

THE INDIAN WORK ENVIRONMENT

It is important for you to understand the cultural dynamics of the Indian work environment. Just as the physical environment varies from office to office, the work ethos differs from one organization to another. The degree of difference depends on the region and ethnic group as well as the individual's

family background, education, age, sex and exposure to other cultures. You need to understand these cultural differences and make allowances for them if you are to build harmonious partnerships. It is, therefore, important to check your assumptions and avoid generalizations.

Relationship-building



There are social relationships between employers and employees and among peer groups in the Indian work environment. Employees expect their organization to look after them as a family would. It is not unusual to find an employer interested in his employees' social well-being and concerned about their family and personal matters. The employer socializes with his employees to strengthen the bond between them. Indians hesitate to change jobs. An employee always weighs offers from other firms—even those with a much higher salary—against the social security his or her current organization provides.

Indians rarely discuss business with potential partners without first establishing close rapport, trust and confidence. Indians rarely divulge business information before they are certain their counterparts can be trusted. Relationships are more

important than contractual obligations; a relation-based approach yields better results than a task-oriented one.

Westerners sometimes misinterpret the informality and casual atmosphere found in most Indian organizations as rudeness. It is, for example, uncommon to knock on someone's office door before entering. It is common for an Indian to announce his presence with a "good morning" or a cheery "hello" after entering the office. Not a sign of disrespect or a deliberate intrusion of privacy, it is merely the Indian way of treating the office—a place where one spends eight hours each day in the company of colleagues—like a second home.

Intelligence alone does not command respect. Respect also depends on one's status and authority. In India's "sir culture," respect for the boss is a deeply embedded tradition. It should