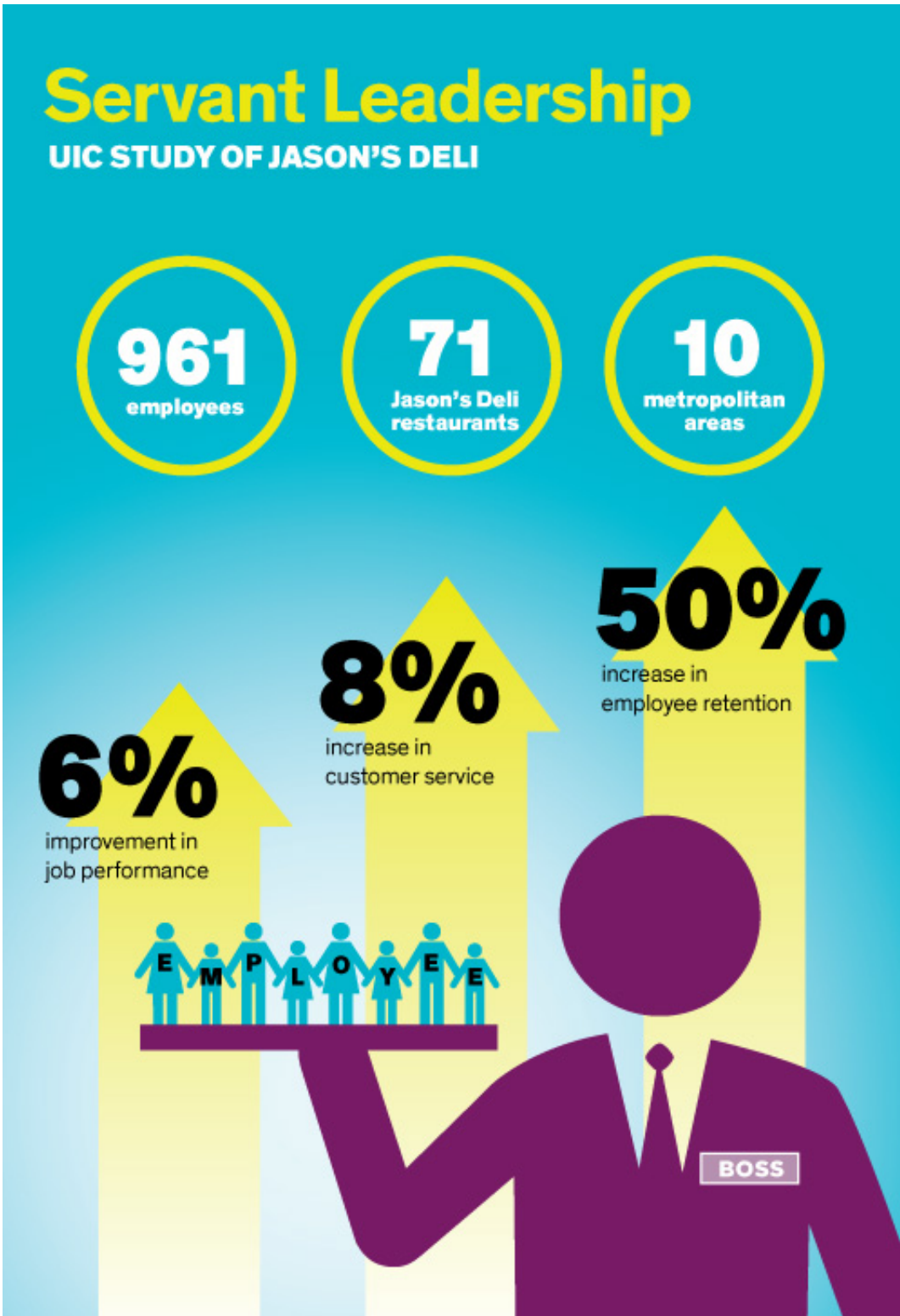


# **When bosses 'serve' their employees, everything improves, research says**

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UIC Business recently conducted a Servant Leadership study of 961 employees at 71 Jason's Deli restaurants in 10 metropolitan areas in the US. The research reveals when bosses act as servants to their employees, it's good for business.

Measureable increases in key business metrics like job performance (6%), customer service (8%) and employee retention (50%) were observed. Credit: UIC Business

When managers create a culture where employees know the boss puts employees' needs over his or her own, measureable improvements in customer satisfaction, higher job performance by employees, and lower turnover are the result, according to research by Robert Liden, Sandy Wayne, Chenwei Liao, and Jeremy Meuser, that has just been published in the *Academy of Management Journal*.

Employees feel the most valued, and in return give back to the company and its customers when their bosses create a [culture](#) of trust, caring, cooperation, fairness and empathy. According to Sandy Wayne one of the authors of the research, "The best business [leadership style](#) is far from, 'Do this. Don't do that.' A servant leader looks and sounds a lot more like, 'Is there anything I can do to help you?' Or, 'Let me help you....' Or, 'What do you need to...?' This approach helps employees reach their full potential."

The corresponding admiration employees have for bosses who care about them manifests itself in teamwork, loyalty and dedication to the business and its customers. The leadership style trickles down. Wayne said, "It's contagious. The employees see their leaders as role models and often mimic those qualities, creating a culture of servant leadership. This serving culture drives the effectiveness of the business as a whole."

The study was conducted at the Jason's Deli national restaurant chain, and the sample included:

- 961 employees

- 71 Jason's Deli restaurants
- 10 metropolitan areas.

The findings were based on data from surveys completed by managers, [employees](#), and customers, and data from corporate records."The University of Illinois at Chicago research project on Servant Leadership has provided a remarkable insight into the myriad of opportunities to enhance our greatest asset - our culture," Joe V. Tortorice, chairman and founder of Jason's Deli said. "The professional interpretation of the data has educated and inspired our executive team."

Professor Wayne says stores with servant leaders experienced the following positive outcomes:

- 6 percent higher job performance
- 8 percent more customer service behaviors
- 50 percent less likely to leave the company

(See infographic below)

The study suggests this is an increasingly relevant form of [leadership](#) that offers promise to the premise that if businesses lead by caring for their people, the profits will take care of themselves.

**More information:** Servant Leadership and Serving Culture: Influence on Individual and Unit Performance, [DOI: 10.5465/amj.2013.0034](https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2013.0034) .  
[amj.aom.org/content/57/5/1434](http://amj.aom.org/content/57/5/1434)

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