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## Hungry for Success

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*It's not enough to feed your business. To truly prosper, you must also feed yourself, as healthy business owners have more energy, more stamina and more strength for building healthy bottom lines. In part three of our small business fitness guide, we offer tips for turning sustenance into success.*

By: MATT ALDERTON

When Jill Cartwright left her 12-year marketing career last year in order to start her own business, Boston-based [Go GaGa](#), she had her reasons. Like most entrepreneurs, she was attracted to the potential fortune, freedom and flexibility that business ownership offers. Equally important, though, was her concern for her own health, which was souring at the hands of corporate America.



Photo by: iStockphoto

"After working 80-hour weeks working for ad agencies and Fortune 500 companies, I launched a company last year that designs and manufactures ergonomically safe and stylish bags," Cartwright says. "Improving my health through diet and work-life balance was one of the biggest drivers for this change, and it's proven to be one of the best changes I've made in my life."

Of course, running your own business isn't easy, and sometimes Cartwright admittedly slips back into her old routine, which involves a manic day that's full of work and almost entirely absent of meals and sleep. Still, she's made nutrition a priority, and she's more productive, more effective and more successful because of it.

"Since I don't have a business partner or employees, if there's no me, there's no Go GaGa," Cartwright says. "I've had to make my health a priority in order to sustain my business."

### Good for Your Body, Good for Your Business

Like Cartwright, small business owners can use nutrition to better both their bodies and their businesses, according to pharmacist and small business nutrition coach George Tohme, author of [Lifestyle Makeover for Diabetics](#).

"For small business owners and their staff, having good health means profitability and productivity," he says, pointing out that healthy small business owners have more energy, more stamina and more focus, which gives them an edge over sluggish, run-down competitors.

Good nutrition does more than increase business owners' energy, however. It also cuts their costs, as healthy owners and employees cost significantly less to insure. "Study after study confirms the fact that businesses can slash their health care costs by at least half when employees have their diseases and health under control," Tohme continues.

The business benefits of nutrition are real, echoes Lanah J. Brennan, a [registered dietician](#) in Los Angeles. The body benefits are even greater, however, she stresses—and certainly more important. "If you're like most small business owners, you probably can't afford to have sick days," Brennan says. "A healthy diet and lifestyle is important to keeping your immune system strong. It also means less risk for the development of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease."

### Small Business Power Foods

If you want to improve your productivity and your profits with increased health and nutrition, you'll need to take a close look at what you put on your plate—and in your mouth—on a typical workday.

When they do, Tohme points out, most business owners will see convenient but empty snacks, including common workplace offenders like potato chips, donuts and candy bars, which may provide short-term energy gains but ultimately cause hunger, overeating and energy deficits.

Nutrition-minded business owners should banish junk food from their office, according to Brennan, then focus on replacing it with body- and business-building fuels, such as instant oatmeal, nuts, whole wheat bread, fruit and peanut butter.

"Instead of running to the fast food outlet across the street or eating junk foods at your desk," she says, "make a plan to have healthy foods available for your meals and snacks."

The best choices for small business owners are high-fiber foods like whole grains and raw produce, which help with digestion and appetite while fighting cholesterol and cancer, and lean proteins from foods like chicken, turkey, fish, eggs and low-fat cheese, which helps the body maintain and rebuild itself.

The most powerful "power food" for small business owners, however, is water, according to Tobi Levine, a registered dietician at [The Sports Club/LA](#) in Los Angeles. "When a person is low on water, all body functions suffer and fatigue sets in," he says, adding that most people need eight to 10 cups of water daily. "While it is important to drink plain water, you can use other beverages, too, such as juices, soups, skim milk, herbal tea, decaffeinated coffee, seltzer water and sports drinks. However, alcohol and caffeine have a dehydrating effect, so drink them in moderation. Also, be aware of the calories in drinks that are not sugar free; a 20-oz. soda has 300 calories, a Snapple has 240 calories and a Jamba Juice has 560 calories."

### Timing Is Everything

Just as important as what you eat is when you eat it, insists Levine, who recommends eating every three to four hours in order to keep your energy high and your metabolism active.

"Most people will need a snack in the afternoon," he says. "The best choice is a carbohydrate with a protein for sustained energy. Some examples are yogurt and granola, apple and cheese, or sugar-free iced blended and some whole wheat crackers."

Eating less more often isn't just about metabolism, though; for busy entrepreneurs, it's also about time management. "Time is the biggest challenge," Cartwright says of her nutrition goals. "Time to go grocery shopping, time to make meals, time to actually eat if you're running between appointments. That's why I've taken to eating smaller meals throughout the day; they take less time to prepare and to eat and they give me more consistent energy throughout the day."

## Your Action Plan

If you find yourself struggling with nutrition, try approaching it as a pet project, suggests Annamaria Poluha, a Los Angeles-based [nutritionist](#). Because business is what entrepreneurs do best, she offers, it makes perfect sense that they treat their health like a business initiative, complete with a weekly and monthly action plan, as well as short- and long-term goals in the form of measurable ROI.

To help you build and execute a nutrition action plan, Poluha offers the following tips:

- **Write things down.** Keep a food journal so that you know what and how much you're eating; writing things down helps you commit to and remember them. Additionally, Poluha suggests, keep lists of your goals and of the foods that you should have and shouldn't have, including those on the menu at your favorite restaurants. "Write down the benefits and actual time you spend on your priorities," she says. "Do you have a solid plan?"
- **Plan and prioritize.** Speaking of solid plans, Poluha stresses the importance of putting nutrition on your calendar, just like you would any other business commitment. "The only reason people fail is that they don't make time for the grocery store," she says. "Schedule it like an appointment!" For that matter, schedule other things, too, including meals, snacks and exercise breaks; if it's on the calendar, make it happen.
- **Get the tools you need.** If you fall off the nutritional wagon at work, make sure your office is stocked with everything you need—including a refrigerator, a microwave and plenty of nutritious groceries—to keep your noshing in check. "A person can adapt nutrition to fit their lifestyle, not squeezing it in," Poluha says. In other words, make it easy for you to fit health in your existing routine; it's all about convenience.

Finally, if you want to succeed at nutrition, apply the same principles you've used to succeed in business. Be disciplined, be committed and be aggressive.

"Think of nutrition as an investment in you," Brennan concludes. "Just as you have invested time and money into your business, it is important that you invest in taking care of yourself."


*For more information on health and fitness for small business owners, read parts one and two in our three-part small business fitness guide.*

## Links referenced within this article

Go GaGa  
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 Lifestyle Makeover for Diabetics  
<http://www.lifestyle-makeover.com>  
 registered dietitian  
<http://www.ianahibrennan.com>  
 The Sports Club/LA  
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