

How Agent Placement Can Influence Perceived Boss/Co-worker Agreement in a Simulated Work Environment

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Abstract: Interpersonal distance, the physical distance between people while they interact, is known to influence attitudes and other social dynamics. For example, merely sitting closer to a person who is presenting information can increase the persuasive power of that speaker. In the current work, we investigate how interpersonal distance will influence perceived agreement among employees in an office setting. Our participants read a passage that asked them to imagine working for an advertising firm and being in a meeting about employee layoffs with a boss. After looking at a picture of an employee seating arrangement that was close, medium, or far from a boss during the meeting, participants were asked to estimate how far the chairs were from the boss and to judge how much agreement they felt during the meeting. On average, participants indicated that they felt less agreement with bosses when interpersonal distance was high (versus medium or low). The results, which revealed that increased physical distance is associated with greater attitude "distance", have implications for the design and use of applications for virtual meetings and more generally, social interactions in virtual environments.