

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

directorship — is that it's all about who you know. But new research from Michigan Ross Professor Jim Westphal shows that it's more about how you think about and interact with

Mar. 16, 2015



A common thought on how to land a big-time appointment — like a corporate board directorship — is that it's all about who you know. But new research from [Michigan Ross Professor Jim Westphal](#) shows that it's more about how you think about and interact with who you know.

One of the toughest hurdles to gaining influence with high-status colleagues is what's known as the ingratiation's dilemma. High-status people are on alert for suck-ups and insincere flattery.

Westphal's research with PhD student Guy Shani reveals that people who take a

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

there wasn't a good explanation for how people overcame it," says Westphal, Robert G. Rodkey Collegiate Professor of Business Administration and professor of strategy. "It really makes it seem like the successful ones are strategic. They reflect on common characteristics, and they're less likely to dwell on things they don't have in common prior to interacting with high-status colleagues."

Their paper, "Psyched-up to Suck-up: Self-Regulated Cognition, Interpersonal Influence, and Recommendations for Board Appointments in the Corporate Elite," will be published in a future edition of the *Academy of Management Journal*.

Westphal and Shani surveyed corporate directors before and after social interactions, measuring how much they thought about things they had in common with colleagues, while avoiding thoughts about differences, before and after meeting with them.

The people who were successful getting board appointments, and getting on influential committees like compensation committees, were more likely to engage in this "self-regulated social cognition" before meeting with a high-status colleague.

That resulted in a spike of liking and admiration for high-status colleagues just before meetings. What's more, the high-status colleagues rated them high in likeability, indicating they never felt the conversations were insincere.

It's one of the first studies to look at change in social cognitions over time, and how it affects perceptions of other people before and after meetings.

"This helps explain successful social influence, and how some people are able to get onto boards and the most influential committees," Westphal says.

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us