

Personal vs. business life

Most Canadians make a clear distinction between personal and business matters, but Nepalese don't. For example, it is common for Nepalese to drop into the office to chat with staff about personal concerns. Similarly, it is common for Nepalese to settle personal affairs in the office, read newspapers at work, and so on. Your Nepalese counterparts will send your office staff out to pay their personal telephone bills during office hours. They will, however, work late into the night and on weekends to complete urgent assignments.

If you do something outside the office environment that your Nepalese counterparts disapprove of, it is likely to sour your relationship with them at work because Nepalese tend not to make clear distinctions between business and personal matters. There is another side of this issue. If you are critical of your counterparts in an official or business context, they are likely to take it personally.

Canadians tend to be more concerned with personal privacy than Nepalese. Nepalese are accustomed to asking personal questions. Nepalese borrow and lend things frequently without the same level of concern Canadians show toward private property.

Nepalese value leisure, considering it a reward for hard work. Money is a means to enjoy life, not an end in itself.

Nepalese give gifts to friends, guests and business partners, a practice that makes many foreigners uncomfortable, particularly when the gift is valuable. Nepalese frequently invite foreign guests home for refreshments or meals.

Some Canadian expatriates have observed that the Nepalese tend to disregard official rules and conventions when concerned with pressing personal or business matters. For example, it is quite common, and not considered disrespectful, for Nepalese to walk in and out of a formal meeting to attend to other business or personal matters (Somlai 1989).

Nepalese may expect personal favours that are beyond your authority or mandate. For example, your Nepalese counterpart may want you to influence his or her boss regarding a promotion.

Several cross-cultural workshops in Nepal have revealed that Nepalese feel threatened when donors insist on project monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. To the Nepalese, who are sensitive to scrutiny, elaborate