



SWEET GIG

I Ching? Ka-ching!



Sherman Tai picks up a green turtle shell the size of a fist. He plunks three bronze Chinese coins inside it, gives it a shake, and declares: "This system [I Ching] has been used for thousands of years." He tosses the coins out onto his desk. "With the three coins and your birthday, you have 216,000 [number] combinations. It's the yin and yang, just like a computer."

I'm not sure I follow this logic but I'm not about to question his methods. The 52-year-old Chinese fortune teller and feng shui master has built up way more cred than his one-room Richmond office would have you believe. With Electronic Arts, Richmond City Hall, HSBC and the Richmond Olympic Oval contractors willing to fork out thousands for his advice on everything from investments to where to plunk a sofa, this former mechanical engineer must be doing something right.

"[With stocks] we take the number, the nature of business and then divide it with the five elements to see how they match with the [investor]," he explains, cryptically.

Tai claims his skills were passed to him by a Tibetan monk who took him under his wing as a child after he was sent by his parents to the Hong Kong countryside to recuperate from a head injury – a mythic-like tale that conveniently gives him the aura of a 'chosen one.' "I was trained in fortune telling, Oriental philosophy, meditation, qi gong," he declares, unable to resist taking a swipe at other so-called feng shui masters. "Caucasian people, they just spend three or six months in a training class and say they are feng shui masters," he sniffs. "I trained – I can't remember how many years."

So does it work? "I never try to convince people to use feng shui," Tai insists. "I don't do any advertising. But it can improve your chance of success. Otherwise, people would not pay me to do this." And with that, our interview is over. But not before he passes on a few words of personal advice. "You need to be clear [about] which direction you go. Otherwise you mess up business, career, personal life and can't have any success." Thanks. I think. □