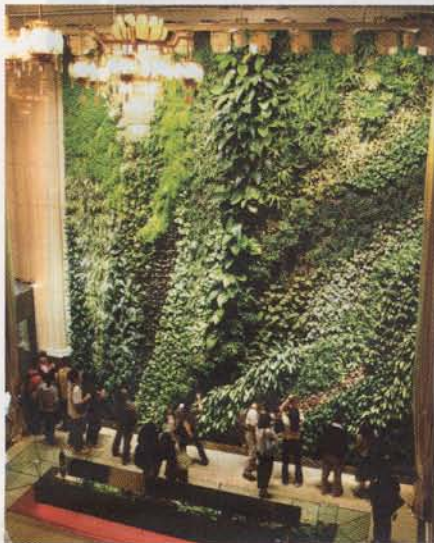


Climbing the Office Walls

PLANTS LIVE UP A WORKPLACE: they clean the air, cheer cubicle dwellers and entice customers into cafés, stores and spas. But they take up floor space. The solution? Companies are going vertical by covering their retail and office walls with plants.



NO WATERING CAN NEEDED: *The new green National Concert Hall in Taipei*

Interior plant walls first sprouted about three years ago. Firms that specialized in environmentally friendly plant-covered roofs discovered that plants could grow on ever-steeper inclines. Two key players, Green Living Technologies of Rochester, N.Y., and Elevated Landscape Technologies of Brantford, Ontario, have since installed hundreds of green walls. The trade group Green Roofs for Healthy Cities offers a training class for builders and designers who want to work with vertical plant installations.

The typical green wall costs between \$60 and \$125 per square foot to install. It comes with slow-growing, shallow-rooted plants that grow on a wall-mounted frame that contains a closed water system. A wall requires only spotlights or skylights, small amounts of plant food and a battery to run the water-filtration system, says Hans Andersson of Green Fortune, a Stockholm firm that has put them into clothing stores, auto dealerships and a concert hall. Typically, the firm that installs the wall provides care under a contract similar to any other office-plant maintenance contract. The best part of plant-covered walls: no paint job.

—LINDA STERN

Let It Snow, Let It Snow

BETTING ON THE weather may not sound like a business plan, but it's what farmers, ski resorts and utilities do all the time. Now they're turning to new financial products to hedge the risk. "Every November or December we get nervous," says Eliot Peyser, CEO of Manhattan's Weatherproof Garment Co. So this year he bought \$10 million of insurance to protect against a warm winter.

The insurance policy, arranged by weather-hedging specialty firm Storm Exchange of New York, is a step beyond the weather-futures contracts that have traded on the Chicago Mercantile Ex-

change since 1999. Those contracts track heating and cooling days, as well as snowfall, for many cities. The theory is that prices are set by a market balanced between buyers who want bad weather, like shovel manufacturers,

and those who don't, like builders. The contracts have become a big business of their own: last year, \$19 billion in weather contracts were traded. That's a deluge—or a windfall—depending on the hedger's perspective.

—L.S.



WINTER WORRIES: *Betting on the weather can be a business*

QUICK READ

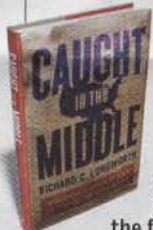
Billions of Entrepreneurs: How China and India Are Reshaping Their Futures—And Yours

By Tarun Khanna
China and India together account for 2.4 billion people—and a seemingly similar number of books that claim to reveal the secret to doing business with them. Fortunately, Khanna, an Indian-born professor at Harvard Business School, resists the temptation to simply add to this pile of tomes. After lamenting persistent Western ignorance about these Asian giants, Khanna delivers a dense but lively blend of anecdotes and analysis. He shows how entrepreneurial spirit is transforming both these countries not only economically, but strengthening ties between the two.



Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism

By Richard C. Longworth
One place in America that nobody can accuse of being unaware of China's economic ascent is the heartland—the industrial region that formed the center of the 20th century's most dynamic and innovative economy, but now is synonymous with unemployed workers and foreclosed houses. Former foreign correspondent Longworth's gloomy assessment of the prospects of a region that has been one of globalization's clear losers is harsh. But while his tale of the failures of complacent workers,



inept managers and clueless politicians to confront global competition takes place firmly in the nation's interior, he offers little reason for those living elsewhere to feel insulated from similar threats.

The Middle-Class Millionaire: The Rise of the New Rich and How They Are Changing America

By Russ Alan Prince and Lewis Schiff
Of course, not all Americans are slipping down the economic food chain. Consultants Prince and Schiff draw on their own research to identify the attitudes and, more important, the habits of an emerging class of people who have earned their way out of the middle class. While this group's existence is hardly a secret, particularly to residents of upscale suburbs, the author's research into what makes them tick—valuing money over happiness, for one thing—is impressively thorough.



—JOHN SPARKS