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### CSCI 325 Ethics Paper

Throughout an individual's life, ethics will guide them on either the path of "great fortune" or the path of destruction. While it may seem as though it would take a minuscule amount of effort to follow the "great fortune" path, ethics are at the material world's mercy. If I were to possess a debit card that is hypothetically linked to the bank account of Amazon's CEO, Jeff Bezos, what is to stop me from buying whatever my heart desires? The answer is my ethics. However, in a less hypothetical setting, what is to stop me from selling sensitive data of a Fortune 500 company?

Although the possibility of me working in a Fortune 500's Information Technologies department is rather slim, the problem still remains. Colossians 3:17 states, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (*English Standard Version*, Ephesians 4.28). As a cybersecurity professional, I am responsible for handling a company's most closely kept secrets, securing their network, and prevent intrusions from hostile actors. In my opinion, those are the hardest dilemmas a young, fresh out-of-college cybersecurity professional could go up against. They have to juggle between making a living and having to uphold their own morals by not selling out the company or client that they are currently employed by. A quick email to the rival company, ignoring a blatant security hole, or letting hostile actors waltz through the front door, and the cybersecurity professional gains fortune in one way or another.

According to Shannon Vallor, Ph.D. and William J. Rewak, S.J. Professor of Philosophy of Santa Clara University, "A broader and better understanding of cybersecurity ethics is therefore essential to promoting and protecting human flourishing in an increasingly networked society" (Vallor

and Rewak). Is the betterment of just my life more important than the betterment of others? Philipians 2:3 states, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (*English Standard Version*, Philipians 2.3). My decision could either increase my standing in life or harm others. Yet, due to the fact that most of the aspects associated with cybersecurity happen “behind the scenes” so to speak, it is hard to discern the effect that my lapses in ethics have on society as a whole. As a result of their ethical decisions being subtle—yet possessing a potentially earth-shattering weight—it is important that cybersecurity professionals are able to overcome these dilemmas.

On the other hand, it is rather difficult to overcome an object that one cannot see or touch, such as an ethical dilemma. However, while it may seem as though it is an impossible obstacle, certain preparations can be made. This is an issue of the heart, and as a result, one must follow their heart. The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) states you are to be “honest and trustworthy,” and “respect the work required to produce new ideas, inventions, creative works, and computing artifacts” (Association for Computing Machinery). If one has a superbly strong moral compass, then they are most likely to not fall for these ethical problems. In the realm of cybersecurity, a young professional must be completely transparent in their practices. Dr. Alan Fix of Charleston Southern University once said, “If I can’t trust you in the classroom, how can I even trust you out in the field?” A budding cyber professional that is shown to have hacked into the school’s grading system obviously cannot be trusted in any type of field. If his moral compass was stronger, he might have not fallen victim to a temptation such as that. Thus, the key to overcoming various ethical dilemmas is to have an overwhelming set of high moral standards.

The situation that I have presented seems to be quite dire. It has been a problem in the past, is a problem, and will forever be a problem within the global realm of cybersecurity. As a result, can I truly prepare myself for the inevitable obstacles ahead? The disappointingly short answer is no. Life is like a constantly changing function where the input variable is complex and unpredictable. Therefore, I am

unable to truly prepare myself for all known ethical decisions. However, I can take steps to harden my “defenses” before they arrive at my doorstep. First of all, I first need to recognize that there is indeed an ethical dilemma. Can I prepare myself for something that doesn’t exist? In fact, I might not need to do so. I am more likely to follow my heart than a guided checklist. Additionally, I have my faith to count on. As a born again Christian, I am covered with the armor of God. He will guide me in whatever ways He sees fit. I may not like them, but He has a plan for me. Ephesians 6: 11 says, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (*English Standard Version*, Ephesians 6.11). With God by my side, how can I fail? How can I make the wrong decision? How can I not be an ethical cybersecurity professional? Of course, I can not go through out my life believing myself to be infallible. That is what leads to one being an unethical black hat hacker.

Works Cited

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