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New report reveals best techniques to lead and motivate people in a remote workplace

Since the 2020 covid pandemic, most people have changed how and where they work, with up to thirty percent of employees preferring to work from home or in locations away from the traditional office. This has had a significant flow-on effect to the way businesses communicate, and particularly, how to lead and motivate individuals and teams remotely. A new study reveals the best techniques for effective leadership in this new digital landscape.

In Petra Nieken's (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany) new report for IZA World of Labor ('**Digital Leadership: Motivating Online Workers**' 07.09.22), research shows over thirty percent of workers would prefer to work full-time from home, and over forty percent prefer to work remotely up to four days a week. Without in-person contact between employees and managers, is it still effective to use traditional leadership techniques to build trust and motivate teams?

In Nieken's report, the short answer is yes. Surprisingly, despite limited or no visual information available to remote workers in video, audio and text communications, charismatic rhetorical leadership techniques – such as aspirational references, and use of the word 'us' – are still found to increase output in teams, when compared with 'neutral' communications, where none of these techniques are used.

The report also shows that in remote settings, these charismatic techniques do not work on their own. One study revealed that when leaders used rhetorical techniques without specifying a goal or vision, the workers output reduced. Using the 'full suite' of both charismatic techniques and goal setting together, resulted in the best results.

It is also possible to hinder the performance of individuals and teams when charismatic rhetorical techniques are not harmonious with non-verbal techniques – such as tone of voice, body language and facial expression. This can result in communication 'backfiring' and is particularly important to be aware of when sharing complex information using non-visual types of communication such as audio and text message.

The type of work also matters when using specific leadership techniques in a remote setting. Incentive rewards – such as rates and bonus payments – work well for simple environments where input or output are easily measured, but this style is less motivating for complex work that is difficult to measure.

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The report shows that across all studies, regardless of the style of leadership employed, the delivered quality of work never wavered. This is a promising indication for the future of remote work, and shows that even in an anonymous gig market, trust between employees and managers can be established, and a high quality of work is maintained.

The full report will be available [here](#) from Wednesday 7th September 2022, and on the IZA World of Labor website www.iza.org.

Media enquiries and further information: the author of this report is available for interview, please contact jobennettpr@gmail.com +44 7457402909

Notes for editors

IZA World of Labor (<http://wol.iza.org>) is a global, freely available online resource that provides policy makers, academics, journalists, and researchers, with clear, concise, and evidence-based knowledge on labor economics issues worldwide. The site offers relevant and succinct information on topics including diversity, migration, minimum wage, youth unemployment, employment protection, development, education, gender balance, labor mobility and flexibility among others.

Established in 1998, the Institute of Labor Economics (www.iza.org) is an independent economic research institute focused on the analysis of global labor markets. Based in Bonn, it operates an international network of about 1,500 economists and researchers spanning more than 45 countries.

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