Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct

**Dark UX Patterns**

In this scenario, several ethical and professional conduct issues are highlighted by Steward, his manager, and the company. The conduct presented by these entities is questionable as it may constitute a contravention of the law, the British Computer Society (BCS) code of conduct, company values, and social morals and ethics.

Dark Patterns are deceptive UX/UI interactions, designed to mislead or trick users to make them do something they don’t want to do (Jaiswal, 2017)

Ethics is essentially a systematic approach to understanding, analysing, and distinguishing matters of right and wrong, good and bad, and admirable and deplorable as they relate to the well-being of and the relationships among sentient beings.

Ethical determinations are applied through the use of formal theories, approaches, and codes of conduct, such as codes that are developed for professions. (Rich, 2020)

As a computing professional, Steward (ACM, 2023) is faced with a conflicting situation and in essence, is also bound to adhere to the code of conduct of the computing professional body that he may be part of.

The changes in the design have clearly manipulated its users, and this can be observed with the number of refund requests that have increased but are still ignored (ACM, 2023). The change in the business model and benefits also hints at this as unethical conduct. The arrows and changes in the colour palette clearly mislead users and discriminate against users with disabilities as this goes against the BCS conduct (BCS, 2023). This does question the ethical obligations of Steward and his team, as they need to ensure that the design is transparent and free from elements of deceit, manipulation, and discrimination.

Craig (2023) states that:

“Designers should always advocate for transparent user experiences that give customers the power to make their own decisions. Balancing business goals with great user experience can be difficult, but dark patterns are never the answer”

It is also concerning that the management team celebrate the increase in revenues that culminated from the changes that were done by Steward, even though they are aware of the complaints and refunds that have also escalated. The management team has prioritized the financial gains of the company over the ethical and moral implications of these changes. Such conduct clearly defies the BCS code of conduct duty of public interest, Professional competence and integrity, and duty to the profession (BCS, 2023).

Sapio (2020) also states that Dark UX is when designers create an experience that pushes users in a direction that benefits the interests of the company rather than the user.

In essence, computing professionals have defied several ethical issues and should always aim to maintain a high level of professionalism, comply with relevant laws and regulations without infringing on other people’s rights, not discriminate or harm others and respect society, and ensure that their work is done with honesty, integrity, and transparency.

Dark patterns make customers unhappy and cause them to lose trust in a business (Picoult, 2020). According to (Blundell, 2018), a majority of customers said that the customer experience was one of the most important factors in their decision to buy. Dark patterns equal bad customer experience. Bad customer experience equals loss of customers.

In conclusion, dark patterns are immoral shortcuts to meeting business objectives at the expense of unprepared users. They show a lack of compassion and respect for users while reaching your business objectives unethically.

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