

We will now examine each issue in detail. Our examples are based on interviews with Canadians and their Nepalese counterparts. (We observed that Canadians in Nepal notice cultural

differences more than their Nepalese counterparts, probably because one becomes more sensitive to the differences when one is working in an alien culture.)

Cyclic vs. linear time

You have a meeting with some Nepalese. As usual, you arrive on time, but find that the Nepalese are not very punctual. Once they arrive, they tend to take considerable time before they are ready to talk business. They seem to have several other informal, non-business issues to discuss. You wonder if these talks are an appetizer. No doubt, the chit-chat drives you crazy!

As the scenario suggests, Canadians are easily led to believe that their Nepalese counterparts care little for punctuality. What underlies this over-generalization? Nepal's low score on Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance and Individualism dimensions offers some clues.

Like most Asians, Nepalese perceive time as cyclical, unending, and relative. With a deep-rooted belief in fate and life after death, time for Nepalese is inexhaustible. Seasons change and days turn to nights and days again in perpetuity. Your Nepalese partners will be aware of time commitments, but may not give them as high a priority, among other pressing concerns, as you would. They are likely to be flexible about deadlines and will expect you to be the

same. The slow, cyclical pace of life in Nepal is reinforced by low wages and a lack of social pressure to hurry. In contrast, westerners have a linear idea of time. For them, time lost is lost forever. Time is a categorical imperative. Time is money.

Don't be surprised if there is a 15-minute delay at the start of meetings with your Nepalese partners. It is expected. Once a meeting is underway, it is common to spend the first 15 minutes or more chatting about social matters. You can expect distractions during meetings, people constantly going in and out and telephones ringing. However, you may be surprised to learn that meetings tend to go on until the business at hand is done.