
WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR CHINESE PARTNER

You may have a tendency to be judgmental because so many of your experiences are different from those at home in Canada. Don't be judgmental; it would be unfair, unproductive, and it could undermine your effectiveness. If you are judgmental, you are likely to be perceived as arrogant by your Chinese partners.

When you first arrive in China, as a Canadian business person or technical advisor, be prepared for a certain amount of skepticism, even rejection on the part of your new Chinese colleagues. Although courteous, some will not offer their sincere friendship at the outset. Your management methods may be viewed as impractical. You should enter the partnership paying close attention to becoming accepted, trusted and credible.

Keep in mind your Chinese partners are very proud of their long and well-established traditions. You will likely have to work hard to convince them that you have something to offer. Quite commonly, they will ask you for advice on how they can improve their products, company or management, for example. This may be a courtesy designed to bring you face as the foreign expert. They may not expect

you to take their request seriously. Indeed, they might be offended if you suggest improvements immediately. Keep in mind that they just might regard you as a threat or nuisance, in much the same way Canadian consultants are sometimes regarded when reviewing Canadian organizations.

Although it is dangerous to stereotype people on the basis of perceived differences in personality traits, there are some commonly acknowledged ones. As Canadians, we tend to promote ourselves and consciously attempt to improve our public image both on and off the job. In contrast, Chinese people downplay personal abilities, achievements and contributions, promoting, instead, the attributes of their group. Modesty is considered a virtue. When asked to perform a task they are well qualified for, Chinese people may belittle their own abilities and profess inadequacy. They will greet compliments with diversionary comments such as, "It was my duty." In job interviews, Chinese people traditionally respond only to the questions asked. Even their responses reflect modesty; when their eyes are cast down they appear humble.