IU researchers explore managing star performers

From IDS reports

Herman Aguinis, the John F. Mee chair of management and professor of organizational behavior and human resources in the Kelley School of Business, discussed how companies can effectively produce and manage star performers in the journal Organizational Dynamics, according to an IU press release.

"Star performers produce more than other individuals, help increase the productivity of those around them and have an important impact on the performance of their organizations as a whole," Aguinis wrote with Kyle Bradley, a doctoral candidate at the business school, in their article, "The Secret Sauce for Organizational Success: Managing and Producing Star Performers."

In a series of studies conducted during the past five years involving more than 600,000 people including scientists, entertainers, politicians and athletes, Aguinis and his team found the performance of individuals does not follow a normal distribution, which usually follows a characteristic bell curve showing the average and middle numbers as equal.

Many top organizations have unrealistically forced managers to assign a set percentage of their people to certain performance measures in order to create a normal distribution.

The practice restricts who can succeed and clusters the majority of people around the center of the distribution.

"Rather than a normal distribution, our research suggests that performance usually follows a power law distribution," Aguinis and Bradley said in the article. "Under this type of distribution, we expect to see many more star performers."

For example, in 2012...