

Los Angeles Times

BUSINESS

Want a Corner Office? First Check the Chi

More big firms, among them News Corp., are quietly using *feng shui* in their work spaces to help ensure success.

By SALLIE HORNEISTER
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Michael Stern had one of the best perches in town.

From his window on the 11th floor of DirectTV's El Segundo headquarters, the new chief executive of the satellite-TV company could take in the mountains, downtown skyscrapers, LAX and ships out at sea.

Stern traded that panorama last week for a view of the Hyperion sewage treatment plant and the company parking garage. But the new office has something his old one lacked: It's a lucky

charm for someone born on May 25, 1954, Stern's birth date.

At least that's the assessment of the *feng shui* consultants hired by Stern's boss, media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

Along with a growing number of major corporations, Murdochs' News Corp. empire is quietly employing the 4,000-year-old Eastern practice as a way to improve its business success.

Other corporate believers reportedly include Coca-Cola Co., which called on a *feng shui* expert at the suggestion of one of its Asian bottlers, as well as Procter & Gamble, Hewlett-Packard and Ford Motor Co.

At least one state lawmaker also is promoting the custom. In January, California Assemblyman Leland Yee, a San Francisco Democrat, proposed a resolution that would require the state's building standards to promote *feng shui* principles.

"Is it mainstream? No. But it's used more than people acknowledge," said Peter Reiss, a *feng shui* practitioner in Genesee, N.Y., who serves as a consultant to several corporate clients.

News Corp. declined to discuss its use of *feng shui*, as did Murdoch and Stern. But sources said that since Murdoch's 1999 marriage to Wendy Deng, who is of Chinese descent, he has become a big believer in its powers.

Shortly after taking over DirectTV in December to fill a gaping hole in his global satellite TV operation, Murdoch turned to an elderly Chinese couple who are considered *feng shui* masters, according to several News Corp. executives.

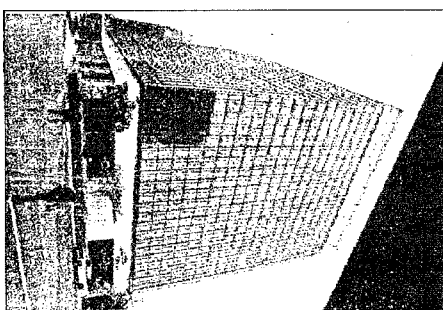
The couple couldn't be reached for comment. But DirectTV insiders said the couple was horrified by some of the things they found at the El Segundo headquarters.

One of their biggest concerns was the office occupied by the company's chief financial officer, Michael Palkovic.

The problem? The adjoining bathroom.

The *feng shui* consultants said the company's profits, which have been negligible since DirectTV launched in 1995, were being sucked down the toilet, according to people familiar with the findings. As a result, Palkovic is scheduled to move this week to a new office on the 11th floor, the only one without a bathroom.

Meanwhile, an even bigger relocation was averted. At one point, the consultants were said to have wanted a unit of the finance department moved from the fourth floor because they said four is considered an unlucky number when it is linked with money. They changed their minds when they discovered that [See *Feng Shui*, Page C5]



REN HILTZK FOR ANGELES TIMES
TRADING SPACES: DirectTV's CEO moved to a new office that is a lucky one, according to *feng shui*.

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