

High-status individuals are only influential if they have a mainstream ideology

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High-status political figures and senior executives are only influential if their own ideologies are seen as mainstream and not too extreme, finds new research from ESMT Berlin (<https://esmt.berlin/>).

Those with high-status in an organisation have greater influence, making it easier for them to get their ideas and initiatives adopted by the organisation. Their views often carry greater weight due to the greater attention paid to them, the higher likelihood they are seen in a positive light, and the strong support networks around their ideas.

However, new research from ESMT Berlin shows that, despite a political figure or executive in a company having high-status in their networks, they may struggle to persuade and influence others, depending on their ideologies - a set of beliefs associated with a person or group. Gianluca Carnabuci, Professor of Organisational Behaviour, and colleagues, studied whether high-status individuals still hold influence if their ideologies do not follow the mainstream of the organisation.

They followed 873 legislators in the House for Representatives in the U.S. Congress, and traced their status, ideology, and influence over eight consecutive congresses. Legislators' influence was based on their ability to get initiatives adopted, with greatest influence indicated by bills which passed through most of the stages in the legislative process, eventually becoming law.

They found that the effect of status is entirely dependent on the individual's ideology. Having high-status is not enough for them to have influence; their ideology must also fit within the organisation's mainstream.

Prof. Carnabuci says,

"Although this study examines the influence of status within a political organisation, our findings can be applied to business organisations too. At a fundamental level, ideology operates similarly in political and business organisations: it provides a set of values and beliefs that shape how organisational members make sense of organisational life and how they evaluate each other's opinions, ideas, and initiatives."

By illustrating the impact of ideology on the effect of status, this research provides a more culturally informed perspective of status in organisations. The findings suggest that high-status individuals might need to adapt their ideologies to fit the mainstream if they want to retain influence in their organisation.

These findings were published in the journal Organisation Studies.

For more information, a copy of the research paper, or to speak with Prof. Carnabuci, please contact Kyle Grizzell on 07904706136 or kyle@bluesky-pr.com