

## Put an end to stress, under-performance and chaos in your workplace.

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*I discovered Feng Shui about five years ago; Rachel Elnaugh, the former Dragons Den star and entrepreneur was invited to Jersey as guest speaker at the ICSA Jersey Awards Dinner, and I had the great pleasure of picking her up from the airport.*

During our conversation, she mentioned Feng Shui. I had never heard of it so I did some research. Then one day I bought a book by Karen Rauch Carter called "Move Your Stuff, Change Your Life". I loved it, I just couldn't put it down. I also started to move things around in my office, my living room, my kitchen; the change was incredible, it felt so right.

After that, I carried on with my search to understand more about Feng Shui and met Davina MacKail. She was a real inspiration and still is. I have the honour to have Davina as my coach and she has been incredibly instrumental in my current success. A couple of years ago, we spent a whole day together, training on the Yin and Yang concept and how I could bring Feng Shui into shops, offices, and workplaces, to help my customers bring a more positive energy into their working environment. Since then, I use the same principles when I go and help customers with their customer journey and I wanted to share some of it with you.

Shopping is all about an emotional experience – we buy things to make us and our loved ones feel better, in other words, we are shopping for an experience, not just a particular item. It does not matter if your customers know about Feng Shui or not; on a subconscious level we are all attuned to some energy movement and react to it accordingly. Your environment has a lot to do with how you feel, and how you feel has a lot to do with how productive you are. Neuroscientists across the globe have studied images of the brain in action and placed emotion in the driver's seat, asserting that thinking is emotion-based, and while emotions form the basis of thoughts, the five senses – sight, sound, smell, taste and touch – fuel those emotions, wielding the power to persuade, relax and heal.

In a study titled "Men Buy, Women Shop," researchers at Wharton's Jay H. Baker Retail Initiative and the Verde Group, a Toronto consulting firm, found that women react more strongly than men to personal interaction with sales associates. Men are more likely to respond to more utilitarian aspects of the experience — such as the availability of parking, whether the item they came in for is in stock and the length of the queue at checkout.

So, men buy and women shop! That's because women are more likely to use their right brain (the limbic brain) and men their left brain (the neocortex brain). The right brain is the feminine energy, the Yin, dark, soft, caring, nurturing, receiving and intuitive; basically the creative thinking. Whereas the left brain is the masculine energy, light, rational, analytic and fact based; the logical thinking. A balance of both energies in your workplace (and indeed in your own life) is vital, creating a healthy environment. This will boost the happiness and productivity of employees, and of course, will make your customers feel at ease, wanting to spend time in your shop, spending more money ... Without doubt it will be a more engaging experience for your customers.

Walk the walk. Start with walking around your showroom, look at how the energy (the chi) and your customers flow through your space. What do you like or dislike? What can you see or smell? What are the first thoughts when walking into an area? Is it organised or full of clutter? Move any blocking fixtures or clutter. Make sure your aisle plan is welcoming and introduces them to as many interesting merchandise presentations as possible. Use angles to lead your customers around the store and delight them at each turn.

You can then make an assessment of the five elements in Feng Shui – water, wood, fire, earth and metal. They must all be represented and exist in balance for harmony. Take an elemental survey of each, this will ascertain whether your shop, office, workplace is "heavy" on some elements or "light" on others. To have a balanced workplace, you may wish to bring in more Yang to your premises otherwise everyone may be too relaxed and not doing much!

After the last USA President's inauguration, the Obamas famously 'cleaned' the White House and newly decorated each of the rooms based on Feng Shui principles to create a positive flow of energy and good vibrations, bringing a positive energy and balanced harmony to support the people who lived and worked there. It is a little early to tell if the new President will follow suit ...

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