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## Year of the Fire Monkey to bring volatility and financial mischief

By Andrew Seale | Insight – Fri, 5 Feb, 2016 2:35 PM EST



A woman poses in front of a monkey-shaped installation in Beijing, China, Feb. 5, 2016. (Reuters)

On Monday, many Canadians will celebrate the end of the lunar calendar, which marks the beginning of the traditional Chinese Year of the Fire Monkey.

Rooted in Ancient China's agriculture-based society – which used to encompass parts of Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – Asian populations have traditionally used the moons cycles to know when to plant seeds and when to harvest. More recently, the lunar cycles have been applied to wealth management and finances to predict prosperity.

“From a financial perspective, basically the monkey is a trickster, the monkey can be unpredictable and is very intelligent and very innovative,” says Kristi Stangeland, who is founder of the Toronto-based [Feng Shui Consulting Service](#), a company dedicated to helping corporate and private clients realize their goals using Feng Shui practices, and former CPA with PricewaterhouseCoopers and J.P. Morgan Chase. “Fire is combustible and hot.”

The combination is part of a rotating system of 12 zodiac signs and the cycle of five elements, which change every two years. Those born during the Year of the Monkey are said to possess incredibly primate-type characteristics like curiosity and cleverness coupled with a healthy dose of mischief – which kind of sounds like the economy as of late.

If the zodiac is any indicator, this year will be a much more volatile year than the past two which were driven by the wooden horse and ram.

But to channel the abstract into genuine insight, Stangeland points to 60 years ago, the last time it was the Year of the Fire Monkey.

“There was so much innovation that happened in 1956 that has stuck with us, it’s amazing,” says Stangeland. “The snooze alarm, video tapes, hard disk drives, the first commercial nuclear plant – again fire, heat – h-bomb testing, which is not so great but still it’s stayed with us, and rock and roll, Elvis on Ed Sullivan, it’s about heat and about being unpredictable.”

### Making the most of the Monkey

She says those serious about finding prosperity and growth in the Year of the Fire Monkey should look to innovative companies and embrace that unpredictability.

“Sixty years ago the Dow Jones hit its all time high so its going to be one of those ‘hold onto your hats’ type of years,” says Stangeland.

Outside of market volatility and into personal finances, it’s a good year to start an emergency fund if you haven’t already. Even if you don’t subscribe to the lunar calendar you can take a page out of the Chinese tradition of red envelopes. The ritual involves married people passing on red envelopes containing \$5 to \$20 each to children and unmarried adults as a way of helping them build their financial foundation.

More recently, the custom is used as a tool to teach young people how to save and manage their money with children often being encouraged to deposit the money and look to building capital and learning investing. With a fire monkey at play, it sounds like a good time to set aside a little extra for those “what ifs”.

“My summary of 2016, it’s a powerful, demanding year with conflict but great potential,” adds Stangeland.

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