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CROSS-CULTURAL DECISION MAKING IN INTERNATIONAL NON-PROFITS: NAVIGATING HIGH AND LOW CONTEXT CULTURES

Introduction

As an employee of Cooks and Clothing, my analysis of this scenario reveals complex dynamics in cross-cultural organizational decision-making. This paper examines the ethical implications of diverse cultural approaches to business negotiations and relationship-building in an international non-profit setting.

Cultural Clash in Decision-Making Processes

In the given scenario, the convergence of high and low context cultures will likely create significant friction in the decision-making process. According to Hall's Cultural Context Theory (Hall, 1976), high-context cultures prioritize relationship-building and implicit communication, while low-context cultures favor direct, task-oriented approaches. This fundamental difference could lead to:

1. Misaligned expectations about meeting pace and structure
2. Potential frustration from low-context members regarding perceived delays
3. Discomfort among high-context representatives who feel rushed



Ethical Decision-Making Framework

When analyzing the ethical implications of declining decisions from low-context members, several factors must be considered:

Respect for Cultural Diversity

Meyer (2014) argues that successful international organizations must create inclusive environments that respect diverse cultural norms. Simply defaulting to rapid, Western-style decision-making could alienate valuable perspectives from high-context cultures.

Balancing Efficiency and Inclusivity

While quick decisions might benefit immediate organizational goals, excluding or rushing high-context members could:

- Damage long-term relationships
- Reduce buy-in from certain countries
- Lead to incomplete understanding of complex issues

Examples and Analysis

Scenario 1: Emergency Response Planning

If low-context members propose an efficient but hastily planned emergency response protocol, declining immediate implementation to allow for relationship-building and consensus might improve outcomes. High-context members could contribute valuable insights about local customs and effective distribution methods in their regions.



Scenario 2: Budget Allocation

When discussing annual budget allocation, low-context members might push for quick decisions based purely on numerical data. However, high-context representatives might need time to explain nuanced local factors that could affect resource utilization.

Ethical Considerations

Declining rapid decision-making can be ethical when:

1. It ensures all perspectives are genuinely considered
2. The benefits of relationship-building outweigh immediate efficiency gains
3. It prevents cultural marginalization

However, it becomes unethical if:

1. Used as a delay tactic without genuine relationship-building
2. It significantly impedes critical time-sensitive operations
3. It creates a pattern of indecision that hampers organizational effectiveness

Conclusion

As an aspiring international business professional, I conclude that Cooks and Clothing must develop a balanced approach to decision-making that respects both high and low context cultures. While efficiency is important, building strong relationships and ensuring all voices are heard will lead to more sustainable and effective outcomes. The organization should establish



clear protocols that accommodate different cultural approaches while maintaining operational effectiveness.

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