



is feng shui fo' shizzle or just silly?

TRIED & TESTED

The CLEO office finds its balance with the help of a no nonsense Feng Shui guru.



We hate to shatter the illusion that magazine buildings are glossy and glamorous, but in the interest of this story we must admit that ours is an office where the words “retro” and “vintage” are euphemisms. Coupled with the fact that we’re constantly on the receiving end of clothes, books, CDs, beauty products, gadgets, magazines and promotional goodies, we live in a constant state of organised chaos. Turns out, there’s no such thing.

BEFORE

“Gobsmacked” and “horrified” are just a few words to describe Elaine’s expression when she first walked into our open plan office. Ever the professional, she recovered quickly and immediately set about improving our chi, or energy flow. The art of Feng Shui might conjure up visions of spiritual interior cleansing, but nothing about Elaine’s airy-fairy. The woman’s all business and more about

WHAT IS IT? Feng (meaning “wind”) Shui (meaning “water”) is the ancient Chinese practice of creating a harmonious space.

HOW? With the help of Elaine Hosiassohn of Fengshuidynamics.co.za / 083 449 5190

HOW MUCH? Consultations start at R1800.

creating a practical, functional space, free from clutter and distractions.

And nothing was more of an eyesore than our hideous partitions, blocking us off from each other and collecting dust. Elaine was adamant we get rid of them as well as all the stuff on the walls. Evidently she doesn't feel the same way about Robert Pattinson as we do. But looking at our space through her eyes, we realised she was right. Our haphazard shrines to *Twilight* hotties, shirtless bachelors and pretty pics were creating a bewildering mess. When it comes to Feng Shui, less is definitely more, and Elaine advocated ruthlessness about getting rid of stuff. "I'm such a current person," she shared matter-of-factly. "What's gone is gone," she said, eyeing the dead pot plant in the corner.

Next Elaine suggested we move our "kitchen area" out of the spotlight so that dirty dishes weren't the first thing people see when they visit. She also advised that our numerous cabinets be moved out of sight and against a wall - things with a common purpose should be grouped together.

She then whipped out her compass and some complex-looking charts to figure out the direction each of our desks should be facing in order to attract more health, wealth and success. She did this by plugging our birth dates and gender into the Chinese Lunar calendar. Practically, we couldn't all change our positions in accordance with the results so she prioritised those with more senior positions, and suggested those who couldn't change the position of the desk merely change the position of the computer screen to face the right direction.

AFTER

With another deadline under our belt, the CLEO team got to work dismantling cubicles, ripping posters off the wall, hauling storage units into a corner and moving desks around. Surfaces we always assumed to be grey turned out to be white after a good scrub, rotting furniture was chucked to reveal the carcasses of cockroaches, and our recycling bins

overflowed with stuff we never knew we had.

Our next task was to flirt shamelessly with our IT and maintenance crews and convince them to extend phone and Internet lines, put up pin boards and transport unwanted pieces to furniture heaven. With all the clutter out of the way, our space appeared to double in size and we decided to splash out on a new, bigger meeting table and bright red folding chairs.

VERDICT

With the arrival of our new furniture came a huge sense of achievement and motivation. Now we can all see each other, and will notice if someone has a breakdown, needs a hug or has snacks to share. Without the dividers, the office is lighter and more open. Our bigger table allows us to all eat lunch together (instead of taking it in shifts) and our pin boards create order to our inspiration. Finally, as per Elaine's suggestion, we paid special attention to creating an eye-catching entrance and framed the latest CLEO covers to invite people in.

And visit us they have. Since our makeover, there's been a constant stream of people ooh-ing and aah-ing over our office (and "borrowing" our interior ideas). In fact, the office has become such a chilled, happy place to hang out that we have to remind ourselves to go home and get a life.



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