

The Nepalese notion of time extends to planning. Planning is often a superficial formality, a ritual. Anticipation, an essential element of planning, is often missing. Nepalese tend to change plans at will and find it difficult to adhere to rigid work plans or highly structured procedures. Lack of planning often results in diffused responsibility, unclear accountability and vague job descriptions. One expatriate observed that some Nepalese have to do six jobs at once, resulting in all of them being done poorly.

How can Canadians cope with different concepts of time and approaches to planning? Canadian expatriates with long experience in Nepal give the following advice:

- ◆ Gently remind your counterpart about meeting times and deadlines;
- ◆ Don't schedule meetings or appointments back-to-back;
- ◆ Be flexible when scheduling meetings and tasks: expect between five and 15 minutes of small talk at the beginning of meetings unless your counterpart is western educated and/or has dealt often enough with westerners to know their habits (Somlai 1989); and
- ◆ Use planning as a tool, but with "flexible rigidity."

Priority to relationships vs. tasks

Nepalese value relationships more than tasks. Developing trust among the partners is more important to them than the partnership's contractual obligations. Harmonious, predictable friendships give Nepalese satisfaction at work where they tend to build lifetime relationships. They expect their employers to provide them with safe, cozy group environments in exchange for loyalty. Employers are expected to create a sense of belonging among employees.

Canadians, like many other westerners, tend to be highly task-oriented. They spend much less time than Nepalese in building relationships before getting down to business. Canadians tend to place their commitment to the job ahead of relationships. Some Canadians would consider the notion of relationship building fuzzy and extraneous. Canadians tend to be selective in building relationships; they have their own (subconscious, perhaps) rules regarding the number, frequency and intensity of their relationships. They are, for example, accustomed to short-term relationships at work since Canadians change jobs more frequently than Nepalese.