

# Humble leaders boost employees' workplace status and leadership potential, finds study

May 27 2024, by Melissa Keogh

---



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

There are many different types of workplace leaders, from those who prioritize the needs of team members and the organization above their own, to authentic leaders who foster openness, trust and transparency.

A recent [study](#) by the University of South Australia published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* has highlighted the significant benefits of humble leadership in the [workplace](#).

According to the study by UniSA's Dr. Xiao Lin, humble leadership can effectively elevate the workplace status of employees by boosting their sense of respect and prominence. It also leads to employees enhancing their own leadership potential by motivating them to lead and take charge.

Humble leadership is a workplace leadership behavior characterized by leaders who view themselves accurately, appreciate the strengths and contributions of others and are open to feedback, even if it's critical.

Humble leaders practice "bottom-up leadership" that involves behaviors such as listening actively and valuing the input of employees, supporting professional development of others and encouraging initiative within their workers.

Dr. Lin, a member of UniSA's Center for Workplace Excellence, is an expert in moral-based leadership styles and says understanding humble leadership is important in today's complex and competitive business environment.

"Understanding and implementing humble leadership is essential as it's been shown to positively impact individual and team outcomes in the workplace including [work engagement](#), proactive behavior, well-being and resilience and increased innovation, learning and performance," she says.

"Humble leadership is a powerful tool for lifting employees' status and unlocking their potential, leading to a more engaged, innovative and high-performing workplace. It can also help build a pool of effective leaders

for the future. By fostering the leadership potential of employees, organizations can maintain competitive advantages."

Humble leadership works when leaders provide "status cues" to communicate their humility and approachability. This could include a leader demonstrating their own willingness to listen, learn and work with their employees instead of asserting dominance or superiority.

Another example is the practice of "role reversals," which allow employees to teach their leaders, driving them to exert more influence in the workplace.

Dr. Lin says not all employees will respond to humble leadership behavior in the same way and that it depends on their personal characteristics.

"Employees who focus on individual development, success and competition respond best to humble leadership behaviors. These are people who feel the need to be at the top, stand out and be excellent employees so they have the chance to influence their leaders and become high-status team members," she says.

"People who don't place as much value on their own development and success in the workplace are less likely to benefit from humble [leadership](#) behaviors. These sorts of employees will do whatever the leaders tell them. They have no interest in teaching their leaders or displaying their own strengths or contributions."

**More information:** Xiaoshuang Lin et al, How do humble leaders unleash followers' leadership potential? The roles of workplace status and individualistic orientation, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*

(2024). [DOI: 10.1002/job.2793](https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2793)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Humble leaders boost employees' workplace status and leadership potential, finds study (2024, May 27) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-05-humble-leaders-boost-employees-workplace.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.