

The Growing Presence of Polychronic Time

Polychronic time is becoming more and more present in modern business. Slowly overpowering our traditional ways of monochronic time, operating on polychronic time allows us to juggle more activities at once leading us to a more balanced life. Polychronic time for some is an art; it can be very useful to some people's productivity and detrimental to others. However, even when used properly by the correct person, polychronic time has its problems and benefits. Taking it one step further, mixing monochronic and polychronic orientated people in the workplace can lead to many advantageous outcomes as well as harmful outcomes. The business workplace today is about finding the right placement for workers while taking into consideration their time use preferences to optimize productivity and peace in the workplace.

Monochronic time is a more traditional business time than polychronic time. It is the linear, scheduled and task oriented way of going upon life. People who operate on Monochronic time see time as something they spend and make. Monochrons are considerably better at performing sequential tasks and enjoy sticking to their daily, weekly and monthly schedules. Monochronic time is often seen in the Western world where time is money. On the contrary, polychronic time is time when more than one task is being completed at once. It is the nonlinear, unscheduled and people-oriented time often seen in the Latino World where family always wins. Polychronic people exhibit better performance on more than one task. They are the people who can watch the news, make their breakfast, reply to some work and personal emails all while being on the phone with their spouse. These two time styles tend to clash in many situations at home and in the workplace. For example, if an American businessman went overseas to Italy he would feel very offended when he is kept waiting for a meeting and would most likely be thinking his "time is more important than [their] time"(Hecht, 2003). On the flipside,

polychronic people can get very frustrated when their monochronic customers expect their total undivided attention throughout an hour long meeting because they always have the need to do many tasks at once.

There are many positive and effective uses of polychronic time today and as we continue to grow as human's the number of positive example continue to flourish. Edward T. Hall proposed, for example, "that monochronic cultures tend to send low context messages, whereas polychronic cultures tend to send high context messages" (Hall, 1990). These high context messages allow the productivity of a conversation to increase and in a business world today where things are expected to be done quicker and more efficiently low context message have no place. This allows polychronic people to continuously excel in the business world. Another example of polychronic time that positively correlates with the increasing present of polychronic time in modern business is that in the ever changing world today people need to be flexible. Unlike monochronic people who "are well-suited for workplaces which require the establishment of a well-planned schedule, such as determining repetitive programs and activities whose success is based on structured time"(Kaufman-Scarborough, 1986), polychronic people find adapting to unforeseen changes in schedules second nature to them. Few tasks in business are "repetitive" proving that although monochronic people are required in business the demand for them is slowly decreasing. That being said, tools and skills will be used improperly from time to time and the erroneous use of polychronic time can be detrimental to one's work and personal life. Business consultants, and coaches, for example, whose work similarly reflects a freelancer, can often loss their work and personal boundaries. Although they do not "work excessive hours... they did work quite irregular hours under pressure from [their] clients' own working patterns and deadlines" (Gold, 2013). This "dissolution of temporal boundaries" often found in the

polychronic time regimes has effects on the consultants' thoughts, emotions and their mental well-being."

There are a few problematic characteristics with polychronic time and the people who enjoy and gravitate towards it. Given that the core of polychronic existence is that they are "orientated toward people, relationships and the family," (Hall, 1990) they tend to be impulsive. Hand in hand with their impulsive behaviour, "polychronic individuals are often accused of being overwhelming" (Davidhizar, Turner & Giger, 1994). This is certainly a problem for lower level managers where order is essential in large workplaces. Another common problem with polychronic time in the competitive business world today is that polychrons "[tend] to work more than 40 hours per week" (Bluedorn, 1992). This may lead to an unbalanced lifestyle; however, this is expected in an ambitious business world. All that being said, "things actually move more slowly in such cultures" (polychronic cultures) (Hecht, 2003). This can be viewed as a negative aspect of polychronic time in business "because time is not seen as a tangible resource, there is no need to hurry" (Hecht, 2003), but on the other hand, having intangible time allows polychrons to live a more natural flowing life where work or personal tasks happen when they happen.

Along with the flowing lifestyle polychrons tend to live, polychrons share many other benefits in their use of time. The more polychronic or the higher level of polychronicity "the stronger his or her creative tendencies will be" (Persing, 1986), this is crucial in the business world where it is important to find the best solution. On top of that, polychrons are becoming more present in the business workplace because they are less likely to procrastinate, and because they "thrive on continuous stress" (Davidhizar, Turner & Giger, 1994). Another benefit polychronic people bring to the business workplace is that "regardless of the multiple stimuli

presented, [they] project a high involvement and energy level” (Davidhizar, Turner & Giger, 1994). Obviously having an entire workplace filled with one time styles is not optimal; however, finding the right balance would certainly increase workplace productivity.

As globalization continues and the cultures around the world continue to mix so do the various lifestyles and time styles. “Multi-chronic” workplaces are becoming more present in contemporary business; consequently, the clashes and harmonies of time styles are more apparent and “the way [clients] and staff handle time can significantly affect interpersonal interactions and the ability to accomplish tasks in the workplace.” (Davidhizar, Turner & Giger, 1994) . For example, suppose there is a monochronic boss who “delegates almost everything to ensure his ability to be working on only one task at a time. The resulting avalanche of delegated tasks may overwhelm the constantly inundated subordinate, especially if the subordinate has a relatively monochronic orientation too.” (Bluedorn, 1986) . In this example, a less traditional more polychronic subordinate would be a better fit for the subordinate because, as mentioned above, they would be able to handle the constant flow of tasks without feeling overwhelmed. Carol Kaufman-Scarborough and her colleagues “believe that polychrons and monochrons can contribute side-by-side in the vast majority of work situations. The strengths of each can often compensate for the weaknesses of the other. These two time styles can be recognized, understood and put to good use in the workplace.” (Kaufman-Scarborough, 1986). With the traditional business being very task-orientated and scheduled, modern business has become more multi-chronic to adapt and optimize the employee productivity. By doing this, there has been an increase in polychronic orientated individuals in business. Employers have recognized that the different time styles “may actually be complementary and provide opportunities to improve the results of delegation” (Bluedorn, 1986). Finding the right fit or even ratio of polychrons to

monochrons in the workplace can be a tough task, but asking certain questions will help solve the company's larger problem and enhance productivity in the multi-chronic workplaces found in business. As shown, there is a fairly fine line between polychronic and monochronic individuals working together in harmony, with many variable and characteristic to take into account; however, as the world is continually trying to optimize every aspect of life, the contemporary business culture is also trying to weigh the pros and cons of their multi-chronic workplace.

Business needs these highly productive individuals who can handle many tasks at once. They allow themselves, their co-workers and boss the ability to do the tasks they enjoy, such as delegation and instantaneous schedule changes. The acceptance of polychronic people in our traditional western monochronic world is not only becoming ever more present in business, but is it also continuing to reap more and more benefits each day. Maybe one day, an individual's preference in time orientation will be the deal breaker in a job interview. In conclusion, the growing existence of polychronic people in business today helps calm the workplace, make it more productive and evolve the importance of time.

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