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FEATURE:

Net Set: The Web Within

[Corcoran.com](#) browses for peace -- and publicity

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"I need five minutes just to go inside myself," says Alex Stark, standing before a makeshift altar with incense, statues, bells, and shells carefully assembled on bright scarves next to a flat-panel monitor. At a time when the Pets.com spokesperson gets interviewed on ABC, it shouldn't surprise anyone that Stark is feng shui-ing Corcoran.com's real estate Website in order to generate the kind of harmony -- and publicity -- the new economy demands. The principles of feng shui work on the Internet, according to Stark, because it's "pure energy," which is what the Chinese art of balancing design is all about. "We're dealing with a type of energy that didn't exist before," he says, as Corcoran Group founder Barbara Corcoran -- radiating her own distinct energy in a signature bright-red dress -- unveils the site to employees and media in the company's offices above Barneys. (Before the company moved in, the space was "smudged," in a Native American practice that eliminates evil spirits.) Stark believes a Website must maintain a balance of two fifths yin and three fifths yang; most e-commerce sites "clobber you with yang" by focusing too much on the hard sell. Stark says most of the Corcoran site is balanced according to feng shui's essential elements. (Each of them, he says, correlates to an aspect of Web design. For example, winter, or water, is content, which must always be flowing.) "The ease of this site," he says, "will impact the bottom line." Which, of course, is what it's all about: Just as Stark was explaining how the wood element translates to potential earnings, Corcoran.com CEO James Kim got a note informing him the company had just secured its next round of financing.