

## CS #3: Email Read Receipts (Discussion Preparation)

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### **Question 1 (a) Answer:**

Maintaining the read receipts feature, I think the strength is that an email experience with more transparency can always maximize the information shared between users to facilitate clear and honest business exchanges. However, I think the weakness is that tracking and collecting email recipients' personal information without notifying them belongs to a dishonest business practice. If the recipients are not GeniusMail users and do not even know they are being tracked, then I think the so-called "transparency" is meaningless.

### **Question 1 (b) Answer:**

Modifying the read receipts feature, I think the strength is that the GeniusMail executives can have less ethical pressure with criticism induced by the social media post. However, the weakness is that the GeniusMail might become less competitive in the business email market, because its competitors also have the read receipt feature. Another weakness I can think of is that even after modifying the read receipt feature, the GeniusMail executives might still receive criticism about privacy concerns because of the "root problem".

### **Question 1 (c) Answer:**

I believe the critics are correct because the GeniusMail indeed does not offer an option for the email recipient not to be tracked, which can be regraded as a dishonest business practice. I believe the CTO is not correct in his pros assessment, which means that I believe the CEO is correct in her cons assessment. This is because we can not simply assume that both the email sender and recipient are GeniusMail users, such transparency is likely to be one-sided, or sender-sided, and it is very difficult not to see this feature as dishonest, especially without the recipient's consent. However, I believe the CTO is correct in his cons assessment because it is likely that the GeniusMail is less competitive after modifying the read receipts feature. I believe the lead engineer is not correct in his assessment, because the GeniusMail company should also take some responsibility if many people just simply choose not to use their product.

### **Question 2 Answer:**

I believe GeniusMail has a responsibility to recipients of GeniusMail emails, even if the recipients are non-users of the company's software. Because the recipients themselves do not have the option to refuse being tracked by GeniusMail, and I think this is certainly a privacy concern. Besides, if the recipients want to block the receipt tracker, they have to make additional efforts using image-blocker. I think the additional burden is unfair for the recipients. Therefore, GeniusMail should have a responsibility to recipients.

**Question 3 Answer:**

Firstly, I want to describe the “Cowardice/Lack of confidence” from “Vice of Deficiency”. In the case study, the CTO expressed his concern about the GeniusMail product being less competitive after modifying the read receipt feature. I think this argument shows a lack of confidence, or even cowardice to some extent.

Secondly, I want to describe the “Disagreeableness” from “Vice of Deficiency”. In the case study, the lead engineer claims that users can directly choose not to use their product if they felt a dishonest practice. I think this claim is completely unacceptable because we can not address problems by simply denying others who disagree with us, and this argument clearly shows the negative effects of disagreeableness.

Thirdly, I want to describe the “Wisdom” from “Virtue (Mean)”. In the case study, the CEO acknowledged the necessity of remaining competitive but also claimed that there must be some way to compromise. I think this argument shows wisdom to some extent, because both pros and cons of modifying the read receipts feature have been taken into consideration.

**Question 4 (a) Answer:**

I think the GeniusMail CEO’s motivations are stopping the overwhelming criticism and debating by making some compromise. However, the CEO also agrees that keeping GeniusMail product competitive is very important, and she believes that addressing the public’s ethical concerns might help provide a competitive advantage.

**Question 4 (b) Answer:**

I think the GeniusMail CTO’s motivations are keeping the current read receipts feature because he believes this is a very important feature for their product to remain competitive. I think the CTO does not care much about public criticism or privacy concerns, as long as the GeniusMail product can make good profits.

**Question 4 (c) Answer:**

I think the CEO’s motivations are more virtuous. Although both the CEO and the CTO agree that it is very important to keep GeniusMail competitive in the business market, I think the CEO takes the ethical concerns and public criticism more seriously, even making some compromise in product competence. Since the CEO really cares about addressing ethical concerns and privacy issues, I think the CEO’s motivations are more virtuous.

**Question 5 (a) Answer:**

I think the most virtuous action is that the CEO insists they should make some compromise to address public concerns and respect recipients' transparency and privacy. This is because I think the CEO's insistency is very previous, especially in the GeniusMail company where the CTO and the lead engineer only care about product competence and profits. Therefore, I think the CEO has the most virtuous action.

**Question 5 (b) Answer:**

I think the least virtuous action is that the CTO fully sided with keeping the read receipts. This is because based on the "fully sided" term, we can see that the CTO does not care about public criticism and recipient's privacy concerns at all. All he cares about to whether the GeniusMail product is competitive to make more profits or not in the business market. Therefore, I think the CTO has the least virtuous action.

**Question 6 Answer:**

I believe the company did the right thing in making the changes described at the end of the case. To explain, firstly, we can see that the geolocation component of read receipts and the logs all historical location data are removed, which reduces the privacy concerns. Secondly, although the read receipts feature is preserved, it is turned off by default, which reduces the recipients' transparency concerns. Therefore, I believe the company did the right thing, which addresses public concerns while trying to keep the GeniusMail product competitive.

**Question 7 (a) Answer:**

I believe the changes made to GeniusMail did not solve the problems for which the company initially received criticism. To explain, firstly, we can see from the case study that there are still many people arguing that they did not go far enough to address the root problems. Secondly, I think as long as the read receipts feature is embedded in (or not completely removed from) GeniusMail, such criticism about "root problems" will never ends.

**Question 7 (b) Answer:**

I believe the company made the right changes. To explain how those changes were appropriate, firstly, removing the geolocation and all historical location data helps address the privacy concerns and turning the feature off by default helps address the recipients' transparency concerns, so that I think the GeniusMail executives are making explicit compromise to address public criticism and concerns. Secondly, I think it is also reasonable and necessary to preserve the read receipts feature to keep competitive in the business market, because the competitors of GeniusMail also have this feature. Combining these two factors, I think the company made the right changes, and these changes are appropriate.