

# Study shows supervisors who feel appreciated have better outlook at work

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'Tis the season to be grateful, even for your boss, according to a recent University of Central Florida study that suggests when supervisors feel appreciated, it gives them a boost of energy and optimism. In the end,

that's good for employees and the organization's bottom line.

"Based on theory, we knew feeling appreciated by another person sends a strong signal that you are positively regarded, and feelings of positive regard evoke a sense of vigor—or [high energy](#)," said Maureen Ambrose, the Gordon J. Barnett Professor of Business Ethics and a UCF Pegasus Professor. "This is important because research indicates when people possess higher levels of resources, in this case, [energy](#), they are better able to maintain a positive outlook and engage in positive behaviors at work. We know when supervisors have feelings of depletion—or low energy—negative things happen. For example, when bosses have low energy, they engage in more abusive supervision, creating worse workplaces for their employees,"

Ambrose teamed up with Clemson professor and UCF alumna Susan Sheridan to examine [feelings](#) of appreciation and emotional expressions in the workplace. Typically, research in this area has focused solely on the downward influence of supervisors on their employees.

"Our study also found that feeling appreciated by employees was positively related, via energy, to supervisors' psychological well-being. Psychological well-being can buffer individuals from the negative effects of job stress," Ambrose said.

Lessening job stress on employees can have a significant impact on a business's bottom line. The American Institute of Stress estimates that job stress costs U.S. industry more than \$300 billion a year in absenteeism, turnover, diminished productivity, and medical, legal and insurance costs.

The study asked supervisors to respond to surveys twice a day for 10 consecutive workdays. Each day participants recorded how much they felt appreciated by their subordinates, how energetic they felt and how it

affected them personally (sense of optimism and life satisfaction) and professionally (job satisfaction).

"On days supervisors felt more appreciated, they had more energy, and this translated into higher levels of optimism, [life satisfaction](#), [job satisfaction](#) and helping," says Sheridan, who earned her doctorate at UCF and is now an assistant professor of leadership at Clemson. "This was interesting because our field hasn't connected feeling appreciated to higher energy, and we typically look at how supervisors can boost the resources of subordinates—not the other way around."

The study found that the external validation from feeling appreciated is especially powerful for those supervisors who lack a strong sense of validation from within.

Ambrose and Sheridan say they hope this research sparks a deeper examination into the role of gratitude and appreciation in the workplace and how employees influence supervisors.

"Anyone who has managed people knows how influential the relationships with subordinates can be," Ambrose said. "Taking this upwards perspective may help us better understand supervisors' lived experiences at work and why they do the things they do."

Provided by University of Central Florida

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