

Title: Informal Governance and "Nomunication" Culture in Japanese Public Administration: A Case Study from Chiba City

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To: Andrew Price, Director, Ethics & Business Integrity, Google

Summary: In Japan, there exists a culturally embedded phenomenon commonly known as "nomunication" (from "nomu" = to drink, and "communication"). In governmental and corporate circles, informal decisions are often made or reinforced over drinks, outside the formal policy-making or contractual process. This memo highlights serious ethical risks and transparency issues tied to such non-contractual practices, with a focus on the City of Chiba's relationship with NEC and Sky Corporation.

Background: - No formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract exists between Chiba City and Sky Corporation, despite Sky's systems (such as SkyMenu) being fully deployed within public education infrastructure. - NEC has only a vague traceable presence through rugby-related activities and indirect connections via Sky, without a clear and accountable procurement trail. - There are verifiable public-private cooperation agreements between Chiba City and NTT, which **do** disclose subcontractors and implementation details. No such transparency exists in the case of NEC/Sky.

Observed Pattern: Ayana, a resident of Chiba and parent of a junior high school student, has directly observed that despite the lack of formal documentation: - Digital platforms provided by Sky/NEC were installed and used in public schools. - There has been no official announcement or contract accessible to the public. - Personal relationships—particularly via shared involvement in rugby culture—are suspected to play a key role in informal decision-making.

Risk Factor: Such undocumented governance, especially when involving student data and international cloud platforms like Google Workspace for Education, poses serious risks: - **Audit Failure:** No log trail to verify how and when decisions were made. - **Compliance Gap:** Absence of vendor accountability. - **Reputation Risk for Google:** If Google's educational services are being misrepresented or embedded in a multi-layer system without disclosure, this violates principles of transparency and fairness.

Cultural Insight: In Japan, "nomunication" culture often results in decisions being shaped over informal gatherings. While culturally accepted in some contexts, this becomes ethically problematic in public-sector tech deployment.

"I have personally witnessed such opaque behavior as a parent involved in the Chiba public education system. Many decisions appeared to be settled outside of formal meetings, likely over drinks."

— Ayana (co-author, witness)

Request: We urge Google to consider the cultural context in its audits and integrity checks. Informal influence must not override the principles of transparent and ethical deployment of educational infrastructure.

We are prepared to provide further documentation and witness accounts upon request.

End of Memo