

Intuitive, extraverted and spontaneous women are the best choice for leading creative people

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According to a new study from the University of Vaasa, Finland,

creative people want a transformational leader, especially one who uses motivation and intellectual stimulation. Other dimensions of transformational leadership include taking individuals' needs into account, visioning and modelling.

Companies need to look for and recruit people with creative characteristics, as they are also more transformational leaders.

The study shows that especially spontaneous women as well as intuitive and extraverted women and men are the most creative leaders. Intuitive and extraverted female leaders are the most transformational.

It is time to change our views on what good leaders are like. Engineer-type managers are also needed, but they lack the qualities required to lead innovators. This is one of the conclusions of Piia Uusi-Kakkuri's doctoral dissertation in the field of management.

"It is understandable that people who value facts and best practices are typically selected as leaders. They are logical and competent, which creates trust. However, it has been found that leaders have a major impact on the creativity of organisations and individuals, and unfortunately these task-oriented managers do not excel in this," says Uusi-Kakkuri, who will be defending her dissertation at the University of Vaasa on Friday.

Uusi-Kakkuri points out that creativity calls for the freedom and courage to experiment, present proposals and make mistakes. A leader who supports creativity must be surprising, inspiring and challenging in a positive way.

"It is easy to talk about the importance of innovation and say that you support creativity, when in truth most of us want to demonstrate our competence by spotting flaws in ideas, criticising and demanding better

justifications instead of being curious and working on ideas, even playing around with them, even if this never leads anywhere."

According to Uusi-Kakkuri, persistent innovators follow through their ideas, but without support they will do this as entrepreneurs or find a place where they receive support. Creative persons can also stay, but if their previous proposals have been shot down or, in the worst case, belittled, they will no longer share their ideas. Leaders should not lull themselves into thinking that recruiting [creative people](#) will guarantee success. They need support, and increasing the number of ideas will also increase the probability of finding the most profitable strokes of genius.

Creative people need motivation and intellectual stimulation

It is sometimes believed that creative people do not need [leadership](#) but freedom. The findings of the dissertation do not support this statement. Creative people want a transformational leader, especially one who uses motivation and intellectual stimulation. Other dimensions of transformational leadership include taking individuals' needs into account, visioning and modelling.

Finnish leaders still have much room for improvement in the area of intellectual stimulation, says Uusi-Kakkuri. It may be a priority on the R&D side, but creativity is needed everywhere. Anyone can have an [idea](#) that will prove instrumental in developing a new process, product or way of organising work.

"Leaders have to stop, question their own actions too and encourage others to do the same: are we tackling the real problem, is there another way to do this. They seek for ideas, do not criticize mistakes or differing opinions" Uusi-Kakkuri emphasises. Individuals to whom this type of

behaviour and creativity is most natural are not necessarily that interested in leadership when they notice that their abstract way of thinking and their habit of outlining opportunities and the big picture are not what is expected of leaders.

Where to find creative leaders?

What can companies do then? According to Uusi-Kakkuri, they need to look for and recruit people with creative characteristics, as they are also more transformational leaders. Personality analysis can be used as one means of identifying creativity.

The dissertation showed that especially spontaneous women as well as intuitive and extraverted women and men are the most creative leaders. Intuitive and extraverted female [leaders](#) are the most transformational.

"I do not believe that companies lack the means to identify the characteristics of candidates. The problem is the values of the business world: we must embrace many types of people if we want to increase innovation," Uusi-Kakkuri says. Of course, it is important that creative individuals appreciate their own insightful viewpoints and aim for leadership positions.

For individuals, Uusi-Kakkuri recommends leadership training and finding a creative mentor.

"If you know yourself to be more of a traditional, engineer-type leader, it is time to recognise how you react to [creativity](#) and ideas. When you begin to see your behaviour patterns, you can start to change them. It is understandable that inspiring creative employees and stimulating them intellectually is not easy when you are used to using your other strengths. The results show that it can help if you focus on developing your emotional intelligence. In other words, you can improve your leadership

by taking the feelings of others into consideration and truly caring about them."

The dissertation is based on seven articles. The studies are quantitative, and the material was collected from various sectors as well as students. The novelty value of the dissertation for scientific discussion lies in the perspective of creative subordinates, in particular, and in the finding that when creative leadership is studied, transformational leadership must be examined through various dimensions, focusing on further research of intellectual stimulation. Uusi-Kakkuri is especially interested in how [intellectual stimulation](#) occurs in different interactive situations.

More information: Transformational leadership and leading creativity. *Acta Wasaensia* 371. [www.uva.fi/materiaali/pdf/isbn ...78-952-476-749-1.pdf](http://www.uva.fi/materiaali/pdf/isbn...78-952-476-749-1.pdf)

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