



Sequential vs Synchronous Time

Resolving Dilemmas from Conflicting Values in Cultural Diversity

Based on: Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars



Chronos: God of sequential
time, of the clock



Kairos: God of time and
opportunity

Measuring Time

- ◆ How we measure past, present, and future
- ◆ Time Horizons
 - ◆ 7 = years, 6 = months, 5 = weeks, 4 = days, 3 = hours, 2 = minutes, 1 = seconds
 - ◆ My past began _____ ago, and ended _____.
 - ◆ My present began _____ ago, and ended _____.
 - ◆ My future will begin _____ from now, and it will end _____ from now.

Why Americans are more sequential

- ◆ The geography of the United States (with many time zones) affects time.
- ◆ Industrialization is based on production which is measured in units of time. E.g, fordism, taylorism.
- ◆ Bonuses and pay are calculated in relationship to time.
- ◆ There is value given to measurements of the progress of everything.
- ◆ God gave us life to see if we would be faithful and if we would take advantage of the time given to us on earth.

The Best of Sequential Time

- ◆ Science and mathematics, the orbit of the planets, everything shows that the cosmos are a gigantic clock
- ◆ “Time is money” Benjamin Franklin
- ◆ “Nothing is certain, except for death and taxes” Benjamin Franklin
- ◆ Celebrates youth and vitality
- ◆ Celebrates the capacity to earn “quick money”



Exaggeration of Sequential Time

- ◆ Time pressures affect mental health on its workers. (E.g., homework assignments)
- ◆ The eternal race against the clock
- ◆ Eliminates the opportunity to use your imagination (because there is no time to do so)
- ◆ It becomes more difficulty to appreciate the here and the now

The Best of Synchronic Time

- ◆ Capable of multitasking and doing many things at the same time.
- ◆ There is a rhythm to time and the body adjusts to those rhythms. (E.g., resting on the beach, listening to music)
- ◆ “Just in Time” production and delivery
- ◆ Celebrates the experience and wisdom of the elderly

Exaggeration of Synchronic Time

- ◆ You have to respond to the rhythm of others
- ◆ Doing many things at the same time can be a distraction, and in the end nothing gets done
- ◆ You are obliged to give of your time to others
- ◆ You have to wait the others who are deemed “more important”



Time Orientation Examples: Motorola

- ◆ “We had a contract to install radios in ambulances for a Japanese company. Upon finalizing the last details with the company president, we wanted to know when we could begin to install the parts.”
- ◆ “I promise that you will have access to the ambulances with enough time to complete the work,” said the president.
- ◆ “Yes, but when will that be? I have to know when we can begin the process,” I responded.
- ◆ “There will be enough time to complete the installation, I promise.”
- ◆ “But can’t you give us a date and time so that we can prepare for the work?”
- ◆ “With that, the president of the Japanese company got up and left the room. He never spoke to me again, and we lost the account.”

Time Orientation In Business

- ◆ Henry Ford and Frederick Winslow Taylor (assembly lines, inventory) vs. Taichi Ohno (just-in-time)
- ◆ Elliot Jaques' theory of the "Time Span of Discretion." The direct supervision and observation of employees decreases as the level of the position rises, there is more time in between each observation.
- ◆ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of "Flow Experiences." There is a relationship in the balance between the challenge of the task and the abilities one has to perform the task.
- ◆ <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/creatingflowactivity.htm>

Time Orientation In Business

- ◆ Robert S. Kaplan and David Norton's theory of a "Balanced Scorecard."
- ◆ <http://www.balancedscorecard.org>
- ◆ If we only measure the return on equity (ROE) and the earnings per share, the focus is always on past achievements.
- ◆ The tendency is to measure what is easy to measure, instead of what ought to be measured.
- ◆
 1. Financial Perspective, How do we see the shareholders of our company?;
 2. Client Perspective, How do the clients see us in our company?;
 3. Internal Perspective, In what areas should we excel?;
 4. Innovative Perspective, In what ways can we continue to better ourselves and create more value?

Examples from Movies

- ◆ Sequential Time

 - ◆ Groundhog Day

- ◆ Synchronic Time

 - ◆ Shall we danzu?

Reference:

Hampden-Turner, Charles and Fons Trompenaars. 2002.
*Building Cross-Cultural Competence: How to Create Wealth
from Conflicting Values.* New Haven & London: Yale
University Press.