

Feng shui at work

This ancient Chinese wisdom is important in running a prosperous office, writes *Peter Sabine*



Is your workplace struggling from a lack of productivity, abounding with gossipers or hampered by weak organization? Try a corporate overhaul or something more magical – *feng shui*.

The ancient Chinese art of creating a good energy flow, or *chi*, can be used in a bustling workplace, where a lot more than personal harmony is at stake.

“We help people look at the function and distribution of the office and make proper use of good energy, while minimizing the bad influence of negative energy,” says *feng shui* master Raymond Lo, who advises several business clients.

While some executives pore over volumes of financial reports and huddle behind closed doors to diagnose business illnesses, *feng shui* advisers look beyond the corporate realm. They assess the “four pillars of destiny” – the year, month, day and hour of birth – and try to glean any imbalance in the elements of metal, water, wood, fire and earth to determine a company’s luck at certain points of the year.

Both bosses and employees can take heed of the following *feng shui* tips in the workplace – many will raise eyebrows, but others simply help your corporate fiefdoms look nice.

According to Lillian Too, former executive and author of several books on *feng shui*, you should:

- Sit in front of your boss, back facing, to curry favour (probably because management can keep a close eye on you and pave the way for more interaction).
- Make sure there is ample space in front of you to allow healthy energy to flow. A cramped area blocks energy. If there is a wall in front of you, move your desk back.
- Energize your work area by keeping it well lit, clean and organized. Cluttered and poorly lit areas are not conducive to good energy.
- Avoid sitting with your back to a door because it will encourage backstabbing by co-workers. You could lose out on promotions or become a scapegoat. Position your desk so you can always see who is entering the room.
- Increase support from superiors by sitting with a solid wall behind you. If there is a window behind, hang blinds or curtains to simulate this.
- Avoid facing a staircase or toilet door, both of which bring negative energy. Sitting across from a mirror also leads to distraction.
- Never keep leftover food or drink

on your desk. Leave your desk tidy as stacks of paper block energy and prevent good fortune from coming.

An employer has an important role to play in balancing the five elements when deciding the material, shape and colour of office furniture. U.K. author and *feng shui* expert Simon Brown points out things that help create positive energy:

- Furniture should have rounded corners. Taller and sharper corners reduce energy.
- Natural shades for office furniture are preferable, but sparing use of

bright colours in a meeting room helps make a strong statement.

- Use wooden office furniture to produce the most positive energy. Metal and glass have more dynamic energy and should be used in a meeting room for quick gatherings. Synthetic materials can impair performance by creating less vibrant atmospheres. Shiny surfaces are dynamic, but they can induce stress in people who spend a lot of time surrounded by them.
- People get frustrated with very small work areas, which make them feel their ambition is restrained. Energy

needs space to flow and it slows down in cramped spaces. Without a lot of space for energy flow, productivity and creativity are stifled.

- Clutter decreases dynamism and competitiveness. Good organization facilitates completion of tasks.

Feng shui master Andrew Lam, however, says it is important to be skeptical of advice. "Always think about why a master tells you to place something here or there," he says. "*Feng shui* is about giving you more information to make a decision, and helps you smooth out the rocky road in life."