

Crossing the road in Vietnam



I guess you never think about how to cross the road? In our Western world there are written and unwritten rules of the road and, provided motorists and pedestrians obey them, crossing the road requires little thought. Imagine then arriving in Saigon, Vietnam, where 1) traffic very rarely stops as there are very few traffic lights or traffic police and no zebra crossings, 2) at cross roads it is a free for all, 3) the majority of traffic is mopeds - up to ten abreast and 4) average speeds are generally low. So, how do you cross the road when traffic doesn't stop for pedestrians?

Well, we can assure you it works fine and it is easy to cross the road once you change your

thinking and start thinking like a local. We read in the guide books that the job of a pedestrian is to walk slowly and purposefully in a straight line across the road, and that by doing this the motorists will be able to judge the pedestrian's position and pass in front or behind appropriately. Conversely if you stop, deviate or run while crossing the motorists' projections will be wrong and you may be flattened! We then observed the locals crossing and indeed they simply walked across confidently and steadily navigating several lanes of traffic.

So, now it was our turn. Taking the first step took a lot of faith and yet halfway across the first road we were laughing at how it works! We then progressed to busier and busier roads, each with the same success!

As we reflected on our experience we realised that despite the apparent chaos, the traffic kept moving in all directions, albeit sometimes slowly, everyone kept smiling and was calm and we only saw two minor accidents in ten days. Everyone took joint responsibility both for themselves and others, there was a shared agenda. How different to the aggressive way we often approach roads in the West with many people often only thinking of their own agenda and needs, with the resulting road rage, crashes and gridlock.

So, what can we learn from this experience?

How often do we stick to our old beliefs and old ways of thinking because that's the way it's always been rather than exploring alternatives?

How often do we take time out to understand other people's viewpoints and learn from them before 'diving in'?

How often do we dismiss other people's ideas as unworkable without finding out more and trying for ourselves?

How often do we claim to know about something by reading or observing without having the experience ourselves?

How often do we not take the first step for fear of ridicule or fear of the unknown?

How often do we take responsibility - both for ourselves and others? How often do we truly embrace a win-win attitude rather than only thinking about our own position?

Food for thought?

These tips are largely drawn from our experience in executive coaching and presenting a range of workshops for improving personal and team performance in organisations. If you would like to know more as to how we can help you make your goals in 2008, please see our [website](#) now or contact Colin on 07881 636538. =