How Should We Sell Ideas to the Leader: Does Framing Tactics Matter?

Abstract

The potential value of employee voice largely depends on whether they can draw the manager's attention. However, it is not easy to persuade the leader to endorse a challenging idea. In this study, we emphasize the agency of employees and explore how and when the ways of providing voice are associated with leader endorsement. Drawn from the framing literature and cognition in persuasion theory, we theorize that both form of voice and frame valence interact with each other to facilitate leader endorsement through perceived voice attractiveness. Furthermore, we demonstrate when these tactics are more effective by examining the moderating role of employee organizational status. Two studies were conducted to test those ideas: results from a company’s archival data suggested that promotive voices were more likely to be endorsed by managers when they are loss-framed, while prohibitive voices were more likely to be endorsed by managers when they were gain-framed; results from an issue-based survey data found that voice attractiveness mediated the interactive effect of form of voice and frame valence on voice endorsement and this indirect relationship was contingent on the level of employee organizational status. The implications for future voice research will be discussed.
Short Bio

Jian Liang is a management professor at the Advance Institute of Business, Tongji University. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Management at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His research focuses on employee voice proactivity, leadership effectiveness, social exchange in organizations and business ethics. His articles have appeared in the Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Management and Organization Review and other Chinese management Journals.