

# By the letter

*People follow your words, not actions*

**T**URNING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM on its head, a study has found that you can attract more followers if you stress what you like, not what you do. In other words, people want to like what others like, but they want to have or do what others do not have or do, the results said.

For example, when people mentally share an action, such as watching a friend eat a bowl of oatmeal over breakfast, they feel in a way that they ate the oatmeal too, so they seek to enrich their own experience by choosing something that is different, such as an omelette. But when people mentally share another person's preference, such as liking oatmeal more than omelette, they adopt the others preference as their own and say they like oatmeal more than omelette.

"The tendency to conform is pervasive and rooted in human psychology," said one of the researchers, Ayelet Fishbach, professor at University of Chicago Booth School of Business in the US.



"When people conform, they conform to what others like and to others attitudes. But in terms of what they do, they want to be different. So if you want to persuade people, you should talk about liking, not about having."

For the study, the researchers designed a series of experiments involving everyday activities such as choosing a type of chew-

ing gum, shopping for groceries, picking a favourite mug design and watching a pet video on YouTube. The researchers found that people conform to others' preferences at last partially because they adopt others judgments as their own.

The research has implications for online shopping, social media marketing and political campaigns. Market-

ers, for example, could collect "likes" from Facebook users, rather than collecting information on what users buy, eat or own. Likewise, they could present products as "everyone likes it," rather than "everyone buys it."

The study will be published in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. IANS

## Take five

*Why office naps can boost productivity*



**EMPLOYEES MUST BE** allowed to take short naps during office hours as this will boost productivity and generate more revenue for the company, a study says. Short naps are an effective strategy to counteract impulsive behaviour and boost tolerance for frustration at work, researchers from the University of Michigan found.

"Napping may be a beneficial intervention for individuals who are required to stay awake for long period of time by enhancing the ability to persevere through difficult or frustrating tasks," said researcher Jennifer Goldschmied, doctoral student in the department of psychology.

Employers may find their employees more productive when the workplace has nap pods or extended break times are offered.

The researchers examined

how a brief nap affected adults' emotional control. The 40 participants, ages 18-50, maintained a consistent sleep schedule for three nights prior to the test.

They completed tasks on computers and answered questions about sleepiness, mood and impulsivity. They were randomly assigned to a 60-minute nap opportunity or no-nap period that involved watching a nature video.

Those who napped spent more time trying to solve a task and reported less impulsivity than the non-nappers who were less willing to endure frustration in order to complete it. The results indicate that staying awake for an extended period of time hinders people from controlling negative emotional responses.

The results appeared online in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*. IANS

## ALIGN YOUR LIFE

### *Traditions versus Feng Shui*

**A**s I travel across the world I see many different traditions people follow before moving into a home or selecting a plot of land. I am certain that these traditions cannot be classified as Feng Shui, because the roots are based in cultural beliefs without a scientific basis.

I am currently in Thailand wrapping up a project and realised that no house or office is considered good in this country, unless one has an altar with a statue of Buddha. In spite of implementing Feng Shui changes my client was keen that I suggest a good place for the statue based on Feng Shui calculations. The belief is that if the Buddha is placed in a good direction it will bring luck to the family. This belief is deeply rooted in the mindset here and is reflected in every hotel, office or home you visit. This tradition reminds me of an ancient Chinese belief that if your ancestors are buried in a good location, future generations will prosper.

We see something similar in India where people want the place of worship to be placed in a good direction. In India we also have Vaastu, an ancient science of architecture and construction. On the surface Vaastu and Feng Shui look similar, but scratch the surface and you have two completely different sciences at hand. Vaastu is followed by applying certain fixed principles, which are based on the notion that the rising sun brings in good energy and one must be able to tap into it. There are no cures recommended in Vaastu as opposed to Feng Shui as the principles are quite rigid.

On the other hand Feng Shui is a Chinese science of energy management that follows a more personalised approach. While harnessing and balancing energy in a property Feng Shui takes into consideration dates of births of all residing members, compass orientation, year of construction, outside influences and changing aspect of time. All these factors play a major role in dictating changes to a client.

In the UAE I have had a chance of interacting with many clients and one tradition that is followed here while buying a piece of land is to offer something to the land before starting work on the foundation, while in many Asian countries a prayer or a ritual is performed before working on a piece of land.

It is important to understand that all these beliefs are cultural and hold no significance in Flying Star Feng Shui. However these have a great impact psychologically and people involved in the project feel a sense of peace when traditions are followed. But to start believing that it is part of Feng Shui is a pure myth.

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