HOW CAN WE INCREASE EMPLOYEES’ DESIRE TO WORK BEYOND FORMAL EXPECTATIONS?
THE EFFECTS OF SUPERVISOR TRUSTWORTHINESS DIMENSIONS

With labor shortages looming due to retiring baby-boomers, organizations will become increasingly dependent upon the efforts, productivity, and loyalty of the new generation of employees. Immediate supervisors can significantly shape their subordinates’ work experience and subsequent work-related intentions, suggesting these supervisors would play a pivotal role in getting the most out of these young employees. Based on an integration of leader-member exchange and organizational trust theories, a policy-capturing approach was used to determine the relative importance of different dimensions of supervisor trustworthiness on young subordinates’ intentions to provide the supervisor with work efforts that transcend formal expectations. Participants with work experience took on the role of employees who had recently begun to work for a new supervisor. They were asked to rate their willingness to work beyond expectations for this supervisor after being presented with scenarios in which three dimensions of supervisor trustworthiness were experimentally manipulated. These three dimensions included the supervisor’s benevolence toward the participant, the supervisor’s job-relevant ability (e.g., problem-solving ability, industry and organizational knowledge), and the supervisor’s benevolence toward other similar subordinates. Results suggest that being treated with benevolence is far more important to young subordinates in terms of their desire to work harder for their supervisor compared to having a very bright and knowledgeable boss or one who seems to be generally benevolent with other subordinates. Thus, in terms of increasing subordinates’ desire to provide their boss with work efforts that transcend formal work expectations, people in supervisory positions should not count on their positive reputations with other subordinates or on their impressive task-related abilities and knowledge. They should take the time to show each subordinate that they care about and try to fulfill their work-related needs and interests. Theoretically, these findings cast new light on the types of leader behaviours that are most salient to the social exchange between leaders and their subordinates.