# New study delves into what makes a great leader

February 29 2016

According to a new study by Dina Krasikova, assistant professor of management at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), the key to a successful, creative leader is confidence. Krasikova, an expert in leadership, took a closer look at the modern workplace and noted that many factors lead to a productive, well-led team.

"Creativity is valued in many organizations, especially places like Google, which is all about creative products," Krasikova said. "In any type of organization, a leader is meant to come up with useful, novel ideas. Naturally, employees carry that responsibility as well."

Her top-tier research on leadership showed that ineffective or abusive leaders will create stressful situations for their employees by humiliating them in front of others, playing favorites or not giving their subordinates proper credit for their work.

"When you feel stressed, you feel helpless and your productivity and creativity is diminished," she said. "Many times this originates with the leader. For example, you might come to work unsure of what you're supposed to be doing because you get conflicting expectations from your direct supervisor or your boss. The solution is clear roles and communication."

Since her field, academia, is so focused on being creative with research, she and her colleagues Lei Huang of Auburn University and Dong Liu of the Georgia Institute of Technology, decided to explore what makes a

creative leader so effective.

"When leaders feel confident that they can produce creative outcomes, their subordinates become more creative," she said. "It's that simple. But how do you create that environment in the first place?"

Usually, creative leaders have the proper experience to fuel their ideas. As a result, they're more confident. Also, leaders become more confident in their creativity when it is recognized by upper-level management. But what surprised Krasikova is that a leader's creativity and confidence is contagious.

"A factor in this is the power of positive thinking," she said. "Leaders can imbue their subordinates with confidence and creativity just by setting an example themselves."

Krasikova also stressed the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationships between leaders and subordinates, with an emphasis on trust, loyalty and mutual professional respect.

"When a confident, creative leader also has good relationship with subordinates, it has even a stronger impact on subordinates' creativity," she said. "Creativity flourishes in supportive environments where leaders and subordinates have good interpersonal relationships. In such environments, subordinates will go an extra mile for a leader without expecting anything in return because they have a good relationship. They can depend on each other, because they trust each other."

However, when a leader is not confident or creative, there's a trickle-down effect and employees feel less confident in their own abilities to be creative.

Krasikova hopes that her research will help employers hire leaders not

just with proper experience, but who are also confident and have the ability to form strong, positive working relationships.

"Leadership is a very complex phenomenon," she said. "It's not about whether leaders are born or made, it's about how they use their skills once they get into that position."

**More information:** Lei Huang et al. I can do it, so can you: The role of leader creative self-efficacy in facilitating follower creativity, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (2016). DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2015.12.002

Provided by University of Texas at San Antonio