

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

Revelling in her element

> Best-selling feng shui author and practitioner Lillian Too shares how her choices in life have shaped her success

WOMEN have come a long way from being mere shadows of men. Many have stepped forward to take destiny in their own hands and light their own path in life.

In this first of a series of articles of women who not only shaped their own destinies but were also very successful, best-selling feng shui author and practitioner Lillian Too tells how she turned her back on the corporate world at the height of her success to create an even more successful – and fulfilling – life for herself.

Lillian, congratulations for being selected as one of today's influential women. How do you manage to balance the challenges and demands of both a career and family?

Well, I feel very happy and honoured to be so recognised. Hopefully, sharing my thoughts and experiences will prove beneficial and perhaps inspire other women who want to have a career and a great family life to hang in there when life gets stressful.

The operative word here is balance. This is something vitally important to me ... I also believe in the satisfaction of our lower chakras before we can think of our upper

chakras. So when I was younger, my focus was on becoming successful, getting rich and things like that – all rather material.

But as I matured, my focus turned to family and love, the kind of nurturing love that comes with our entering what I call our nesting period ... after Jennifer (her daughter) was born and [growing] up, she became more important to me than my career.

This outward focus on another human being was, I believe, the key to everything wonderful that was to come later. So today you see before you a very fulfilled woman – very happy and contented.

Fifteen years ago, you set out to demystify and distil the practice of feng shui into easy-to-understand literature which not only put feng shui on the world map but you into publishing history as well. What inspired you to do that?

I had then “retired” from the corporate world to focus on my 11-year-old daughter. I came back from Hongkong to tutor her, put her in a great boarding school and then I realised I had nothing to do.

I decided to pursue my dream of becoming a best-selling writer. Actually I wrote on three different subjects – the first, on the power of

the mind (a self-help motivational book); the second, a fictional tale about Empress Wu of the Tang Dynasty; and the third, on feng shui, a subject near to my heart and something I knew quite a fair bit about.

I set up a publishing company to publish all three and ... the feng shui book took off. [UK's] Random House and Harper Collins ... commissioning editors flew to Kuala Lumpur to sign me up. ... I agreed to do books with both ... [and] several of my feng shui books became international bestsellers in many countries.

It was wonderful. And that's how it all started ...

Many of my books were translated into over 30 languages and to date I have written over 60 books on feng shui and the same number on astrology – the 12 annuals on animal signs which sell thousands each year ... it is all very satisfying indeed.

Of all the challenges you've faced in both your personal and professional life, which one most defines you as a person and why?
Wow, this is a hard one. My life has been filled with a great many challenges and I cannot think of a single one that was so amazing that it “defined” me as a person.

My belief systems were forged over time and one experiential lesson builds on another ... The important thing is to grow in strength and courage – morally as well as materially.

It is so important never to succeed at the expense of hurting someone else; and also never to give in to our base instincts – those are the real challenges of living ... to always take the high road when faced with a choice.

As one of the first women CEOs in the Malaysian corporate scene, why did you quit? Do you have any regrets doing that?

It was not really so tough to quit [the corporate world] especially if it is to spend more time with the family. In the 80s, few women were interested in the career path.

I myself sort of bumbled into it and I got to enjoy it very much – maybe because I made it to the very top in a very short span of time and I worked for a great guy – a very clever man who brought out all that was rather capable and efficient in me.

But that was it. It was all rather cold



and clever.

When Jennifer said to me: “Mummy why can't you be like other mums?” that sort of tugged at my heart strings. She saw so little of me, so I decided then to quit while I was still on top and had already made enough money to retire.

[It was the] best decision I ever made. That was the real and only reason I quit. Then, of course, I started writing books and feng shui took off. I guess you can call it karma.

How do you manage your time and make those decisions that will ultimately affect not only yourself but also others working under you?

I feel very blessed that at my age I am still busy, still relevant, still needed and wanted by others. It is the best anti-ageing serum ever!

How do I cope? It really is easy to work hard and work well doing something you love. I adore what I am doing as it inspires me.

My work is very creative but more than that, it is beneficial to many people. This is something that really drives me – that everything I write and make and sell really can make a difference in someone's life.

I treat everyone who works for me as part of my family. I have a core group of people whom I genuinely love and care for and I think they care for me too.

So our company is not just about me. It is about us and they all know it. I guess this is what makes them work as hard as I, and how I work as hard as them.

Are there things you still like to do?

These days I am very into magic – the good white light, bright light magic that comes with powerful spiritual awakening. I have been studying Tibetan Cosmic Magic for the past 10 years and this is a logical extension of my work in feng shui.

What are the qualities that you feel women today need to be successful in life?

Focus, courage, integrity, ambition, skills and patience to make it to the top – and good moral fibre to stay at the top!

How has your own life been changed by feng shui?

Well, one cannot write with conviction unless one has personally benefited from something. It is integrity and honesty of writing that makes one's books into bestsellers. So it has been for me.

Over the years, I have seen feng shui work its magic on others especially in Hongkong [where] feng shui [is] used by all the top tycoons there, Chinese as well as kwei lo!

Feng shui is easy – there are three dimensions to its practice – the space aspect, the time aspect and the spiritual aspect. For all three dimensions, there are specific methods. Learn them and you are well on your way.

Making yourself worthy of hire

EXPLAINING why someone should hire you, or introduce you to a friend who is hiring, can be uncomfortable.

You need to sell yourself, but you don't want to sound like a salesman. Instead of detailing what's so great about you, tell a story that covers the following:

▶ **Situation.** Explain the problem or situation that you, your unit, or your

company was facing.

▶ **Tasks.** Outline what your responsibility was in solving the problem.

▶ **Achievements.** Make clear what you did to meet your responsibility.

▶ **Results.** What happened as a result of your achievements? Did revenues increase? Did customer satisfaction improve? Use specific examples to

pique your audience's interest.

This tip was adapted from *Guide to Getting a Job*. – Reuters Life!

The Management Tip of the Day offers quick, practical tips and ideas from Harvard Business Review and HBR.org (www.hbr.org). Any opinions expressed are not endorsed by Reuters.

Malaysia's Largest Mobile Lifestyle Expo!

GoMobile EXPO

12-14 NOVEMBER 2010
11AM - 9PM, KL CONVENTION CENTRE

Free Entrance!

Buy!

- Fantastic bargains on phones, accessories, packages & more!
- All major brands participating!

Do Not Miss! Mobile Phone Museum!
Check out what early phones look like!

Exciting Workshops!
Check our daily schedule or visit www.gomobile.my for updates on workshops to be held!

Get Your Friends to GoMobile Expo!
Bring your friends to GoMobile and you could get a **Free BlackBerry smartphone!**
Details: www.gomobile.my