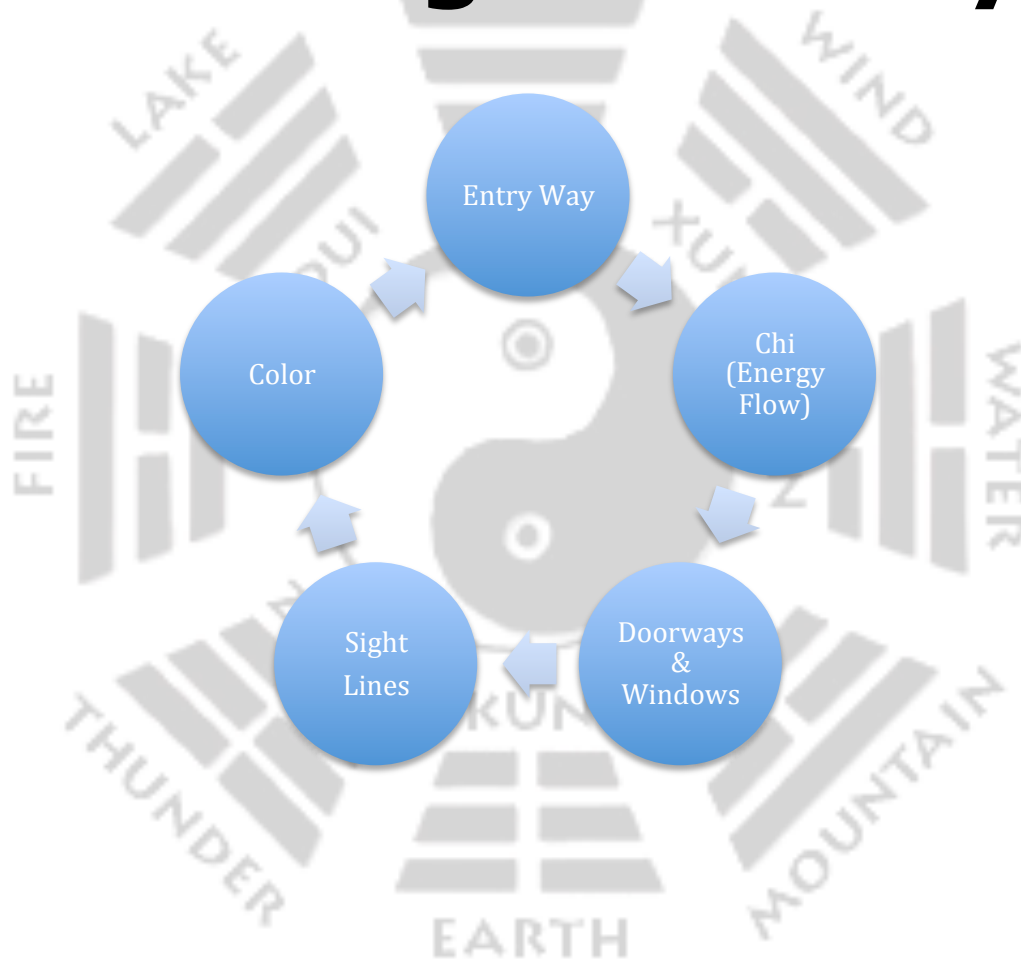




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# Optimize Your Meeting Space... The Feng Shui Way!



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**FENG SHUI:**  
**The ancient Chinese art and science of placement.**

Its name derives from two types energies, Wind (Feng) and Water (Shui), that shape our world.

The quality of your club meetings is directly related to the qualities of your meeting room: **Light, Sound, Smells, Color, Visual Stimuli, Furniture Layout, Entry Ways, Windows, Doors, Space, Clutter** and more. Simply put: your room has room for improvement!

**ENTRANCE WAY**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible?               | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discernable Threshold?    | <input type="checkbox"/> Signage?                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear Pathways?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Distractions?             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First things you see?     | <input type="checkbox"/> Obvious where to go next? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What's in "lucky" corner? | <input type="checkbox"/> Does it feel private?     |

**Tips:**

- ✓ Avoid congestion. Strive for ease of flow.
- ✓ Nice aromas entice.
- ✓ Plants, signs, banners can welcome guests.
- ✓ Make your entrance way inviting, safe and warm.

**Notes:**

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## **SPEAKER'S BACKDROP: Sacred Space!**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Devoid of doors, windows    | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid color (ex. Black) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No distractions in front of | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear sightlines to?    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is speaker area set apart?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Elevated in status?     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protected from entry/exit   | <input type="checkbox"/> Easy access to podium?  |

## **ROOM SET-UP**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easy to navigate?      | <input type="checkbox"/> Ample leg & arm room? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Space to write notes?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Handouts orderly      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chairs in neat rows    | <input type="checkbox"/> Absence of clutter    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exposed wires, cables? | <input type="checkbox"/> Room temperature?     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good lighting for all? | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheltered from noise? |

## **WHAT YOUR ROOM SAYS ABOUT YOUR CLUB**

- ✓ Wall of Achievement: Member Achievement Records, etc.
- ✓ Library of resources visible?
- ✓ Motivational quotes posted?
- ✓ Where are your banner, awards, ribbons displayed?
- ✓ Celebrate successes
- ✓ Plants, flowers, artwork all enhance your meeting space.
- ✓ Lectern, Gavel, Microphone, Podium? Logo? Awards?
- ✓ Guest Book prominently featured?

## **KEY FENG SHUI CONCEPTS TO REMEMBER**

- ✓ Clutter dissipates energy
- ✓ Energy is lost through doorways, jagged edges.
- ✓ Color can soothe, comfort, inspire, instill confidence!

## EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVES:

"Thresholds are important! An entrance should be inviting, attractive, comfortable and unobstructed. It marks the transition from the public to that which is private."

— Alice Inoue,  
Author of *Feng Shui Your Life*,

"Before a speaker utters a word, the room is already making a statement!"

What statement is the room making? Is it saying it's old or tired? Only when the meeting room is optimized, is your message optimized!"

— Katie Weber  
*The Red Lotus Letter Feng Shui E-zine for wealth*

"Lavender calms. Yellow items (live Chrysanthemums) brighten dull rooms, stimulate mental creativity. Red is good for boosting Chi (Chinese for energy). When speaking, to boost your own energy, wear power red. Speaking on emotionally charged/difficult topics? If conflict's present, wearing pastel colors (blue, pink, green, lilac) helps calm listeners."

— Sheryl Roush DTM, PDG  
Accredited Speaker

Create a meeting space to enhance concentration, uplift the spirit and warm people's souls!

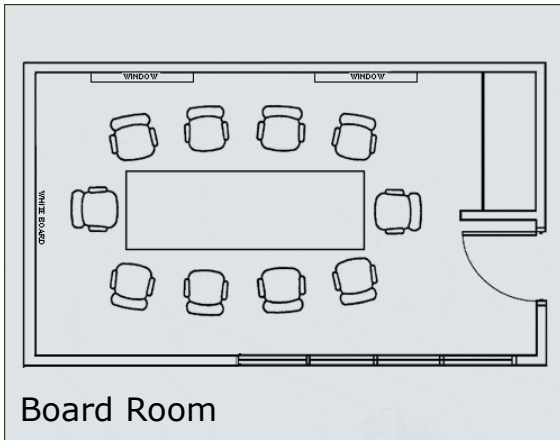
—Craig

"Every aspect of the built environment has an impact on us: Light, sound, smells, and visual stimuli can influence our energy level and responses"

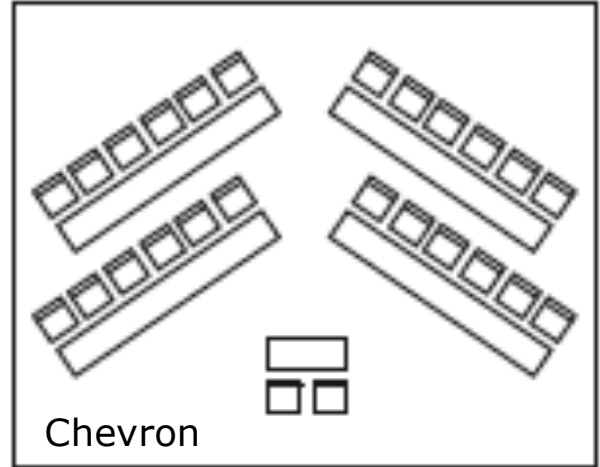
— Linda Lenore, ASID, Feng Shui Master, founder, Green Chi Designs  
([www.GreenChiDesigns.com](http://www.GreenChiDesigns.com))

"You have a choice how you place materials on tables or chairs. Care enough to place them down neatly and uniformly at each station. It will be noticed...one way or the other!"

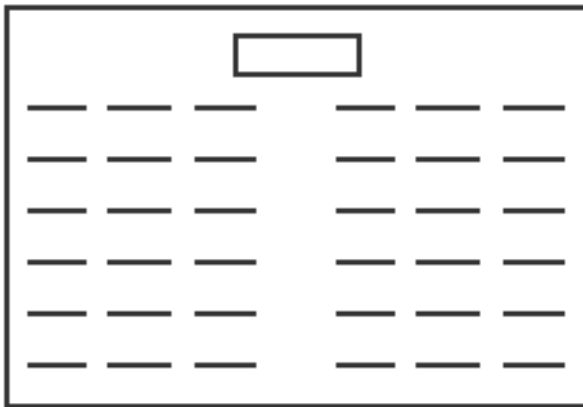
— Syndi Seid  
[AdvancedEtiquette.com](http://AdvancedEtiquette.com)



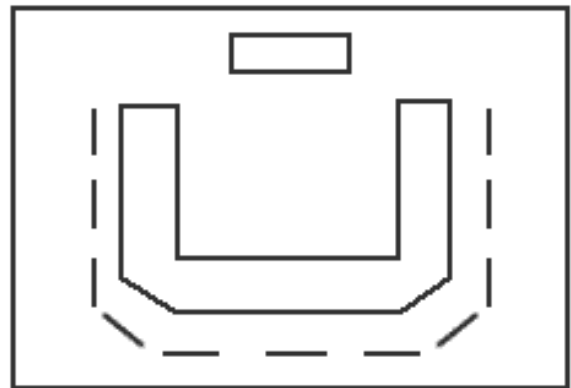
Board Room



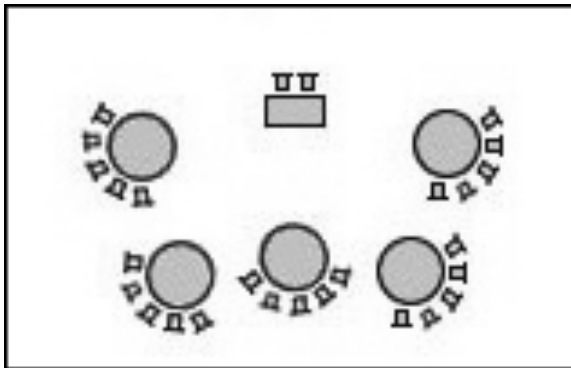
Chevron



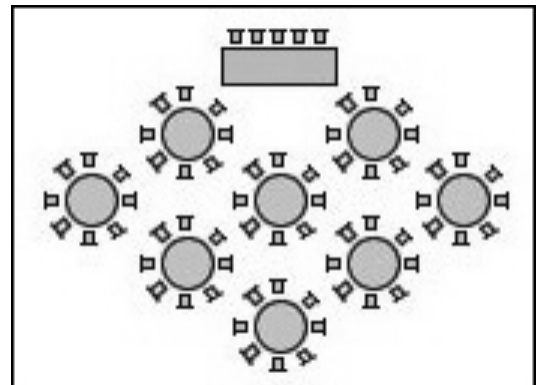
Theatre



U-shaped



Cabaret Style



Banquet Style

## **Speaking *Inside* the Box**

*How the ancient science of Feng Shui helps clubs optimize meeting rooms for success*

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Whether your club meets in a high rise or a basement, a barn or a barracks, you have the ability to alter key variables to make the experience more inviting, nurturing, welcoming and simultaneously reinforce the goals of your club. Did you know your meeting room has room for improvement?

Many variables contribute to an effective speech: the quality of your material, the amount you practice, the volume of your voice, whether you dress for success, and other variables. Yet little attention is paid to the *environment* in which you give your speeches.

“Before a speaker utters a word, the room is already making a statement!” declares Katie Weber, an Austin Texas publisher of *The Red Lotus Letter Feng Shui E-zine for wealth*. Weber, *Living Space* columnist for Tribune Media Services, continues, “What statement is the room making? Is it saying it’s old or tired? Only when the meeting room is optimized, is your message optimized!” Here, the ancient discipline of Feng Shui offers insights.

### **Sway your Audiences with positive Feng Shui**

“Every aspect of the built environment has an impact on us: Light, sound, smells, and visual stimuli can influence our energy level and responses” states professional speaker Linda Lenore, ASID, Feng Shui Master and founder, Green Chi Designs ([www.GreenChiDesigns.com](http://www.GreenChiDesigns.com)) in the San Francisco Bay Area. Lenore, a Certified Green Building Professional, continues: “The Modern sciences of environmental behavioral research and eco-psychology, along with ancient wisdoms of Feng Shui, each recognize the impact our environment has upon our happiness, productivity and feelings of well-being.”

Feng Shui (pronounced fung-shway), is the ancient Chinese art and science of placement. Its name, in Chinese, refers to the two types energies, wind (feng) and water (shui), that shape our world. Feng Shui focuses on energy and its flow, and how to achieve harmony and balance in one’s environment.

Emperors, architects, interior designers and others, including Donald Trump, have been guided by the wisdom of Feng Shui for centuries;

Toastmasters too can heed the wisdom of Feng Shui to optimize meeting spaces for safety and comfort, learning and inspiration.

### **On Arrival: The Entrance Way**

Think about places you visit: a doctor's office, government office or restaurant. How do you feel as you approach each? Are you drawn to them? What do you see, smell, hear and experience upon entering? Do you feel comfortable, safe and at ease? Or anxious, constricted or disoriented?

The same applies to Toastmaster clubs. Do guests and members find your club easily? Is it welcoming? Is the banner visible from a distance? Is the entryway unobstructed by furniture or other impediments?

Avoid congestion. An effective entrance way should offer ease and flow of people (energy). ~~Is there a person to greet and welcome all whom enter? Often it's the club's Sergeant-at-Arms.~~ As you enter the threshold is it clear where to go next? What is the first thing you see upon entering, often diagonally across from the entrance (regarded as a source of energy and referred to as "the lucky corner")? Is it inspiring or an eye sore? Make it shine.

"Thresholds are important!" says Alice Inoue, author of *Feng Shui Your Life*, and former member of First Hawaiian Center Toastmasters in Honolulu. "An entrance should be inviting, attractive, comfortable and unobstructed. It marks the transition from the public to that which is private."

Inoue, a life guide ([www.AliceInspired.com](http://www.AliceInspired.com)) and Feng Shui expert, elaborates, "Making the entrance comfortable for guests eases the subtle yet very real discomfort of transition on a subconscious level. Ease the transition of your entrance with symbols that say who your club is and what it stands for, to allay their fears and quell anxieties."

### **Ruminations on Rooms**

Is your meeting room well lit? Is the temperature comfortable? How does the room smell? Does air circulate? Is the room laid out for comfort? Do participants have ease of access in navigating the hallways of the edifice, the walkways and aisles in the room? Are the sight lines good so all can see the lectern and also view each other from the speaker's perch?

## **Conduct A “Background Check” for Speakers**

After the entryway, the second most important part of your room is the place from where your speakers present. Are speakers supported by a solid wall behind them? They need to be, or at the very least, have a solid-colored dark curtain as a backdrop (never a pattern). And never place the speaker in front of a door or window!

It’s disruptive to the audience and speaker if someone enters or exits a door behind the speaker. Symbolically, energy is lost when a speaker stands in front of a doorway or window. Keep them safe. Weber suggests additional tips to enhance the speaker’s stature and message. “Consider creating a sentry effect with flags on poles<sup>1</sup> (symbols of power), or plants (representations of nature) flanking both sides of the lectern, to frame it and signify its importance.” A podium or elevated platform also raises the speaker’s stature, literally and figuratively. By the same token, don’t have stuffed animals, especially animal heads, glaring down since the speaker could feel attacked.

## **Clutter Clouds and Confuses**

When optimizing a room for Toastmasters success, don’t underestimate the importance of the placement of handouts on the table in front of attendees. Syndi Seid, founder of Advanced Etiquette in San Francisco, explains, “You have a choice how you place materials on tables or chairs. Care enough to place them down neatly and uniformly at each station. It will be noticed...one way or the other!”

Don’t arbitrarily scatter agendas, speech evaluation forms, voting slips, rosters, schedules and more in a messy pile. This is not only unsightly, but confusing to members and guests, and dissipates energy. Stacking the materials neatly, in the order of use, like table settings, makes for a more inviting experience and crisper feel to the meeting. In this case, form informs function.

Clutter can also extend to other items. Are chairs neatly organized in a uniform pattern that is pleasing to our eyes, which like clarity and order? Whether in rows or pushed in under tables, Chairs should be equidistant from each other.

Take pains to cover any wires, cables and cords that may be visible. Beware of extraneous items left over from previous meetings or other

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<sup>1</sup> Be sure to follow proper flag protocol for the country where your club meets. In the United States, the flag should be to the speaker’s right when facing the audience.



groups sharing the room. Wipe the chalkboard or whiteboard clean of its previous content. And turn over used flip chart sheets so its writings will not distract from the current meeting's speakers and subject matter under discussion.

Similarly, strive for clear thoroughfares for people walking in and out of the room, and to and from the speaking area. As the people flow, so does the energy of their thoughts and ideas being expressed.

### **Sights and Smells, Colors and Chi**

Accredited Speaker Sheryl Roush, a Past District Governor who speaks and trains professionally, often uses olfactory and visual stimulation in her training rooms to generate attention, pleasure and positive energy. The Peppermint aromatherapy she rubs on the edges of tables around the room "brightens spirits, raises energy, stifles negativity and boosts mental clarity." When using an overhead projector she leaves the open bottle next to the projector's exhaust fan. (This also helps stimulate salivation to keep the speaker's throat from becoming dry while presenting.)

Roush, creator of the popular Boot Camp course *Sparkle When You Speak™*, continues: "Lavender calms. Yellow items such as live Chrysanthemums, brighten dull rooms and stimulate mental creativity. Red is good for boosting Chi (the Chinese word for energy). If you're speaking and need to boost your own energy, wear your power red. If speaking on emotionally charged or difficult topics where conflict is present, wearing pastel colors (such as blue, pink, green, lilac) helps calm listeners." Yet whether its aromatherapy, flowers or plants, always be sensitive to possible allergies of members and guests.

Lakeview Toastmasters in Oakland California met for years in a square room with white walls in a hospital. When management decided to paint the wall yellow, club members were amazed at the positive difference it made in how all its speakers were received. Feng Shui adherents are quick to point out that yellow is the color of happiness and good cheer!

### **Go Green: Harness Plant Power**

The inclusion of plants enhances any meeting room. Not only do plants beautify often-sterile rooms, softening right angles and adding color, they represent growth, life and vitality. They also oxygenate the room. According to the National Aeronautic Space Administration (NASA), plants will absorb toxic chemicals from flooring and other interior

furnishings making the environment healthier. Flowers similarly beautify rooms and their color uplifts attendees' spirits. Plants and flowers can help harmonize a room and warm up its bland look and feel.

### **The Highs and Lows of Meeting Spaces**

If your club has a choice of meeting rooms consider variables such as natural light and sound proofing (good), excessive foot traffic or outside distractions (bad). If your club focuses on comedy you will want a tight room with a low ceiling. High ceilings or cavernous halls dissipate energy. If your focus is on storytelling, you might add rugs and pillows and comfortable sofa chairs to give your room a homier feeling.

Be aware that whenever there is a wall within six feet in front of us, the subconscious mind decides we are being blocked. So lay out your room and the placement of its lectern accordingly. Leverage your room's resources to optimize light and beauty, increase comfort and security.

### **Walls of Fame and Acclaim**

Many clubs adorn the walls of their meeting rooms with powerful statements. Some post the mission of the club or the district, or a member achievement wall chart, to underscore the purpose of the club and celebrate its members' educational achievements. Make your room a shrine to success.

Advanced practitioners of Feng Shui often guide the layout of their environments based on the *Ba-Gua*, an eight-sided chart that informs on the optimal layouts for wealth, fame, career, knowledge, vitality and four other areas of one's life.

### **Become A Chi-Master**

The power is yours! You have the ability to rearrange, reorganize, de-clutter, shift or otherwise alter your room's layout. By doing so you can improve sightlines and acoustics, introduce color and contribute natural beauty and harmony to your surroundings. When you do you'll find more visitors will join, you'll boost your speakers' confidence and attendees will be more receptive to each other. So let the energy flow!

*Craig Harrison DTM, PDG, co-founder of LaughLovers.us (596430-57) in Oakland CA, is a professional speaker. He learned long ago that energy is generated by speakers, audiences, and the environments in which they congregate. Visit [www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com](http://www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com) for more resources for Toastmasters.*