

assuming responsibility for anything not specifically assigned are actions that invite criticism or punishment.

Employees are expected to follow leaders' directions almost without question. Challenging authority can have serious and harmful consequences. When differences between those in authority and their subordinates cannot be avoided, the subordinates must be as ambiguous and unassertive as possible in trying to persuade their superiors. If the superiors wind up making decisions or demanding actions that are unacceptable, it is common for subordinates to resist passively. For example, they might react slowly, make excuses, fail to understand or simply stay away from work. Decision-making in a Chinese organization can be very cumbersome. Bringing about change can be slow and difficult.

A Canadian entering this environment with a mandate to change things may have a rough time. Success will come only as a result of both partners'

patience, persistence, skill, trust and understanding. Decisions may be made and agreed to, but your partner may take no action to implement them. Your solutions to mutually identified problems may be ignored. Your partners may offer reasons why they are inappropriate or cannot be done. It is incumbent upon you to ferret out the reasons for inaction and develop elegant and mutually acceptable solutions. You will have to be attuned to the "Chinese way" and sensitive to your partners' situation. You will have to observe, listen, learn and develop an appreciation for the restrictions and power structure in which your partners must function. From time to time you may not get it right, resulting in passive resistance or outright lack of cooperation from your Chinese colleagues.

It is a good strategy to court the senior people in the office. Each office has powerful, respected leaders. If you build a good working relationship with them, they can help you navigate the system.

### *Face and Guanxi*    ♦   ♦   ♦

*Loss of Honour is loss of life.*

-Fang Xuan Ling, Tang Dynasty

Face and *guanxi*, the accumulated personal capital or indebtedness

between individuals, are interrelated fundamental aspects of Chinese