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Time Management in Russian and American cultures

This work is devoted to research into the key features of the perception of time in American and Russian cultures. Understanding how time is viewed by other cultures is absolutely vital. Especially it is important for people going to work across cultures and borders and be successful.

Communication and understanding of people largely depends on their attitude to time. It, in its turn, depends on the culture in which a speaker was brought up. As we know, time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time which people spend on specific activities.

American time management remains the most developed system all other the world. It made the USA take a leading position among the countries of the Western world and Japan. Moreover, keep in mind that the United States was exactly the place of formation of science and practice of time organization. Its leading importance in the world and the impact on other cultures is undeniable today.

First, typically the Americans think that one should be productive, or at least active. What do they keep in mind: «Actions speak louder than words», «Don't let the grass grow under your feet», «Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today», «Business before pleasure», «Don't beat around the bush» and, the most popular, «Time is money». This equating time with money can be also seen in the Americans' choice of words where they spend time, save time or waste time. Time is the scarcest resource.

Of course, it doesn't mean that the Americans don't believe in leisure. But, generally, time is a precious commodity in the USA. Cultural values such as courtesy, tact and advertence take priority there. It is interesting that the Americans in an ideal would want to start and finish their discussions, tie up all the loose ends and have the contract signed and by the end of the first meeting itself. Deadlines are fixed. People from other countries who are not accustomed to making any commitments until a sense of mutual trust has been established, this Americans' habit of going more or less straight to the business can be considered as disdainful or rude. The Americans do not think that acting in any other way is worth the effort.

In this way, one of the most important problems which can suddenly come with talking to people brought up in different countries is the various attitudes to time. Understanding different points of views and positions promotes good cross-cultural communication.

Time management in Russia, like in any other country, reflects its historical characteristics, culture and social psychology. At this time people are forced to work more and more efficiently, and it is not surprising that most of them have problems with using and scheduling their time. But despite this fact, the problem of the effective using of time in most studies, is either ignored or covered very poorly. Native leaders are forced to use the developments of foreign specialists. Currently, managers of different fields, mostly expected to organize the time in the most effective way, can be divided into two groups: old-school leaders, worked under conditions of a planned economy, many of whom find it difficult to adapt to the new conditions. They prefer to work the same way they used to. Another group is new managers, most of whom had studied abroad, had read the foreign literature. They used the experience of Western way of time organization. Usually they do not differ much from their colleagues from other countries. It is natural for them to take care of the maximum efficiency of using their working time.

Russia is a culture where traditionally schedules and deadlines are viewed as flexible. For the Russians, the value of time is «elastic». In Russia there is a trend to be involved in too many things instead of the task with the highest priority. Routine duties do not allow to concentrate on one the most important thing. Planning is not rigorous. This indicates problems with delegation Russian

managers have. As the result issues and problems can be solved under pressure and stress at the last-minute or even a deadline can be missed.

Another feature of time management in Russia is that friendly relations between colleagues are more common in Russian companies. Many people prefer to start their working day with informal communication with colleagues, but not from the most important cases. Discussion of the terms of the contract can also smoothly go into a friendly conversation.

Also, being late is not perceived as being rude because if somebody was engaged in another meeting or activity it would have been rude to bring it to an end just because the clock said so. «People» come before time in Russian culture. Some Russian proverbs say: «Seven people do not wait for one», «All in good time», «Better late than never», «Moscow was built during several centuries».

At the end I want to say, it is ok that people who work in contexts of multicultural communication often express frustration with the way some of foreign associates manage their time at work. Complaints often include an inability to meet deadlines, being late for meetings, a seeming lack of focus on a priority task and so on. But successful cross cultural management depends only on the individual's ability to meet and solve problems. Everyone must be responsive and undoubtedly tolerant toward representatives of other culture.

Литература

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