

# Feng shui guides design of offices

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There seems to be a familiar pattern in the evolution of Diana Garber's feng-shui business, which focuses on commercial construction and renovation projects.

It starts with an initial dose of skepticism from clients, followed by a growing interest and, eventually, an acceptance of this ancient Chinese method of maximizing positive energy flow.

"I wasn't a real big fan at first, to be honest," said Steve Casciani, CEO of Border Energy.

His company recently moved into a new, 10,000-square-foot office in Powell that incorporated several feng-shui design elements, including the shape of the building and the location of the entrance.

"Now, everyone who walks into the building has the same impression, that the energy just pops out when they come in," Casciani said, adding that this seems appropriate for an energy company. "Our employees are ecstatic to be in a building that was well thought out and created for their needs."

In addition to Border Energy's new headquarters, Garber also was hired to apply feng-shui design elements to the expansion of the Tansky Sawmill Toyota dealership, scheduled to be completed in the spring. She also is working on a volunteer basis to help renovate the Breathing Association's office space on Old Henderson Road to add positive energy.

"There are pockets of people who aren't on board with feng shui," said Garber, who runs Intuitive Concepts in Sunbury. "I think that's based on their misinformation, and when they see how it works, and that it's based on quantum physics and mathematical formulas, they say, 'This isn't what I thought it was.'"

Experts such as Garber use compasses, diagrams, mathematical formulas and an understanding of five elements — water, fire, earth, wood and metal — to achieve harmony and positive energy flow in buildings.

It is not, Garber said, rearranging the furniture in a room.

Using feng shui is the norm for residential and commercial construction projects in Asian countries.

In the United States, it is more common in homes and is slowly spreading to commercial projects. In Los Angeles, the \$65 million Burton Way tower complex will incorporate feng-shui designs, as will a new, 213-unit apartment building in Minneapolis.

Garber initially did work on the home of Maria Collart, CEO of the Breathing Association.

"Like our bodies, buildings age and need certain things, in terms of positive energy," Collart said.

What the Breathing Association's office needs most is a paint job.

"It hasn't been painted in 22 years," Collart said, adding that she's looking for donors to help with the \$3,000 cost of paint.

Garber's calculations have determined that a gray color palette will work best and create better energy throughout the two-story building, where clients come for a variety of lung and breathing-related medical issues.

Garber also recommended that Collart install a large clock above the elevator.

"It changes the energy of the entrance, so people feel better," Garber said. "A clock is moving metal, and since it is always moving, it is working 24 hours a day, turning negative energy into positive energy."

Garber initially met Casciani when his wife, Lisa, hired her to do a feng-shui makeover of their home. She then made some changes to his previous office space.

Her ideas for Border Energy's new headquarters began with its shape, which was originally going to be V-shaped.

This, she said, isn't conducive to energy flow, and Garber suggested a rectangular shape — and Casciani agreed.

"The energy is more stable and can settle more in the wide rectangle," Garber said. "If the building was too narrow, the energy goes through it too quickly and affects business."

The front entrance was put on the west side of the building.

Putting it here, Garber said, created water energy.

"Water means flow, the flow of money; and, for a business, this is important," Garber said. "As each person enters the building from the west, they bring in the good energy with them."

There are 20 employees in the building, and it is large enough to accommodate 50 as Border Energy grows.

Casciani's skepticism has turned into acceptance.

"I believe there is most definitely a spot in my life for this," he said of feng shui. "It's not something I live my life by, but if you learn about it and see the results, why not do it?"

"I see this as an investment that yields returns."

Garber spent three days compiling her calculations at the Breathing Association, and used them to come up with her suggestions.

"What she does is not cookie cutter; it's based on mathematical formulas and calculations and compass points," Collart said.

And, feng shui is something that should be felt and sensed rather than seen.

"Feng shui isn't something obvious. You shouldn't walk into a building and say, 'You've done feng shui,'" Garber said. "You shouldn't notice it, and you should feel safe and secure and supported."

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