

FENG SHUI

and the Corporate Edge

For every believer, there is a sceptic or two but enough big names and big companies are turning to an ancient Chinese practice to have the corporate world taking notice. KAREN HARDING investigates Feng Shui in the workplace and the hunt for positive energy, wealth and success.

Since ancient times, man has sought to best his competition. Back then, of course, his actions were driven by primary needs – food, water, shelter. To be successful, he needed to assess his environment and take actions appropriate to it. Those individuals that did, survived. And those that did it better, dominated. It became known as “survival of the fittest.”

Modern day business is not so far removed from primordial existence as you might think. Still we seek the “edge” that separates us from our rivals, some little thing that shows our superiority and allows us to dominate. No more so than when the smallest advantage can mean millions or billions of dollars.

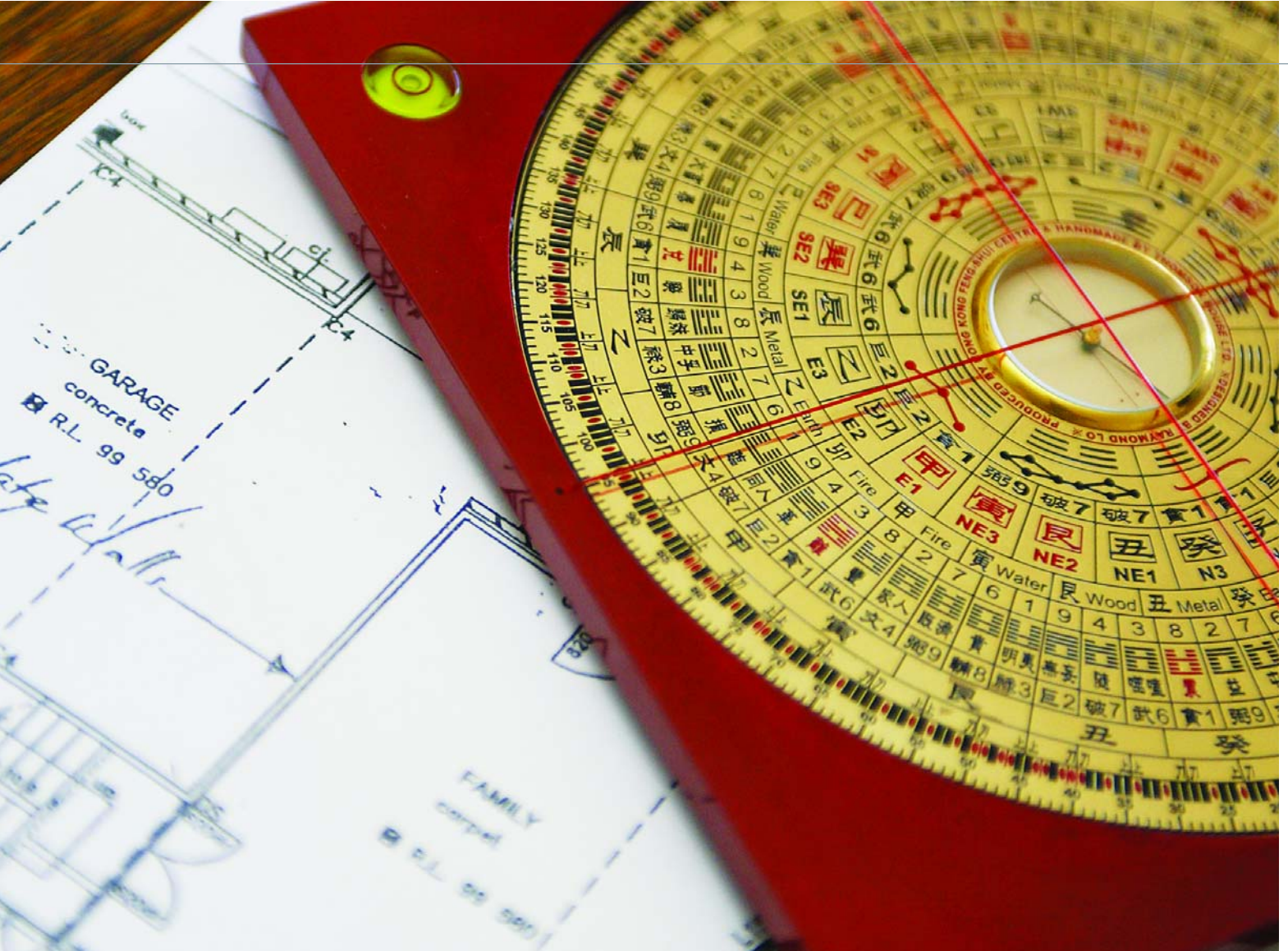
The “fittest” businessmen and businesswomen of today are, in increasing number, turning back to the ancients for inspiration. Specifically, to the Chinese practice of Feng Shui.

Translated literally, Feng Shui means “wind water”. The earliest Chinese villagers noted the formations of the land surrounding them, the seasons, and the ways of the wind and water. This then governed where they sited their community. What these ancients understood was the relationship between man and his surrounding environment. How that environment can affect his ability to not just survive but to prosper.



Feng Shui is the process by which we can affect our surrounding environment, which then in turn affects us. It is about energy – “qi” or “ci” – and its flow. Energy can be either beneficial or detrimental. Every place has both. Feng Shui allows us to harness the positive whilst minimising the negative.

Such business leaders as Donald Trump, Rupert Murdoch and Richard Branson have all been reported to have incorporated Feng Shui principles into their workplaces. So, too, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Clinton, Madonna and George Clooney. Fashion designers Donna Karan and Tommy

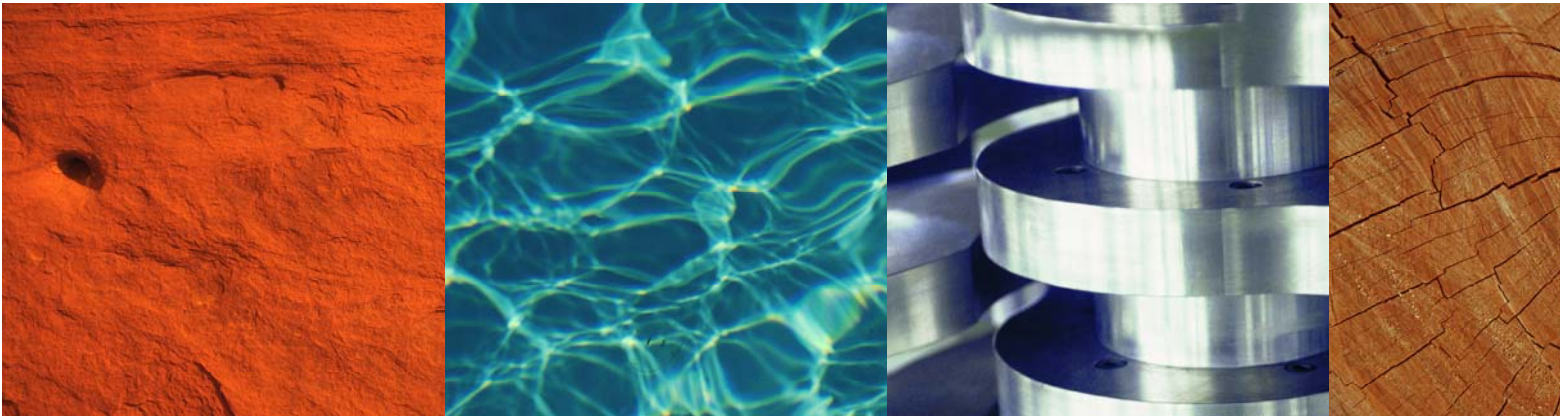


Hilfiger have brought it into their showrooms. And large businesses such as The Body Shop, Esprit, Panasonic and Kellogg's have also discovered its benefits.

In Australia, both the Burswood and Star City Casinos have acknowledged using it. Qantas reportedly brought in Feng Shui consultants during its recent upgrade of its Frequent Flyers lounge. Others to apply its principles include Mortgage Choice, Jeans West and the ANZ Bank under recently retired head honcho, John McFarlane. Although many bigger companies are coy about discussing it openly (presumably to maintain their edge

over their competitors), they will quite happily 'fess up' to using it, off the record.

The biggest users in general seem to be building developers, casinos, financial services, the hospitality industry and retail giants. Although many started on a client-driven basis, respecting the culture of Asian clients and trade partners, all recognise that Feng Shui has a very happy track record in business success, some reporting tremendous increase in business profit after implementing suggested changes.



According to prominent corporate Feng Shui consultant and author of the book “Feng Shui – The Perfect Arrangement”, Gayle Atherton, there is more scope for Feng Shui in the business world even than the domestic sector, mainly because work spaces are more physically flexible, in other words able to accommodate more easily any changes in the way a space is used.

And “using space correctly is the main aim”, according to Anjela Wong, of Anjela Wong and Associates. “Get that right and everything flows from there.” Wong grew up with Chinese culture and, following an honours degree in Science and post-graduate studies in Business Management, has geared her professional career towards assisting large businesses achieve their corporate vision through the use of feng shui.

There are a number of schools of Feng Shui but the most traditional and sacred is Flying Star. Others used extensively, usually in conjunction with Flying Star, include Form and Compass School but Flying Star is considered the most powerful. Atherton, who is credited with bringing Flying Star to western practitioners in Australia after studying it, in Chinese, under Feng Shui Master Raymond Lo in Hong Kong, describes it as being like “an x-ray of a building”.

“There are two types of energy in Feng Shui,” she said. “Seen and unseen. You need to work with both.”

“Feng Shui does not attempt to completely alter one’s destiny. Instead, it aims to create a harmonious living and working environment, to help a person, community or business to prosper.”

A typical Feng Shui consultation requires an analysis of the building based on its compass direction, which is done using a Feng Shui specific compass called a lapan. Once this is determined, an energy map is constructed. This map is highly mathematical. Numbers representing the energy influences within the building are drawn into eight sectors of a pie chart which is then laid over a plan of the building. In Flying Star, unlike the other schools, the age of the building is factored in, giving the building its own horoscope, or astrology chart if you like.

From this energy map, areas of positive energy as well as negative can be identified, as well as blocks to the flow of chi. Remedies are then suggested which will restore the prevailing energies to balance. These remedies are based on the Five Elements – Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood. Each element describes one of the five essential qualities of chi (for example, metal represents the quality of sharpness or focus) and each is represented by specific shapes and colours. Remedies, according to Wong, might include artwork relating to the element required, such as a pottery bowl reflecting the earth element or a moving water feature or fish tank to introduce the water element. It might be as simple as facing a desk another way or moving the photocopier to a different area.

For those who work from home, an analysis will need to consider the entire building as the energy influences on the individual have more effect than in a separate office, by virtue of the fact that the home-based worker is in the building at all times and not just during work hours. An analysis that includes the Four Pillars (which is the individual’s Chinese astrology) is of further help but is not mandatory.

Feng Shui can be used to address many issues in business. The primary focus is usually revenue, productivity levels and profit - but staff relationships, a harmonious working environment, and healthy, happy employees are high on the list also. Atherton, who conducts her business across seven countries, said in Asian cultures, workers wish to be assessed. To them, it is



important to be successful, to prove themselves to their bosses. To their employers, efficient workers mean greater productivity and prosperity.

If applying the principles of Feng Shui all sounds very complex and intricate, that's because it is. Well, for the average person, anyway, although there are some steps (below) that can be easily adopted. As each building has its own unique energy influences and each business its own set of needs or desired outcomes, it is preferable to use an expert and important to engage a reputable consultant.

The Feng Shui industry in Australia is currently unregulated but there are steps underway to address this. The Association of Feng Shui Consultants (AFSC) was formed with the mission to define, promote and maintain a high level of standards in the practice of Feng Shui. A list of members is available on the website www.afsc.org.au. A Certificate IV course in Feng Shui accredited with TAFE is now available at the Australian College of Environmental Studies in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. And in what is seen as a coup, Feng Shui Master Raymond Lo has recently come on board the AFSC as an educator.

Feng Shui cannot solve every problem in life or business, although it can support through crises. Jude Moar, founding member of the AFSC and its current Vice-President, says "in a sense, our potential starts with ourselves". The Chinese Masters believed that there were three types of Luck – Heaven Luck (which is determined at the time of birth), Personal Luck (which is determined through personal effort and accounts for about 50% of your luck) and Earth Luck, which represents the environmental influences on the individual. It is Earth Luck with which Feng Shui concerns itself.

THE QI TO FENG SHUI

Jude Moar's tips for your business and home office:

- Always sit with a solid wall behind your back to ensure you have support in life. Avoid sitting with a window behind you.
- In the office, always place the fax machine, telephone and computers in the wealth sector and/or future wealth sector (according to Flying Stars) to help attract more clients.
- The arrangement of tables and chairs should be in a harmonious position so that chi is able to flow smoothly.
- If you own a retail business, place your reception, sales counter and/or cash register in the wealth sector.
- You should not have any cactus or sharp-looking plants in your office as the small sharp leaves on these plants cause "sha qi" (negative energy) in the office. The qi that rides on the wind will have to pass through them, causing the qi to be fierce and sharp.
- In your office, avoid having the main door opening directly onto your reception area or office desk, as the qi represents obstacles and problems.
- In a manager's office, you should try not to choose a room with two opening doors, as the qi will be unable to accumulate within the room.
- The qi from the main entrance of your office should not meet a wall inside the office, as it blocks the qi; therefore, your business will be slow and not vibrant.
- In any work or home environment, a fish tank placed in the wealth sector is beneficial for increasing wealth and success. However, there are strict guidelines to be followed for correct placement according to Flying Stars.
- The business signage should be in the wealth sector so that you outclass your competitors within the market.
- Remove any clutter in your office. This is vital for improved qi flow.
- Place a hanging crystal in your window as this will activate "sheng qi" (auspicious energy).
- Place a pair of Fu Dogs (male and female) at the entrance of your business to protect you from evil influences. They are a symbol of valour and prosperity.
- If you have any negative energy directed at your office entrance, use a Ba Gua mirror to disperse the negative energy. Be mindful to use these as directed.

To find a consultant in your area or state or for further information on the practice of feng shui, go to The Association of Feng Shui Consultants at www.afsc.org.au

Gayle Atherton is at www.fengshui.com.au. "Feng Shui – The Perfect Arrangement" is available from this website.

Jude Moar is at www.whitelightimpressions.com.au

Anjela Wong is at www.anjelawong.com.au

For Feng Shui products/remedies, go to www.everythingfengshui.com.au

Moar, whose business, White Light Impressions, does both home and business consultations and who has worked with Wong on corporate consultations as well, says "Feng Shui does not attempt to completely alter one's destiny. Instead, it aims to create a harmonious living and working environment, to help a person, community or business to prosper." She offers the following advice: Enhance the good. Fix the inauspicious. But don't get hung up worrying about bad Feng Shui. It's what you do with it that counts. ■