

Tap into positive energy for a better workday

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Credit: University of Michigan

It's no secret that feeling positive vibes from people you work with makes the job more enjoyable.

But a new University of Michigan study shows a leader's positive energy has a direct impact on productivity, absenteeism and commitment. People who [work](#) with positive energy leaders also do more work outside their official roles, and have more satisfying family lives.

Kim Cameron and Wayne Baker of U-M's Ross School of Business and colleagues Brad Owens of Brigham Young University and Dana Sumpter of California State University-Long Beach measured relational energy—the energy you get when you interact with [people](#) who make you feel good when you spend time with them. Through surveys and field studies they documented how this energy works and the effect it has on organizations.

They found that the more relational energy a leader exudes, the better employees on that team perform in terms of productivity, absenteeism, engagement and job retention.

Employees also are more likely to help each other and volunteer for tasks outside their job description.

"Managers spend so much time managing information and influence," said Cameron, the William Russell Kelly Professor of Management and Organizations. "But relational energy trumps both of those by a factor of four as an outcome determiner."

A related study by Cameron, Baker and their co-authors found that people who experience relational energy at work have better home lives as well.

"There's a spillover from relational energy at work to the home, said

Baker, the Robert P. Thome Professor of Management and Organizations and professor of sociology. "When we interact with people, some buoy us up and others bring us down. When you're buoyed up you tend to bring that home."

Relational energy isn't to be confused with charisma or personality, say Cameron and Baker, who are both core faculty members for the Center for Positive Organizations at the Ross School. Being an extrovert isn't necessary. It's simply the way people feel after you interact with them.

The research uncovers a cost-free way leaders can improve results and loyalty, and create a positive work environment. The key is finding the centers of energy in the company.

"Early in our research, we'd meet leaders who knew something was wrong, but they couldn't put their finger on it," Baker said. "Now they can do a relational energy survey, draw an energy map and show the bright parts of their organization and the black holes. It's hard to figure out what's going on until they see a map. It's like seeing an X-ray."

Cameron says there's a need for companies to recognize relational energy and find ways to make it work for them.

"Do people get promoted or hired because they're a positive energizer? No, it's not even on the agenda," Cameron said. "So here's a resource that's been ignored but is a major predictor of performance."

More information: Relational Energy at Work: Implications for Job Engagement and Job Performance, [DOI: 10.1037/apl0000032](https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000032) , [positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/wp- ... -job-performance.pdf](https://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Relational-Energy-at-Work-Implications-for-Job-Engagement-and-Job-Performance.pdf)

Provided by University of Michigan

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