**WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT THE COOKS?**

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Critical Incident Overview**

Mary White had to solve food logistics problems for the second annual Girls’ Empowerment Camp sponsored by the Peace Corps (PC), and American non-governmental organization (NGO) in central Senegal. Although Mary had been part of the planning for both the first and second camps, she had never been a project leader until just now. Mary inherited a messy situation. Lindsay had signed the food preparation agreement with the same establishment used for the first camp. This left the second camp vulnerable to same women who persistently served meals late, refused to follow directions, and willfully misinterpreted expectations. Mary must find a way to motivate the cooks and avoid the problems encountered in the prior year.

This is a descriptive critical incident (CI). The CI could be used in upper-level undergraduate, MBA and master’s in public policy or nonprofit management courses in Organizational Behavior, Intercultural Communication, Cultural Diversity, Nonprofit Management, or Human Resources Management. Pre-assignment of relevant sections of Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) provides students with the necessary frame of reference for cross-cultural interpretation.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Create a concept map to identify the key issues involved in Mary’s dilemma.
2. Analyze the situation with the cooks using Hofstede’s ([Hofstede, 2001](#_ENREF_7); [Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010](#_ENREF_8)) Dimensions of National Culture.
3. Contrast Bolman and Deals’ (2013) perspective on frames to determine a feasible solution to the problem with the cooks.
4. Propose a motivational approach likely to enhance the performance of the Senegalese workers taking into account cultural differences.

**Research Methods**

This critical incident was based on the experience of one of the authors. The names of the individuals, the company, and its location have been disguised to preserve anonymity.

**Questions**

1. Create a concept map of the situation. What key issues related to the suboptimal performance of the Senegalese cooks are revealed? (Learning Objective 1)
2. Why is it important to view the cooks’ situation from a cross-cultural perspective rather than from a standard U.S. management perspective? (Learning Objective 2)
   1. What perspective on the cooks’ situation might be taken by someone using Hofstede’s (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, et al., 2010) framework for understanding national culture? How is this perspective refined by including information from the African Value Survey ([Noorderhaven & Tidjani, 2001](#_ENREF_10))?
   2. Apply these perspectives to your concept map.
3. How might the four frames model of Bolman and Deal be used to develop a course of action to take with the cooks? How might you modify the four frames model to incorporate the cultural differences revealed in your analysis of the situation through the national cultural perspective? (Learning Objective 3)
4. What approach or combination of approaches to motivation is likely to have the most impact and make the biggest difference in motivating the cooks? Compare at least three common motivational theories ([Osland, Kolb, & Turner, 2007](#_ENREF_12)), taking into account:
   1. What cultural implications must be considered when developing a motivational strategy for the Senegalese cooks; and
   2. In what ways your approach to motivation accommodates cultural differences? (Learning Objective 4)

**Answers to Questions**

1. Create a concept map of the situation. What key issues related to the suboptimal performance of the Senegalese cooks are revealed?

Concept maps help students make connections between the situation being studied and theories being applied. The theory and utility of concept maps across a wide variety of disciplines is well documented ([e.g., Novak & Canas, 2008](#_ENREF_11)). Concept map creation is an excellent group activity in the classroom that can spark deeper conversation and encourage individual scholarship. However, when using concept maps, instructors may need to help students move beyond the obvious and to correct misperceptions ([Chiou, 2008](#_ENREF_2)). Encourage students to flesh out their concept maps as they continue the analysis while answering subsequent questions for the critical incident. Ask students to move beyond the causes of the problems to finding solutions with specific links to the theories they are asked to apply.

It is helpful to instruct students to organize the concept map so that the problem (the cook’s suboptimal performance) is in the middle, the causes are on the left and the solutions are on the right. The names of the theories, concepts, models, and cited authorities go in the outer boxes (e.g., Attribution Theory, Hofstede, etc.).

The application of the concept or model to the cook’s situation goes in the inner boxes. Students are challenged to show what a particular concept/theory says causes suboptimal performance and what that particular theory/concept would say to change suboptimal performance. Causes and solutions should connect across the two sides of the map. Although students may use meaningful abbreviations as necessary, linkages should read like sentences. For example, *not considering cultural background when organizing tasks* suggests a *cause* (you name it) on the left side of the map. Later, students will suggest a corollary *solution* on the right side of the map as the lesson progresses. Figure TN-1 shows how students might initially display the causal issues from the CI.

WILL CHANGE

Cultural misunderstandings between PC and Senegalese cooks

C A U S E S

Differing identity and social role expectations of women

*Figure TN-1. Typical beginnings of a concept map*

1. Why is it important to view the cooks’ situation from a cross-cultural perspective rather than from a standard U.S. management perspective?
   1. What perspective on the cooks’ situation might be taken by someone using Hofstede’s (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, et al., 2010) framework for understanding national culture? How is this perspective refined by including information from the African Value Survey ([Noorderhaven & Tidjani, 2001](#_ENREF_10))?
   2. Apply these perspectives to your concept map.

U.S. management practices rarely translate well into non-western situations without modification and cultural reinterpretation ([Hofstede, 1993](#_ENREF_6); [Hofstede, et al., 2010](#_ENREF_8)). The lasting effect of French colonialism on Senegal is an important factor in understanding the nuances of this critical incident. The Americans (Mary and the other PC workers) had different values, educational backgrounds, and views of the task than the five Senegalese cooks. The Americans had set a schedule and timeline intended to control each day’s routine. However, the cooks seemed not to believe that they could control something such as time, so the meals would be ready instead whenever they were ready. Mary saw the camp as a valuable learning experience for the campers and it was important for it to be well-run. The traditional Senegalese women did not share the view. For them, working at the camp was merely a job that would provide extra income for their families. Additionally, they found the concept of the camp somewhat threatening to their traditional ways and actively resisted change even if it would be of benefit. For example, several volunteers spoke with their language teacher (a well-educated, modern, Senegalese women) about marriage between cousins, which was common. She saw no problem with the practice, although she was aware that any children would be at a high risk for genetic diseases. The value of tradition trumped the benefit of change.

In helping students understand the implications of this critical incident it is appropriate to use Hofstede’s concept of national culture, which carefully distinguishes among colonial and linguistic influences ([Hofstede, 2001](#_ENREF_7); [Hofstede, et al., 2010](#_ENREF_8)). Unlike the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) cross-cultural leadership study that is limited to research in Sub-Saharan Africa to Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa (black sample), Zambia, and Zimbabwe ([Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012](#_ENREF_3)), Hofstede’s concepts have been extended to other parts of Africa. The research of Noorderhaven and Tidjan ([2001](#_ENREF_10)) on African values specifically includes Senegal and has been incorporated into an expanded interpretation of Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture ([Hofstede, et al., 2010](#_ENREF_8)). Students may also benefit from exploring the Hofstede Centre online ([Hofstede Centre, 2013](#_ENREF_5)), as the explanations on the site are clear and concise. Although the GLOBE project has become well-regarded for its contribution to implicit leadership theory in non-U.S. settings ([Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011](#_ENREF_4)), it is of little use in evaluating this critical incident because no francophone West-African nations were part of the project ([see House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001, for the full list of nations covered](#_ENREF_9)).

Hofstede’s model looks at five major dimensions ([Hofstede Centre, 2013](#_ENREF_5)). Power distance (PDI) expresses the ways in which people accept hierarchy and react to inequalities. Individualism versus collectivism (IDV) expresses the preference for loosely-knit or tightly-knit social frameworks and is reflected in the preference for “I” or “we.” Masculinity versus femininity (MAS) expresses the preference for assertiveness and achievement over cooperation and caring for the weak. Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) expresses the degree to which a society’s members are uncomfortable with ambiguity (traditional and orthodox societies rank high in this dimension). Long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO) measures the tendency for context-specific perseverance over normative thinking and striving for quick results. Table TN-1 shows differences between U.S. and Senegalese societies and includes the perspective of the PC workers for comparison. Table TN-1 is provided as a blank form in the appendix so that teachers can use the charts in conjunction with “Culture, Governance, and Economic Performance: An Explorative Study with Special Focus on Africa” ([Noorderhaven & Tidjani, 2001](#_ENREF_10)), which is especially appropriate for master’s-level students.

Table TN-1

Interpreting Senegalese society through Hofstede’s ([Hofstede, et al., 2010](#_ENREF_8)) national culture dimensions (NCD) for the U.S. and West Africa with annotations for Senegal from the Africa Values Survey (AVS) ([Noorderhaven & Tidjani, 2001](#_ENREF_10)) and the perspective of PC workers.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dimension | U.S. | West Africa | Senegal | Senegalese Details | PC Worker Perspective |
| Power Distance | Low | High |  | Senegalese society is highly structured and people do not question their place in it or attempt to change it. This attitude is partly a reflection of an old caste system. Although caste is no longer a determinant of one’s place in society or how they are treated, the unquestioning acceptance of who is and is not a leader remains. Age is also an important societal construct; older people are instinctively given greater respect. | PC workers were excluded from fitting into what would have been a woman’s place in society based on age and gender. In Senegal, this structure created stability and predictability, i.e. if you wanted permission for something, you knew who to talk to. But it hindered change or new ideas since the oldest people had all of the power and were more likely to tell us “But that’s how we’ve always done it.” |
| AVS Rules & Hierarchy | Low |  | High |
| Individualism vs. Collectivism | High | Low |  | The Senegalese are highly interdependent and collective. Dependence on one another is one of the defining traits of Senegalese society. Loyalty to and consideration of family, neighbors, and other members of society are highly important. Everyone takes care of everyone else. This is manifested in many ways. For instance, adults protect and discipline all children (not just their own); it is extremely rude to eat in front of another person without sharing; and it is impolite to say no to a request from another person. | This concept in some ways is totally alien to those coming from a capitalist society where each person is expected to earn his or her own way. In the contained world of villages and small towns, it did not seem so odd because there was a greater amount of interdependence due to the limitations and lack of resources. |
| AVS Sharing | Low |  | Very High |
|  |  |  |  |
| Masculinity vs. Femininity | High | Medium | Medium | The Senegalese feel that people, and not the task, are paramount. Relationships and consensus are important in order to have a good work environment and be successful in a task, and individuals want to feel that they are valued and their presence is recognized. | This aspect of the culture was easy for PC workers to overlook because of enthusiasm for the task at hand. However, it could completely derail a project because to the Senegalese it appeared rude. Rudeness is taken more seriously in Senegal than in the U.S. because of the importance of tradition and conformity. Most volunteers had a person or two within their communities that understood that PC workers were not being rude, but enthusiastic. They would reign in the PC workers in order to build necessary relationships. |
| AVS Collectivism | Medium |  | Medium |
| Uncertainty Avoidance | Low | Medium |  | Senegalese culture tries to avoid uncertainty by having definite ideals of proper behavior and little tolerance for individuals who do not conform. These expectations extend to such seemingly insignificant details as the fact that rice is not eaten for dinner (it is acceptable as breakfast, lunch, and an evening snack). Changes to these rules are resisted, sometimes even if the change is acknowledged as sensible. However, the Senegalese culture is highly fatalistic so when events do not unfold as desired or expected, it is accepted as ordained by God. This also causes people to place little value on time or heroic efforts to complete a task. | This makes understanding and integrating into the culture both easier and harder. Once volunteers learn the rules, people’s reactions or expectations are predictable. However, it also creates resistance to change even when, the Sengalese acknowledge that something is better than the traditional way. It made problems or failure of an idea harder to overcome because it was just accepted instead of searching for a solution and people were less willing to try again. |
| AVS Importance of Religion | Medium |  | High |
| Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation | Medium | Low |  | Senegal is heavily oriented to the short term. Tradition is very important, and people will often say “That is how we have always done it.” The focus is on the present and how people measure up against others today. In general, the Senegalese do not plan or save for the future. In the marketplace, everything is sold in the smallest possible unit (e.g., a tablespoon of salt) because shoppers do not buy more than they immediately needed. This also reflects economic realities of the region. | To the PC workers, this short term perspective appeared as a major block in economic development. The Senegalese wanted the prosperity of the U.S. but they weren’t willing to make sacrifices or changes in their manner of consumption or lifestyle to accomplish the goal. |
| AVS Traditional Wisdom | High |  | Very high |

Completion of cultural perspective charts prepares students to annotate their concept maps with their findings using concepts from the National Dimensions of Culture, the African Values Survey, and their awareness of Senegalese culture. Again, the linkages should be in the form of true statements. The instructor will need to verify that students interpret the concepts properly.

Cultural misunderstandings between PC and Senegalese cooks

C A U S E S

Not considering traditional women’s values of the cooks when organizing tasks

Overlooking expectations of hospitality and relationships

Having different expectations of leader

Differing identity and social role expectations of women

MAS

says

*Figure TN-2. Typical enhancement of a concept map within a cultural overlay from Hofstede*

1. How might the four frames model of Bolman and Deal ([2013](#_ENREF_1)) be used to develop a course of action to take with the cooks? How might you modify the four frames model to incorporate the cultural differences revealed in your analysis of the situation through the national cultural perspective?

Table TN-2

Analysis of the cooks’ situation using Bolman’s and Deals (2013) four frames model.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Frame | Description | Pros | Cons | Comments |
| Structural | PC places a high value on organization and structure. Following the schedule and the menu is very important. Mary would expect the cooks to adjust their work to meet these expectations and goals of PC. | Expectations and rules are clearly defined, so work and outcomes should be predictable. For example, lunch will take place at 1:30. | Work can become too rigid and not fluid enough in a changing environment, such as when preparing the meal takes longer than expected. | This is the frame used by PC at the first camp.  Risk: The women didn’t respond to this framework the first year. Continued use of this frame guaranteed failure. |
| HR | PC nurtures the relationship with the cooks, asks for their input, and finds ways to work with the wishes and desires of the cooks. | Cooks feel valued and have a greater interest in participating and performing well. | PC loses some of the control over the decisions. | Does the western notion of empowerment make sense in this culture?  Risk: This could be viewed by the cooks a token consultation that may be interpreted as insulting because the cook’s input wouldn’t be taken seriously by those who are in charge of the camp. |
| Symbolic | PC tries to share its vision of the camp (empowering the young girls and teaching them valuable skills) with the women so that they will buy into the vision. | Cooks gain a new perspective and PC has buy-in from the cooks. | Cooks could see the vision as a criticism or rejection of their culture and values. | Could PC work with different symbols that might better align?  Risk: PC might misinterpret symbols or be seen as condescending. However, this is lower risk if relationships have been established. |
| Political | PC demands compliance from the cooks in schedule, menu, and compensation since it is the paying customer. | PC would have control and would get what they paid for. | Local women could refuse to work. PC would no longer have cooks for camp | Could culturally sensitive negotiation help?  Risks: Negotiation would require both sides to transcend the barriers created during the first year’s camp. It’s not clear that either party had sufficient savvy to do so because the normative positions of women in the two cultures were so different. |

All four frames contain risk due to cultural differences; therefore, it is important to question U.S. normative perspectives at every juncture. For example, the PC workers never considered paying the women substantially more than the average daily wage because out of fear that the cooks would have simply written off the extra money as part of the “rich American” perspective, and that the extra money would have exacerbated behavioral problems in the long run. Based on the issues at the camp and the information available, the HR frame appears to be the best fit for this situation, although cultural modifications must be made. The structural frame proved not to work since it conflicted with the cultural values of the women; timeliness is not important, sharing and equality are important. The symbolic frame risks backfiring if the women see the mission of the camp as a rejection of some of their values since they had led very traditional lives. The political frame could result in not having anyone to cook meals. The HR frame addresses the cultural and identity issues. It can provide the women with a greater stake in the outcome since they are included in the decision-making and it encourages their participation.

1. What approach or combination of approaches to motivation is likely to have the most impact and make the biggest difference in motivating the cooks? Compare at least three common motivational theories ([Osland, et al., 2007](#_ENREF_12)), taking into account:
2. What cultural implications must be considered when developing a motivational strategy for the Senegalese cooks; and
3. In what ways your approach to motivation accommodates cultural differences?

This critical incident provides an excellent platform for students to explore common motivation theories.

Table TN-3

Comparing common motivational theories within the Senegalese context.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Western Approach | Initial Application | Cultural Criticism | Cultural Modification |
| **Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs** | **Fill basic needs first. Women are living in a developing country where the majority of people are below the poverty line; their basic physiological needs may not be met. This would explain their insistence on sharing in the meal as well as their demand for food at the end of the camp.** | AVS Sharing (of food) is a cultural norm, so would exist regardless of income.  Higher-order needs, such as self-actualization (empowerment) are only relevant in high IDV applications (Senegal is low) | Make sure cooks are invited to eat at the camp.  Create a symbolic gesture of providing a food package (not leftovers) for each cook in a ceremonial gesture at the end of each day or at the end of camp as a planned, motivational activity. |
| Goal Setting | **Setting specific attainable goals is the optimal form of motivation and leads to job satisfaction and higher performance in the future. The cooks were given a specific goal: have lunch ready to eat at 1:30; yet they did not meet the goal.** | MAS Women enculturated in a traditional, subsistence culture express displeasure in accordance with their society’s strictures on female assertiveness.  AVS Importance of religion and traditional wisdom play a strong role in enculturation. | Passive-aggressive behavior (culturally-sanctioned expression of displeasure) was immediate and pervasive and occurred before the food-sharing incident. This suggests that other cultural norms had been violated prior to or during lunch preparation. |
| **Equity Theory** | **According to this theory, people compare their inputs to the outputs they receive compared to others, prior performance, and the system. In this case, all of the women were receiving the same pay and equality was a cultural expectation. The equality expectation extended not only to the other cooks, but also the others involved in the camp.** | IDV/MAS and ADV collectivism suggest that in a collectivist culture with strong values on sharing **the culture does not appear to measure outputs against inputs in the way equity theory demands, so unequal outputs and a sense of injustice do not motivate people to perform.** | **The women expected to share in all of the meals based not on their inputs, but rather on the premise that everyone must take care of each other. Inequality is more of a cultural faux pas.** |
| Job Design | Job enrichment is posited as a motivator. **Some task characteristics are already present. A variety of skills are required for cooking and the task is easily identifiable. The cooks took ingredients (raw materials) and provided a meal (completed product). The last characteristic, feedback, is also present since the cooks can see if the others like the food they have prepared and know if they have met the time goal that was given to them. If they understand the task significance, they should not have problems with the cooks misusing them as previously forewarned.** | **The task of feeding people and providing nourishment to people is significant, but due to the routineness of cooking and the status of women in the culture, the women may not see their relevance. PC could make clear the importance of the cook’s role and of the importance of the camp to the community.** | PC could give the cooks greater autonomy by letting them take part in setting the menu. PC could also provide all ingredients at once rather than doling them out as needed. PC and the cooks would need to come to a common understanding of time expectations and disposition of unused food. |

Maslow’s hierarchy lays a foundation for understanding some of the deeply embedded differences in views held by PC and the cooks. This understanding could inform an acceptable approach to job design that would allow the cooks to have a better feeling of control, thus encouraging them to perform at a higher level.

**Epilogue**

PC used the same cooks and added one more woman due to the increased number of campers. Both the site owner and the cooks protested that they needed additional cooks since the number of campers had doubled, but Mary refused to comply explaining that it was not within PC’s budget. She also spoke directly with the chief cook, Khady, prior to the camp instead of working through Robert so that the expectations would be clear. This allowed her to discuss the menu with Khady prior to the camp. PC understood that they were expected to feed the cooks this year, so included an additional six people in the count when purchasing food.

PC also designated Jennnie Banks, a PC employee who lived in a Serer village and spoke Serer, to oversee the cooks. This was her only responsibility at the camp and allowed her to spend all of her time in the kitchen. She formed a closer relationship with the cooks and therefore was able to keep them on task more effectively. Although PC saw this as micromanaging, the women valued the extra attention they were given. The meals were still not on time but generally were not more than half an hour late and there were no blow-ups between PC and the cooks. Knowing that meals could be behind schedule, PC also built the schedule with a little more flexibility and short filler activities.

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**Appendix**

Interpreting Senegalese society through Hofstede’s ([Hofstede, et al., 2010](#_ENREF_8)) national culture dimensions (NCD) for the U.S. and West Africa with annotations for Senegal from the Africa Values Survey (AVS) ([Noorderhaven & Tidjani, 2001](#_ENREF_10)) and the perspective of PC workers.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dimension | U.S. | West Africa | Senegal | Senegalese Details | PC Worker Perspective |
| Power Distance |  |  |  | Senegalese society is highly structured and people do not question their place in it or attempt to change it. This attitude is partly a reflection of an old caste system. Although caste is no longer a determinant of one’s place in society or how they are treated, the unquestioning acceptance of who is and is not a leader remains. Age is also an important societal construct; older people are instinctively given greater respect. | PC workers were excluded from fitting into what would have been a woman’s place in society based on age and gender. In Senegal, this structure created stability and predictability, i.e. if you wanted permission for something, you knew who to talk to. But it hindered change or new ideas since the oldest people had all of the power and were more likely to tell us “But that’s how we’ve always done it.” |
| AVS Rules & Hierarchy |  |  |  |
| Individualism vs. Collectivism |  |  |  | The Senegalese are highly interdependent and collective. Dependence on one another is one of the defining traits of Senegalese society. Loyalty to and consideration of family, neighbors, and other members of society are highly important. Everyone takes care of everyone else. This is manifested in many ways. For instance, adults protect and discipline all children (not just their own); it is extremely rude to eat in front of another person without sharing; and it is impolite to say no to a request from another person. | This concept in some ways is totally alien to those coming from a capitalist society where each person is expected to earn his or her own way. In the contained world of villages and small towns, it did not seem so odd because there was a greater amount of interdependence due to the limitations and lack of resources. |
| AVS Sharing |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Masculinity vs. Femininity |  |  |  | The Senegalese feel that people, and not the task, are paramount. Relationships and consensus are important in order to have a good work environment and be successful in a task, and individuals want to feel that they are valued and their presence is recognized. | This aspect of the culture was easy for PC workers to overlook because of enthusiasm for the task at hand. However, it could completely derail a project because to the Senegalese it appeared rude. Rudeness is taken more seriously in Senegal than in the U.S. because of the importance of tradition and conformity. Most volunteers had a person or two within their communities that understood that PC workers were not being rude, but enthusiastic. They would reign in the PC workers in order to build necessary relationships. |
| AVS Collectivism |  |  |  |
| Uncertainty Avoidance |  |  |  | Senegalese culture tries to avoid uncertainty by having definite ideals of proper behavior and little tolerance for individuals who do not conform. These expectations extend to such seemingly insignificant details as the fact that rice is not eaten for dinner (it is acceptable as breakfast, lunch, and an evening snack). Changes to these rules are resisted, sometimes even if the change is acknowledged as sensible. However, the Senegalese culture is highly fatalistic so when events do not unfold as desired or expected, it is accepted as ordained by God. This also causes people to place little value on time or heroic efforts to complete a task. | This makes understanding and integrating into the culture both easier and harder. Once volunteers learn the rules, people’s reactions or expectations are predictable. However, it also creates resistance to change even when, the Sengalese acknowledge that something is better than the traditional way. It made problems or failure of an idea harder to overcome because it was just accepted instead of searching for a solution and people were less willing to try again. |
| AVS Importance of Religion |  |  |  |
| Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation | Medium | Low |  | Senegal is heavily oriented to the short term. Tradition is very important, and people will often say “That is how we have always done it.” The focus is on the present and how people measure up against others today. In general, the Senegalese do not plan or save for the future. In the marketplace, everything is sold in the smallest possible unit (e.g., a tablespoon of salt) because shoppers do not buy more than they immediately needed. This also reflects economic realities of the region. | To the PC workers, this short term perspective appeared as a major block in economic development. The Senegalese wanted the prosperity of the U.S. but they weren’t willing to make sacrifices or changes in their manner of consumption or lifestyle to accomplish the goal. |
| AVS Traditional Wisdom | High |  | Very high |