Ergonomics and Feng Shui – More Creativity in the Office:

1. Introduction

The working time in the office is a phase in the life of many people, which plays an important role in maintaining their health. The office constitutes a working environment with a multitude of physical and psychological demands, challenges or stresses, which have a long term effect on the person working in an office. A high degree of psychologically influenced misconduct and resultant physical ailments are a result of this. On the contrary, a meticulous and holistic design of the working environment can also promote creativeness and significantly contribute to the well being of body and mind. This also promotes productivity and the ability of innovation of the company.

2. Ergonomics and Feng Shui

Our aim is to create a living office space. We bring together ergonomic office planning and furniture design, modern Baubiology and a traditional way of performance-enhancing interior design and decoration (Feng Shui).

2.1 Ergonomics

Everyone has heard of ergonomics - after all, the word is widely used in advertising. But to think of ergonomics simply as a way of designing more comfortable goods misses the point - there is much more to ergonomics. The word ergonomics is perhaps a little intimidating, but behind it lays a very simple idea:

Ergonomics is about 'fit': the fit between people, the things they do, the objects they use and the environments they work in. If good fit is achieved, stress is reduced. We are more comfortable and can do things more quickly and easily, and we also make fewer mistakes.

The science of "ergonomics" therefore examines the stresses and needs of working people.

The main purpose of ergonomics is to avoid incorrect conditions in areas relevant to safety by optimally adjusting work-related media and the working environment. As stress is reduced, we feel more comfortable and can accomplished our tasks more quickly and easily, with fewer mistakes.
2.1.1. Stress load model:

The individual influences that act upon a person are certain characteristics of various stresses. This means that many small partial stresses caused by office appliances, work processes and the working environment have their effect on the worker. The sum of all these small partial stress loads constitutes the total stress load. Since the office environment usually does not have one partial stress that immediately causes significant harm to one's health, it is important to recognize the total stress load and this also over a longer period of time.

2.1.2. Ergonomic Polarity:

The human being in the workplace creates a contradiction for himself. On one hand, humans need social interaction. To be seen and recognized (feedback) is a basic need that is required for healthy personality development. On the other hand, the average office worker wants the greatest amount of privacy possible. He would prefer having an enclosed office for the best possible concentration, and yet at the same time he wants optimum conditions for communicating with coworkers. It is therefore not wisest to force a 100% solution for one side; rather, it is more effective to strive for a 60/40 solution.

2.1.3. Branches of Ergonomics:

- **Anthropometrical:** Deals with adjusting the workspace to the human form and size
- **Physiological:** Adjusting the working conditions to suit people (lighting, temperature, noise)
- **Psychological:** Creating a pleasant atmosphere for workers (colors, decor, shapes)
- **Data related:**
  - Configuring user devices (eye, ear, touching, feeling .. screen without visual distractions)
- **Organizational:**
  - Deals primarily with the performance of tasks
- **Safety-related:**
  - Regulations set by unions, trade associations, others
2.1.4. Hygiene comfort and personal appreciation

From an ergonomic perspective, the edging of the desktop is an important point. Because we are constantly in direct contact with the edge of the desk, the form of the edge in regard to its hygienic characteristics should be evaluated.

For instance, most typical desktops with a glued plastic (PVC) edging very quickly develop a bacteria-contaminated crevice, especially because the glue used to seal the edge is water soluble and collects perspiration from the palm.

Unfortunately, the characteristics of the desktop are not given enough practical consideration. The underside of our arms is in direct contact with the surface the entire day, the entire week, and indeed our entire working lives.

High-quality desktops manufactured from homogenous material with rounded edges combine hygiene, comfort and personal appreciation.

The quality of our surroundings determines the quality of our work.

2.1.5. The most important basic human needs:

- Security through backing = back coverage
- Security through protection = shield in front
- Security through command = overview of space

Personal territory = privacy

2.1.6. Integrated Ergonomics

An ergonomic workspace configuration should be specifically conducted for each individual project and office. All branches of ergonomics should be considered. A workspace cannot be made ergonomically correct just by providing so-called ergonomic furniture and office chairs. The psychologically rooted needs for privacy, communication and integration are just as important. These factors can be best considered only within a professional planning by experts.
2.2 Feng Shui

Almost everyone today has heard of Feng Shui, and almost everyone understands it differently. So the question is: What's behind it, and how do we deal with it?

2.2.1. Definition

The concept of Feng Shui comprises various alternatively oriented health models and a holistic way of thinking.

Since the term "Feng Shui" is not trademarked, the concept of Feng Shui is generally used for many different systems, teaching methods and design philosophies from geomancy to astrology and much more. Also many Feng Shui schools attempt to differentiate themselves from one another, e.g. "Qi-Mag Feng Shui," which is emphasizing spiritual space clearing and contrary the "classical Feng Shui," which emphasizes Chinese astrology. Then there is geomancy, the "western Feng Shui" originating from western culture, and much more.

It is therefore difficult to discuss or even evaluate Feng Shui as long as each person understands it differently. Rather than argue about it, we are more interested in a constructive communication. (Especially when dealing with non Feng Shui experts and customers.) What does someone really look for when he is interested in Feng Shui? We found 3 basic focuses that build on one another:

Health .. is the primary quest, particularly when one is ill. In a company this corresponds analogically with the health of a company.

Happiness .. is a part of a development that has to do with being in tune with your environment. Corporately speaking, this deals with the proximity of products and workers to the market.

Fulfillment .. is the authentic (creative) state of being. Here also the corporate side is a living company.
2.2.2. The Psychology of Space - the Feng Shui Principle:

Feng Shui affects people in a psychological way through the space configuration like a health-oriented therapeutic treatment. The Feng Shui Principle may be defined as follows:

"We shape our environment, and the environment shapes us!"
"It affects our feelings, thoughts, and vitality."
Emotionally - Associative .. consciously and unconsciously.

We shape our environment, e.g. set up and decorate our home, according to our state of psyche at the moment. The room configuration that results is a static snapshot of our inner self. This comes back and transmits to our psyche a sense of security. Our surroundings thus become a means of self-programming.

Time is flowing (changing), so are the changes in our society, our thinking, and the way we express ourselves. That's why it is important to be open to change in order to participate in life creatively. Space configuration is in this way an important medium for psychologically and gently harmonizing the familiar sense of security with the courage to accept change. A positive approach is especially helpful for this process and helps to overcome so-called "blockades and complexes" better than negative prejudices.

Our surroundings - a room, a building, a certain place outdoors - primarily affect our feelings. We feel either good, well, pleasant, safe, and happy, or just the opposite - uncomfortable and oppressive. If we are very active, we do not necessarily perceive this feeling right away. Nevertheless, this feeling affects our thoughts associatively. Our thinking then changes discreetly in either a positive (optimistic) or a negative (pessimistic) direction. Negative thinking sucks our energy away and make us tend to withdraw. On the contrary, positive thoughts mobilize power within us we didn't even know we have.

The goal of Feng Shui training is to become more consciously aware of these interactions.

Carl Gustav Jung developed the scientific basis for this awareness in western culture. The definition of the conscious, the personal unconscious, and the archetypal area of the collective unconscious provides some insight into the way Feng Shui techniques work. According to Jung, the goal of the lifelong process of individuation is to incorporate as much of the unconscious into consciousness as possible.
2.2.3. Thinking pattern

Our own western, very differentiating way of thinking is very different from the far eastern holistic view of things. The traditional Chinese teaching of Feng Shui can be understood only when one adopts the thinking pattern of the far-eastern culture as one's own.

The most essential differences between the western and eastern patterns of thought are as follows:

Transformation from the inside out:

Balance instead of the ultimate truth

Social responsibility before individual rights

The total organism instead of the Cartesian separation of spirit and matter.

The separation of soul and body, as well as the further fragmentation of our being into distinct areas .. work life / home life, church / sports arena, feelings / self-presentation, etc. leads ultimately to endless conflict and metaphysically to confusion and frustration. The inner fragmentation of the western way of thinking is reflected externally in our world view, which assumes that a multitude of distinct objects and events can be analyzed and used separately from one another.

The "I" (spirit) as an isolated observer, freed from external material influences, is an illusion.

Spirit and matter are merely only different aspects of a universal whole.
2.2.4. Modern Physics

At the beginning of the twentieth century, modern physics replaced the fixed concept of Newton’s world view through the theory of relativity and quantum physics. Matter is no longer seen as static and passive, but rather as a dynamic and active "energy field" that undergoes constant change. The traditional concepts of time and space, of isolated objects and cause-and-effect have lost their absolute relevance.

According to modern physics, the universe is a dynamic, indivisible whole, of which the observer is an essential part.

Fritjof Capra, physicist, system theorist, philosopher, and author, described the commonalities between modern physics and far-eastern thought patterns very well in his book The Tao of Physics. His work is filled with the scientific attempt to overcome the Cartesian division of spirit and body and replace it with a holistic world view.

The Laws of Resonance:
While we are part of a whole, we are in constant interaction with our environment

Like two vibrations that meet, creating a new vibration pattern.
2.2.5. Yin and Yang

Yin and Yang is the basis of all Feng Shui teaching.

In the trigrams and hexagrams the polarity Ying Yang is more differentiated into finer qualities. The meanings and associations are described in the old Chinese book *I Ging* (Book of Metamorphoses).

The Yin-Yang symbol itself, however, represents the dynamic of the eternal process of transformation! (birth – growth – maturity – decay ..)

Constant change (transformation) and movement is best displayed in the symbol. Therefore, Feng Shui does not deal with creating a rigid (and perhaps temporarily advantageous) situation but rather keeping things in a state of flux, in motion.

The task is to achieve balance (harmony) and not one-sidedness! (One-sidedness would lead to stagnation and sooner or later to a sudden tip-over.)

Yin Yang is the motor of development, the dynamic force in the universe."

Dynamic" means agile, energetic, suspenseful, and power through motion. Dynamics is a requirement for transformation, metamorphosis, assimilation, evolution, and continual competitiveness for a company. We distinguish three kinds of dynamics:

The dynamic of business factors such as equipment, products, and expertise.

The dynamic achieved through bodily movement to increase vitality and communication

The dynamic in the office through mobile modular furniture.
2.2.6. The Vital Energy Qi (C’hi)

Qi is the basic energy for all life.

Effects of the vital energy Qi are vitality, performance, concentration, intuition, creativity, immune system resistance, ability to limit psychologically deleterious external factors, high stress tolerance, and a positive frame of mind.

There is a difference between "body Qi," the Qi concept of traditional Chinese medicine (acupuncture / meridians = Qi paths) and space / landscape Qi, which is directed by Feng Shui practitioners.

The following properties of Qi are defined in Feng Shui:

Qi originates from nature (outside) and has the tendency to flow back to its origin.

Qi follows the electro-/biomagnetic path of humans and other living beings (Qi paths are created)

Qi has a natural sluggishness / The Qi flow remains intact for a certain amount of time. (Qi flows in through used doors and along used paths).

Qi is attracted to other bio-magnetic fields and flowing water. (People, plants, animals and fountains can attract and direct Qi.)

So-called "bad Qi" arises when energy runs in long, straight paths. It then accelerates too quickly, becomes too intense and switches over into the negative. Just as negative is stagnating energy. There is nothing worse than overloaded rooms with "dead" dusty corners with rectangle pieces of furniture or objects. This creates energy blockades. Stagnant Qi becomes bad, and junk contaminates Qi.

Good Qi: Qi should always circulate in softly undulating motions. Think in terms of a creek or a river that meanders its way through the landscape in gentle curves and turns. That's how a natural energy stream should flow in the office.
3. More Creativity through Inspiration and Intelligent Design

Creativity is important for a healthy office and a healthy company. Employees who contribute creatively intuitively respond better and faster to challenges in their job and are therefore more successful.

By contrast, employees who in a virtuously perfect manner execute exactly what they are told are in long terms often disappointed when this no longer seems good enough in their supervisor's eyes. Something is obviously missing in how they do their job.

3.1 Creativity:

Creativity is the joy of live - an authentic expression like a child's - and last not least spiritual "live" itself. To be authentic - creative - is joy and love.

Creativity is the joy of life
Creativity is authenticity
Creativity is life

Synonyms: ingenuity, innovation, fantasy, imagination, power of creation.

Antonym: Virtuosity

Creativity contains "create", which means to bring into existence and shaping. In principle there is no difference between the inner shaping of oneself (spiritual and mental), an authentic creative communication or the shaping of something in the material world.

The External is Expression – the Internal is Origination.
3.2 Inspiration:

Harmonious organic forms symbolize abundance, security and formative free space. Creative development, imagination and strength of expression are made possible.

Unnecessary regularity and rigid forms, in structures and at the workplace, psychologically work against and inhibit the creative approach of the individual.

Moreover such unyielding expression is simply too banal for our mental abilities considering the biological diversity we are used too since millions of years.

Consequently a design which is reduced to straight lines may be interpreted as an affront to our real mental abilities.

"By using round, or better said organic shapes, the visitor is more intensely connected with the nature surrounding him. With organic shapes, one communicates with deeper levels of nature .. Source: Rudolf Steiner, Toward a New Architectural Style."
3.3 Intelligent Design / Geometry:

Humans unconsciously recognize geometric relationships and thereby the higher order of shape.

Organic forms stimulate and are esthetically pleasing.

But organic forms can imply a higher intelligence by means of geometric forms, which have their roots in mathematics. For example, an ellipse is a curve where the sum of the distances from any point on the curve's two center points is constant. And a "Cassini curve" is a family of curves in which the loci of each curve satisfies the condition that the product of the distances to each focus point is exactly a constant. The lemniscates (the horizontal eight, the symbol of infinity) is a special form of the "Cassini curve".

Our unconscious is aware of such relationships and is content having discovered it's "intelligent" environment. Therefore it's particularly important, with regard to organic forms, that clearly formulated geometry is used to ensure the higher approach of intelligence at work.

The circle itself is the most perfect geometric shape, symbolizing the spiritual origin (heaven). The square, on the other hand, symbolizes matter (earth).

Linear shapes symbolize regulations, directions, limitations, shortage and out of this the resulting power and authority.

Round shapes symbolize diversity, abundance, infinite possibilities and freedom.

Round shapes, based on a geometric relationship, symbolize a higher (intelligent) order within the biological diversity.
4. Summary:

Rather than presenting a static "to do list" of ergonomics and Feng Shui guidelines, we have set our sights on the fundamental principles and correlations. This enables us to facilitate greater potentialities in a company through individual office planning and interior design.

Our aim is to create a living office space. We bring together ergonomic office planning and furniture design, modern Baubiology and a traditional way of performance-enhancing interior design and decoration (Feng Shui).

Vital Office Group consists of various experts in each field and offers full size service out of one hand. We complete the efforts of constructing a “high energy building”!

Guiding you from concept to completion, we ensure that you receive a vital and creative office, down to the last detail ... the prerequisite for a flourishing and successful business.

For further information, please see www.vital-office.net

Peter Jordan, Vital-Office Ltd.
Ergonomics and Feng Shui – More Creativity in the Office:

Peter Jordan, leading partner of Vital-Office, an organization that provides office layout planning and furniture design for greater health and vitality.

Biography:

Peter Jordan is the founder of Vital-Office, an umbrella world for a unique and holistic way of designing office environments.

His business let him to ergonomics already in the early 80's when he started producing adjustable computer furniture. 1989 he was the first in Germany who designed anthropometric rounded desk systems. And in 2000 he developed the first authentic Feng Shui office system which was endorsed by many Feng Shui masters.

In the business world he is generally accepted as an experienced specialist in ergonomics, a professional creative planner of office environments and a diligent designer of office furniture.

Personally he made his own spiritual journey and learned about Feng Shui, Geomancy, Sacred Geometry, Shamanism, Buddhism and Spirituality. His aim is to show a way to facilitate creativity. Creativity is the joy of live - an authentic expression like a child's - and last not least spiritual "live" itself. To be authentic - creative - is joy and love.

He lectures “Vital-Office Ergonomics and Feng Shui” in Germany since 2006. Many Feng Shui consultants and office dealer already participated in the seminars in Germany and are linked in the Vital-Office website.

His company Vital-Office GmbH in Germany offers professional services in the field of Consulting, Architecture, Baubiology, Feng Shui, Planning and Design through groups of self-employed partners associated with Vital-Office.

The Vital-Office company also manufactures a wide range of office furniture from exclusive executive desks to conference tables with integrated media technique to ergonomic desk systems according to Feng Shui principles.