

Bosses who put their followers first can boost their business

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Companies would do well to tailor training and recruitment measures to encourage managers who have empathy, integrity and are trustworthy—because they can improve productivity, according to new

research from the University of Exeter Business School.

Bosses who are so-called 'servant leaders' create a positive culture of trust and fairness in the workplace. In turn, they benefit through creating loyal and positive teams. This type of manager has [personal integrity](#) and is also keen to encourage staff development. The new research shows clear evidence of a link between this style of leadership and an increase in productivity.

Researchers examined 130 independent studies which had previously been published and used them to test a number of theories.

"Our work shows that, as we expected, a 'servant leader' style of management which is ethical, trustworthy and has a real interest in the wellbeing and development of staff brings about real positives within the workplace," said Dr. Allan Lee, the lead author of the report and Senior Lecturer in Management.

"Employees are more positive about their work and therefore also often feel empowered to become more creative. The result is a rise in productivity."

The analysis also found that this style of leadership often creates a positive and valued working relationship between the manager and employee.

"Given the results, we recommend organisations look to put 'servant leaders' into influential positions and that training programmes and selection processes are aligned to make this happen," added Dr. Lee.

The results also suggest that it would benefit organisations to create, or reinforce a culture that positively promotes trust, fairness, and high-quality working relationships between managers and staff.

The research was carried out by Dr. Lee, Dr. Joanne Lyubovnikova from Aston Business School, and Drs Amy Wei Tian and Caroline Knight from Curtin University, Perth. It is published in the peer-reviewed academic *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*.

More information: Allan Lee et al, Servant leadership: A meta-analytic examination of incremental contribution, moderation, and mediation, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1111/joop.12265](https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12265)

Provided by University of Exeter

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