

Cultural Agility (Part 2)

5. Linear Time VS Flexible Time

Linear Time – project steps are sequential. One thing at a time with no interruptions. Focus is on deadline and sticking to schedule. Emphasis is promptness and good organisation as opposed to flexibility. (Germany, Japan, Switzerland)

Flexible Time – Projects are fluid, Changing tasks as opportunities emerge, many things are dealt with at once. Adaptability and flexibility is valued over organisation. (Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, India, Kenya)

BMT or African Time is a phrase that's sometimes used for flexible time. This is seen in queues. What are the pros and cons of this? Recently my wife came into my study and apologised for disturbing me. I explained to her that I am not that linear with regards to time and speaking to her was more important than finishing my work in record time. We spoke for about an hour very meaningfully.

In Africa things change.

Germany and UK are more linear whilst India and lots of African countries are more flexible. E.g. EL wedding and research project in E. Cape.

E.g. white guy at Telkom queue. Eg in Zimbabwe the IQ was very high, IQ for bread, IQ for fuel etc. How do people see time? When the cows come home we will do such and such. When the sun starts to get warm. In linear cultures its important to stick to the agenda. Some Germans were doing business with Nigerians and planned many months in advance. The Nigerians struggled with this. In January they had been asked what their 3 meal preferences were for something happening in April. One of them explained that he was from a Muslim part of Nigeria where the holiday would only start when the supreme leader had looked at the moon and decided.

Biblical Balance of Linear and Flexible Time

2 Cor 1:16-18 - I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to return to you from Macedonia, and then to have you help me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷When I planned this, did I do it carelessly? Or do I make my plans by human standards, so as to say "Yes, yes" when I really mean "No, no"? ¹⁸But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No."...

Eph 5:15-17 - Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Psalms 90:12 - So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 8:6 - For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter

Myles Munroe Quotes on time

1. *Time is the only commodity on earth given equally to each human being*
 - a. *Time is the only commodity every human possesses*
 - b. *Every human every day is given the same amount of time*
 - c. *What you become in life is determined by how you use your 24 hours*

2. *Time is the currency of life*
3. *Every human is given the same amount of time each day*
4. *Time like all currency must be spent*
5. *Time is used to buy life*
6. *You become whatever you spend your time buying*
7. *Time is so powerful, that whatever you invest your time in, you become.*

How to Redeem the Time

1. *Time like all commodities must be managed*
2. *Time must be protected*
3. *Time must have a purpose*
4. *Time must have a vision*
5. *Time must have measurable results*
6. *Time must have worth and value*

Luke 10:30-37 - In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶*"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"*

³⁷*The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."*

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

The principle here is that you cannot be too linear about time if you are going to make time to step away from your process and do good for others. Are you open to being disturbed for purposeful things? Straight after this we see the scenario with Mary and Martha. Who do you think was linear about time? Who was in God's will?

Luke 10:38-42 - As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" ⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴²but few things are needed—or indeed only one.^f Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

6. Low Context VS High Context

This is to do with communication.

Low context – communication is precise, simple and clear. Messages are expressed at face value. Repetition helps clarity. Get down to business first. Values expertise and performance. Agreement is by legalistic contracts. Negotiations are as efficient as possible. (US, Germany, Canada, Australia)

High Context – Good communication is sophisticated, layered and nuanced. You have to read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not stated explicitly. You have to establish social trust first. Personal relations and goodwill are valued. Negotiations tend to be slow and ritualistic. (Saudi, Korea, Japan, China).

There are 7 times more words in English than in French. English has 500 000 whilst French has 70 000. Some say it's partly because English dictionaries are more liberal in what they consider to be a word. In Shona we have a sentence; Vana vana vana vana vana. Its formed using the same word but different meanings.

Biblical Balance of high context and low context

Jesus was culturally agile. For example, He could speak plainly and in Parables. Sometimes He took His time and other times He was very focused and task oriented.

Mt 13:9-11 - ⁹He who has ears, let him hear.” ¹⁰Then the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Why do You speak to the people in parables?” ¹¹He replied, “The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them....

Mark 3:14 (ESV) - And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.

The disciples were called first to be with Jesus before they performed.

1 Cor 4:17 - For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.