Leadership online: Charisma matters most in video communication

August 9 2022

Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Managers need to make a consistent impression in order to motivate and inspire people, and that applies even more to video communication than to other digital channels. That is the result of a study by researchers at

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). They investigated the influence that charismatic leadership tactics used in text, audio and video communication channels have on employee performance. They focused on mobile work and the gig economy, in which jobs are flexibly assigned to freelancers via online platforms. The results of the study have been published in *The Leadership Quarterly*.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people are working partly or entirely from home or in mobile work arrangements. At the same time, the so-called gig economy is growing. It involves the flexible assignment of short-term work to freelancers or part-time, low-wage staff via online platforms. Both trends are accelerating the digitalization of work. However, compared to face-to-face conversation between people in the same place, communication through digital channels offers fewer opportunities to motivate people and show charisma. This presents new challenges for managers. The impact of charismatic leadership tactics (CLTs) and the choice of communications channel (text, audio or video) on staff performance is the subject of a study by Petra Nieken, professor of human resource management at the Institute of Management at KIT.

Charismatic leadership tactics can be learned and objectively observed

A charismatic leadership style can be learned; researchers speak of charismatic leadership tactics, which include verbal, paraverbal and non-verbal means such as metaphors, anecdotes, contrasts, rhetorical questions, pitch and tone of voice, and gestures. CLTs can be objectively observed and measured. They can be selectively changed in randomized controlled trials.

"Managers can use the entire range of CLTs in face-to-face meetings.

Digital communication reduces the opportunities to signal charisma," says Nieken. "Depending on the communication channel, visual and/or acoustic cues can be missing. The question is whether people's performance suffers as a result or if they adjust their expectations to the selected channel."

In the first part of her study, Nieken conducted a field test with text, audio and video communication channels in which a task description was presented neutrally in one case and with the use of as many CLTs as possible in the other. In the neutral case, video messages led to lower performance than did audio and text messages. In contrast, there were no significant differences in performance in the CLT case.

"The results show a positive correlation between video communication and charismatic communication; the charismatic video led to better performance than the neutral video," explains Nieken. "So we can conclude that it's most important for managers to convey a consistent impression when they use the video channel."

Traditional charisma questionnaires do not predict staff performance

In the second part of her study, Nieken had the different cases assessed with traditional questionnaires like the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and compared the results with those from the first part. Charisma noted in the questionnaires correlated with the use of CLTs but not with staff performance. "Traditional questionnaires like the MLQ are not suitable for predicting how people will perform in mobile work situations, working from home or in the gig economy," concludes Nieken.

More information: Petra Nieken, Charisma in the gig economy: The

impact of digital leadership and communication channels on performance, *The Leadership Quarterly* (2022). DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101631

Provided by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Citation: Leadership online: Charisma matters most in video communication (2022, August 9) retrieved 16 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2022-08-leadership-online-charisma-video.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.