

You are what you 'digitally' eat — at work and in life | NCET Biz Tips

Mikalee Byerman |

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We've all heard the phrase “you are what you eat” — suggesting our bodies somehow physically manifest as reflections of our diet. Healthy people, the thinking goes, consume healthy things.

I'm here to suggest a corollary to that argument. You are what you “digitally” eat. Gross? Nah — let me explain.

We spend a metric ton of time online — six hours per day on average, more than one-third of our waking hours searching, “liking” and reading. And when that time is full of negativity and despair — well, you can guess the outcome, right?



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Provided by NCET

Now let's talk about work productivity. University of **Warwick** research links happiness to a 12 percent spike in productivity; unhappy workers proved 10 percent less productive. Psychologist Shawn Achor suggests

positivity is leading to quantifiable spikes in creativity and problem-solving. And additional research reveals happy workers are more effective collaborators.

Putting it all together: When we consume negativity, we become negative. When we consume positivity, we become not only happier, but also better employees.

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Ready for that digital diet yet? But where do we shop, and what's the e-version of kale we should throw in our virtual baskets?

I work for a creative agency, and there we are challenged with developing new initiatives outside of "traditional" ad agency work. Last year, we started contemplating this simple fact: The online experience is overwhelmingly negative.

So we created the solution, developing a website dedicated to local positive stories called JustThePositive.com. I'm responsible for generating social media content, and here's an unexpected side effect: Since I've been seeking positive stories to post, I see less negativity in my newsfeed. Yes, Facebook's algorithm is actually adapting to my searches for positivity. The Facebook bots are serving up more frequent bites of positivity because I'm proactively seeking them!

Here's the recipe:

- **Seek positivity online.** Spend more time perusing and drawing feel-good inspiration from your favorite causes, like the SPCA's Facebook page or Eddy House's inspirational posts or whatever fits your passion.
- **Share the positive.** When you see a friend tell an amazing story, or you swoon over a scenic photo, or you find a puppy that needs adopting, share it!
- **Hide negativity.** If friends are bringing you down, unfollow them.
- **Be the positive.** Do good in our community and formulate ways to help others. And when you do, don't forget to tell us about it at Just the Positive so we can tell our readers!

We know intuitively that positivity is good, but we likely seldom think about how we can train online properties to deliver positivity to us. Put yourself on

a digital detox: Try it for a few weeks, watch your newsfeed adapt, feel happier and become a better employee. Plus it's far more appetizing than kale smoothies. So I've been told.

Mikalee Byerman is VP of strategy for the Estipona Group, a creative agency that has been building brands and buzz since 1993. She's also VP of communications for NCET, a member-supported nonprofit which produces educational and networking events to help people explore business and technology. And, full disclosure: She loves kale.

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