

# Study shows benefit of employees managing themselves

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More U.S. companies could benefit from encouraging and developing self-leadership in employees, a concept that allows workers to manage themselves instead of relying on supervisors, according to a new study

from researchers at Florida Atlantic University.

Self-leadership involves employees influencing their own behaviors, thoughts and moods, making them less dependent on traditional leaders to complete goals and achieve peak performance in the workplace.

The study, published in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, found that self-leaders are more creative and perform better than other employees. Self-leaders are more confident in themselves, satisfied in their roles and committed to their employers.

The role self-leadership plays in the [work environment](#) could take on new significance considering the COVID-19 pandemic, which is forcing millions of U.S. office workers to telecommute and perform duties without frequent supervision from bosses. It has organically pushed much of the workforce into self-leadership situations where many excelled, creating new expectations among those employees. This is leading to a sharp rise in resignations as workers re-evaluate their jobs and find new positions offering more money, flexibility and satisfaction.

"Self-leaders tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy, which allows them to perform at higher levels," said Ethlyn A. Williams, Ph.D., an associate professor in FAU's College of Business. "They are confident in their abilities and might be willing to face risks as they exhibit flexibility and look for creative solutions."

Williams worked on the study with fellow FAU professors Michael B. Harari, Ph.D., Stephanie L. Castro, Ph.D., and Katarina K. Brant, Ph.D.

People who are highly conscientious, extraverted and open to new experiences are more likely to be self-leaders. The research suggests that organizations might be more successful by recognizing the potential within employees and providing training to enhance self-leadership

tendencies that might already exist.

"People who self-lead believe in themselves and set their own goals," Harari said. "Organizations might be able to achieve greater success by allowing employees to lead themselves rather than relying on leadership from the top down."

In conducting their study, the FAU researchers reviewed and synthesized more than 20 years of research to determine the importance of self-leadership in organizations.

"The results of any one study are not necessarily reliable," Harari said. "By combining findings across a large number of studies, we were able to arrive at more definitive conclusions."

The professors said examples of self-leadership are apparent in athletes and celebrities, many of whom intentionally create positive expectations and push themselves.

"Elon Musk of SpaceX, Jeff Bezos of Amazon and Reed Hastings of Netflix are great examples of creative leaders who rose to the top, initiating and directing their own actions in the pursuit of excellence," Williams said.

**More information:** Michael B. Harari et al, Self-leadership: A meta-analysis of over two decades of research, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/joop.12365](https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12365)

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