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By Chris Nolter

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Finding Wall Street's chi

By Amy Wu

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Alex Stark has helped Citi, Merrill and others create “harmonious environments” for business success.
2. Stark: Most requests focus on “maximizing opportunity and increasing investment returns.”
3. 50% of clients want a strengths-weaknesses analysis of their space; others want to improve odds of success

Alex Stark says he creates “harmonious environments.”

A feng-shui-master-astrologist in private practice in New York, Alex Stark, 58, says he has counseled Citigroup Inc., Merrill Lynch & Co., and other corporations on how to use feng shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement and flow, to promote business success. So what is he advising companies do in these stressful times? We called him to find out.

Movers: What are the common requests you get from clients?

Alex Stark: Most requests have to do with maximizing opportunity and increasing investment returns. About 50% of clients want me to look at their physical space, either when they are building out their new offices or their existing space. I analyze their strengths and vulnerabilities in institutional terms and find how the space reflects those strengths or weaknesses. By adjusting the space to more closely reflect institutional goals and shoring up weaknesses, potential for success is improved.

Movers: What about the other 50%?

Alex Stark: The other 50% seek to increase the odds of success. I often turn to astrology, rituals and other more esoteric approaches, and a combination of psychology, intuition and luck, to maximize possibilities.

Movers: What are some examples of your work?

Alex Stark: One client was the CEO of a very large land arbitrage company in California, which got into a heap of trouble during this last event. The company had to enter into liquidation. They were working with tracts as large as 10,000 to 15,000 acres. Exactly a month after this happened, the same CEO was able to re-start another company and landed a \$10 million deal, this time entirely on his own. This happened only four months ago, so you can imagine the jubilation.

Movers: What have you done on Wall Street?

Alex Stark: One firm really wanted to move into a better address on Wall Street. They knew what address they wanted and which floor, but the existing tenants would not negotiate with them in order to open up the space they wanted. The site they were interested in overlooked the stock exchange and the Federal Reserve. With the help of some feng shui procedures, not only were they able to secure the exact space they wanted, but at favorable terms.

Movers: How much do you charge?

Alex Stark: I have helped design medium-size investment firms for around \$10,000 to \$15,000. For larger land development projects, the budgets can reach much higher sums, although these rarely go over five figures.

Movers: Can you look into your crystal ball and tell us where the U.S. economy is headed?

Alex Stark: This year will continue to present problems with faltering investor and consumer confidence, and liquidity will continue to be a problem for many companies. Institutional investments will restart late in 2008, with growing confidence as new opportunities are identified. On the other hand, there is a large section of the economy that is healthy, which can weather the storm, provided short-term capital is available.

Movers: What about the Dow?

Alex Stark: If I could accurately predict that, I would quit my feng shui job.

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