ENG3004 assignment: 3 to 5 pages, times new roman, font:12, 1.5 spacing

Q2: Volkswagen (VW) emission scandal cost the company billions in criminal fine. Watch this video. Discuss how the scandal impacts the Professional and Social/Cultural Dimensions for VW. Did VW engineers uphold their codes of conduct? What about their duties to their employers? Has VW’s attitude impacted the social perception of the company? You may need to conduct independent research to support your position.

Ans:

For the impacts of the scandal, it’s affected in two dimensions, the social dimension and professional dimension.

For the social dimension, we know that engineers design new products, infrastructure, and services to have a positive impact to the society, usually improving the quality of life, and reducing the harm to the environment. As for the case of designing new cars, the engineers were aiming to design a final product that could directly reduce the environmental problems caused by cars, such as emissions.

Engineers have a social responsibility, that is other than their training and education, which makes them knowledgable and skillful, they also have to consider the well-being of the society. Their acts should not violate their morals and should not destroy the trust with the society. Or else they will lose their positive perception as an engineer, and negatively affect the company.

In the case of Volkswagen, the reason of designing new vehicles that would increase fuel efficiency and reduce air pollution, was to meet the need of the socity and the world. The world saw the problem of air pollution thus they wanted to deal with the cause. One of the major cause is pollution from cars. In fact there are groups of people around the world that put in effort to reduce pollution. They will make a lot of changes to their habits, such as using electrical appliances that are more efficient, reducing use of air conditioner, use public transport/bicycle to reduce pollution. They believe that by doing so, this can reduce the air pollution, and by adding up the effort of people with same belief and changes, they can effectively reduce the air pollution around the world. Other than that, there are different organizations and government around the world trying to promote this life style. They would set up laws and advertise, affecting more people around the world.

So a vehicle with significantly lower air pollution would take advantage of this trend. People would like to reduce pollution would be interested in such vehicle. Volkswagen then tried to develop a vehicle that could have a significantly lower emission than its competitors, so they can win over that market.

Apart from that, the development of Clean Diesel cars could help promote the values of reducing air pollution. So it’s not only the result, it’s also the cause of people reducing air pollution.

However, despite all the positive impacts it could bring, Volkswagen decided to lie to the entire world using a defeat device. By doing so they can pass all environmental tests by USA and Europe with flying colours. The public would believe that the vehicles developed by Volkswagen could meet their values of saving the environment, thus the sales increased greatly, passing even Toyota.

When the public found that Volkswagen lied to them, it brought a lot of negative impacts in social dimension. First, this will destroy the public trust they’ve built up with their customers. The customers believed that their products could have less emission, which meets their values and beliefs. After they knew about the lies, they might not trust any other companies that develop similar products. This would greatly impact the trust between customers and engineers around the world. Customers would build up a negative perception to engineers, making the relationship unhealthy.

Secondly, the customers would think that engineers around the world only aim to earn more money instead of designing better products, affecting the promotion of many new products. Whenever engineers develop a new product, they have to persuade or change attitude of the public, that the new product would improve their life. But the public would remember how Volkswagen promoted about their Clean Diesel car, this would cause them to be doubtful about new products.

In the professional dimension, this will bring some negative impact.

People believe that engineers are professional, which means they possess the knowledge and skill to provide the consumers with a successful product. However, the engineers of Volkswagen decided to develop a defeat device so as to pass the emission test. This would change the customer’s impression of engineers. They will think that engineers possess knowledge, but they use it to cheat, instead of putting more effort to provide good products. This not only violates legality, but also the ethical perspective. This destroy the trust between customer and engineers. People will question the professionalism of the engineers, they have an ingrained mindset that engineers would lie, affecting other engineers that really helped to change the society.

Volkswagen engineers did something illegal to meet the targets set by their employer. They didn’t uphold their code of conduct to their employer.

Volkswagen hoped for a vehicle that can emit less air pollutant, so they asked their engineers to work on some vehicles that meet their goal. However, the engineers came up with an idea of adding a defeat device, which is illegal and unprofessional. The code of conducts stated that engineers should uphold the dignity, standing and reputation of the profession. Also an employer could discharge an engineer’s duty with integrity and in accordance with the highest standards of business ethics. The engineer also have responsibility to the public. The engineers didn’t uphold the code of conducts, as well as some of the senior staff. They wanted to stay competitive in the market, so they chose to install a defeat device, instead of discharging the engineers.

At first when Volkswagen was questioned about its vehicles, they didn’t admit their mistake, not until a long time later. They tried their best to hide the fact that they’re using a defeat device. This attitude would definitely give the customers a negative impression to this company, and they wouldn’t like to buy vehicles from this company. The company would have to face the criticism from the customers due to the scandal. And they would need a lot of time to rebuild their image, so the public would start to trust them again.