

Organizing and Feng Shui...Connecting the Dots

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A LITTLE BACKGROUND

I actually became a Professional Organizer completely by accident. However, I had always had “the organizing gene”. I was the one proudly determined to keep my precious box of 64 Crayola® crayons in color-coded order—at about the age of 5. My first redesign job was at 12. I got tired of hearing my Mother’s on-going complaint about “no space for a dishwasher”. So I reorganized the kitchen, and gave her the specific measurements and directions needed to remodel the area to accommodate the new appliance. Mission accomplished! When I worked in Corporate America, I was the go-to gal if there was an organizing project, a move, or a floor plan layout required. Needless to say, this was never in any official job description. You get the picture!

SOME FENG SHUI BASICS

Fast-forward to 2001. That’s the year I started my Balanced Environments business as a Certified Feng Shui Consultant. For those who may not be familiar with this practice, here is the Cliff’s Notes version. Quite simply Feng Shui is both the art and science of placement. There are specific methods and tools used to improve the balance, harmony, form and flow of any environment. The design is specifically created to reflect who the client really is, along with their intentions. The bottom line is to help them plan a space that is loved, supportive, and purposeful. One in which they will feel their best...until things change. (Refer to #5 below.) Then it’s just a matter of making some adjustments to bring things back into “aligned design”.

During my training, I learned many basic principles. Here are five that I feel are helpful to know:

1. Feng Shui is all about the flow of energy (often referred to as Ch’i or Qi.)
2. Feng Shui is literally translated Wind (referring to the unseen) and Water (the seen.)
3. Everything is alive (quantum physics can help you with this one!)
4. Everything is connected (think of a pebble in the pond reaction.)
5. Everything is changing (which is the nature of life itself.)

THE FIRST STEP OF FENG SHUI

I was amazed by some of my first consultations. Although I conducted phone interviews to find out why they were calling me and what they wanted as a result of our time together, when I arrived to do the consultation I found that many of these clients had piles of stuff all over their homes or offices. Rather than needing to know where and how to enhance the flow of their spaces, they first needed to have a close encounter with my good buddy the Dipsy Dumpster. It was my job to gently and lovingly explain that the very first step of the Feng Shui process is actually letting go of ANYTHING that is literally blocking or slowing down the energy flow.

The position of a couch or a desk is irrelevant, if you have to circumnavigate a cluttered path to reach them. In other words, let go of the clutter! It was usually at this point that they would ask if I knew of anyone who could help them. It was the perfect opportunity to combine my life-long skill with my new-found passion. (Where is that Staples “EASY” button?) And THAT is how I began incorporating organizing into my business.

At this point, you probably have started connecting the dots, and realize that as Professional Organizers you are actually participating in the first step of Feng Shui—whether you know it or not! Or whether you want to or not! It is my belief that by at least being aware of the concepts that your organizing skills can be heightened. And with some study and practice, the possibilities are even more enhanced.

THE PATTERNS YOU SEE

So as Emeril might say, “Let’s kick this up a notch!” There can be more of a meaning to what you encounter than just the objects. WHERE things are located can be very significant. Quite often the same area in almost every room will be cluttered. It’s like a repeated designated dumping ground. It’s not a coincidence—there is definitely a message here. The client is just not aware of it. And if you’re thinking, “Well which came first?” It’s the chicken vs. the egg debate. And it really doesn’t matter. It’s not about

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judgment or analysis—it's about providing information to help your client shift a situation. But the final decision whether or not to do it is always theirs.

One of my first experiences with this was with a college professor. He was hoping to publish a book and had been having difficulties with it. As we went through his house, the doors opened into the rooms, which is pretty standard. Most of them were on the right side of the room entrance. However, the doors could not be opened all the way because of the clutter piled up on the floor behind the doors. Although there was clutter elsewhere, this was a definite pattern!

I asked him if he was having difficulties finding people to help him with his publishing project. The answer: Absolutely! And if he did make some in-roads, did he feel like he just couldn't get in all the way? The answer: Absolutely! The sections of physical space (seen) that were blocked corresponded to the Helpful People (unseen) area on a Feng Shui Bagua map. (Refer to #1 and #2 above.) And you literally could not open the doors (seen) all the way to make room for opportunities (unseen). (Refer to #3 and #4 above.) Shortly after he cleared these areas, he found a publisher (Helpful People) and the project moved along easily (opportunities). (Refer to #5.) He understood the connection and was thrilled with the results.

MORE ABOUT WHERE

The same thing can apply to a single room, such as an office. WHERE the piles are located can correspond to issues that are happening in the business. If I've been called in to help organize, it usually determines where I start the project, once I've asked a few questions. A typical situation would be one in which the client is hoping to improve his business, and I notice the pattern of things collecting in the area corresponding to Prosperity on the Feng Shui Bagua map. There will be clutter on the left rear corner of the desk, return, credenza, bookcases, floor, etc. It doesn't mean that there isn't clutter in other places—it simply reflects that the predominant trend is "congestion" in the Wealth area. Since that is the client's major concern, I will begin the process there to start things moving—literally and figuratively.

This dynamic of WHERE can also be useful when the client tells me one thing, but I observe a different pattern. For example, the client may complain of a problem relating to

Prosperity. However, I'm seeing "the pattern" in their Creativity area. After a few questions, they confirm that they have felt overwhelmed, unable to focus, and lacking in creativity. It's hard to have the prosperity you're looking for if these factors are involved. So the process starts in the Creativity area and voila!—things start to change and the Prosperity follows suit.

PEELING THE ONION

There are nine life areas in Feng Shui: Career, Knowledge, Family, Prosperity, Reputation, Personal Relationship, Children & Creativity, Helpful People and Health. And like an onion, there are many layers to Feng Shui. It is a process, and one might even say an on-going journey. Since our lives are always shifting and changing, it's helpful to have our things and our processes stay in alignment.

The WHERE location of the stuff is just one area that corresponds to organizing. It's the tip of the iceberg, so to speak—and it's huge. It's an opportunity to offer the client some useful insight. Remember, you are just like the Fed-Ex guy delivering an "information package". It's not about being the CSI team trying to solve an "environmental crime"! ☺



As you work with clients, by incorporating Feng Shui you will find that there is more depth as you "peel the layers" of the environment. The less cluttered and more organized it is, the more interesting it becomes. There is usually some "subtlety of clutter" in the WHAT the client has kept or the HOW it is kept. This is particularly evident in the artwork and décor items in the space. The messages can be so amazing! But to continue down that path would involve who-knows-how-much-more space, and I don't want to push my luck on holding your attention any longer.

AND FINALLY...

I hope this information has been helpful in connecting the dots between the world of Organizing with the world of Feng Shui. I hope you recognize that the work we are doing is like prepping the canvas for a wonderful piece of artwork that your client is creating. You are an integral part of this fun process. And if nothing else, you will have some interesting new topics for discussion at your next social gathering!