

Senior leaders fail to connect useful workers together

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Powerful bosses can be “blind” to gaps in workplace connections between employees, finds new research by academics in the UK, the US and Germany.

The research, just published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, found that feelings of power reduces the ability to perceive opportunities to link people who are not already connected.

Paradoxically, such powerful people are actually more willing to “broker” such connections if made aware that gaps exist. The gulf revealed by the findings suggests that leaders are not taking full advantage of the connecting opportunity their powerful position presents, and are failing to make connections that can improve the flow of ideas and information, thus helping firms.

Conversely, people who feel less powerful tend to recognise the gaps in organisational networks, but may be less willing to take action because this might be seen as overstepping their role’s boundaries.

From a practical standpoint, therefore, powerful individuals within companies may need to rely on less senior staff to point them to gaps in the network of work relations, and these less powerful individuals may need to prompt their bosses to do introductions and close those gaps, or provide the less powerful individuals the freedom to serve as brokers themselves.

The paper, based on almost 500 U.S. and UK-based workers, is co-authored by Blaine Landis and Martin Kilduff of UCL School of Management, Jochen Menges of Cambridge Judge Business School and WHU-Otto Beisheim School of Management, and Gavin Kilduff of New York University.

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