



Peace And Quiet

## A Healthy Office, A Healthy Mind?

Miriam Marcus, 05.29.07, 12:00 PM ET

Picture yourself stretched out on a white, sandy beach with an endless blue sky above, listening to waves cresting at your feet.

Now open your eyes. You're in the office with endless e-mails, voice messages and employees all vying for your time and attention. No one would deny that being the boss is stressful. But many believe there's a way to curb office stress and stay mentally healthy by creating an atmosphere of calm when everything around you is hectic. It's called Feng Shui.

This ancient Chinese philosophy, the idea that people can and should live harmoniously with their surrounding environment, was once cast off as borderline voodoo. But recent trends indicate that among top executives, Feng Shui is on the rise, and CEOs like Dirk Moler of Get Logistics, a transportation broker based in Billings, Mont., are considering the potential benefits for their business.

"The crazy thing about Feng Shui is that I don't know if it was the right business timing for increased profits, the right time of year or the result of good Feng Shui, but it all happened at the same time, and I attribute at least some of that success to Feng Shui."

How does it work?

By manipulating a physical workspace in subtle ways, such as color choice, furniture arrangement and the use of natural building materials, Feng Shui can increase employee productivity, amplify profits by attracting more customers, cut down on office politicking and build a better corporate reputation, according to certified Feng Shui consultant Kartar Diamond of [Feng Shui Solutions](#) in Los Angeles.

"It's hard to give specifics about tangible benefits," admits Kevin Rosen, founder and CEO of CAFM Solutions, a facilities management company based in Las Vegas. However, he says, "we've definitely seen our company grow since Kartar made her suggestions. Harmony and energy in our office has been enhanced, and in discussion with customers, our staff is friendly and cohesive. We credit Feng Shui with some of that."

Utilizing the principles of Feng Shui can influence the way employees and clients think and act when they come to work together. An amicable work environment is said to promote better employee interactions and decrease conflict on many levels.

Getting the most out of this practice doesn't happen by making "out there" changes, like strategically placing crystals or trinkets around the office. "Classical Feng Shui is itemless,"

says Joey Yap, founder and CEO of the [Mastery Academy of Chinese Metaphysics](#) in Malaysia.

"It [Feng Shui] is about aligning furniture, offices, buildings and factories according to certain polar directions and calculations of time. It doesn't look like a Chinese restaurant after we leave."

And there are numerous Feng Shui practices that can be as simple as telling you the direction your desk should face in the office.

The "command position" in an office is sitting with your back to the wall, in the farthest corner and at a diagonal from the door, says Jill Daley of [Office Interiors International](#) in Coconut Grove, Fla. If your back is facing the door, Chinese folklore (and any American cowboy) predicts that a stab in the back is inevitable.

Another basic Feng Shui tip is to use full-spectrum light bulbs in the office to simulate natural sunlight. Veteran Feng Shui consultant Valerie Bogdan of [Feng Shui Works](#) in New Jersey suggests keeping live plants around to promote energy and active movement. And avoid abstract art. "All artwork and decorations should be of things you are familiar with, like nature." She even suggests to some clients that they infuse orange or other citrus scents in the air vents to keep employees aware and focused on their work.

The entrance to a building, the main flow of human traffic into many businesses, is also very important. The location of the CEO's office and upper management offices within a building can be crucial, according to corporate Feng Shui principles.

Placement of other key people--such as the chief financial officer, general manager, and the sales, marketing and HR directors--should be positioned accordingly. "Some buildings and some locations within buildings are better than others for attracting wealth and opportunities," says Diamond.

Much of this seems like common sense and more about functionality than ancient Chinese anything. When you spend more time at work than at home, the clean functional parity that a Feng Shui reformation can provide "just makes sense" says Jan Risi, president of Independent Purchasing Cooperative for Subway franchisee owners.

But common sense doesn't always come cheaply. Certified Feng Shui consultants can command a broad range of fees for the often admittedly immeasurable results they offer.

Expect to pay, on average, between \$100 and \$500 per hour for consulting services. For large spaces like factories and warehouses, anticipate paying from 30 cents to \$2 per square foot. "Celebrity" Feng Shui masters may charge thousands just to walk in your door.

What is the price then, for moral and physical productivity, happy workers and perhaps even increased revenues? According to Rosen, "for a couple of thousand dollars, the benefits [of Feng Shui] are tremendous, and the return on investment is significant."