To upper management,

Hello, this is Zhiming Zhao. I am now reporting the tricky ethics case that Ms. YY has been through. As the second large global anti-virus company, our product is proud of safety and efficiency. However, one day a guy who called himself the XX, has privately contacted our employee Ms. YY. In this situation, XX claimed that he created a kind of virus that can penetrate our anti-virus system without being noticed, and only he can fix it. He sent the virus to YY, and YY used the isolated system to test out the virus. The virus has been proved that it can hack into our security system and attack the local user. XX stated that he only wants to cooperate with us and make more money. Instead of using the virus to directly attack users for his profits, XX wanted to spread the virus with us, and only our company can kill the virus. Therefore, our anti-virus software might become the world’s #1. He claimed that this would be a win-win situation, and he promised that he would keep it silent forever. After that, he’s willing to join our company as an anti-virus expert. On the other hand, he said, if we don’t cooperate with him, he will spread the virus anyway, or choose to cooperate with another anti-virus company which might be a threat to our company.

Ms. YY accepted it; however, under certain conditions. First, XX must come to our company before we cooperate. Therefore, we could have proven that he is the right person and avoid fraud. Second, XX must keep the cooperation silent in the future to avoid unnecessary panic from the users. Third, XX must stop the development of any other virus and work for us as an anti-virus expert. The crucial decision was made based on the spread of the virus that is unstoppable in this situation. If we do not cooperate with XX, either the virus is going wild and affect millions of users, which brings down our company’s reputation, or he is going to cooperate with another anti-virus company.

In the second situation, it is uncertain for other companies to obey the ACM code. When XX cooperates with others, they can create a lot of even worst situations like develop more viruses together or directly install the virus onto the user devices to make profits illegally. Ms. YY was trying to turn this crisis into an opportunity by carefully handle the case.

According to the ACM principle 1.2 (Avoid harm). It is understandable that as an anti-virus company, we are not allowed to spread out the virus. People commonly believe that the anti-virus company will fight injustice behaviors. However, in this situation, we decided to follow the ACM principle 2.3 (Know and respect existing rules pertaining to professional work), which breaks the rules but only for the greater goods. Since obeying principle 1.2 will cause more harm than good to the company and the whole society, it is ethically better to cooperate with XX and have the virus controlled by our company. Moreover, despite that we did not follow the ACM principle 1.3 (Be honest and trustworthy) since we cooperated with the virus creator XX, we still managed to follow the ACM principle 2.9 (Design and implement systems that are robustly and usably secure), which eventually create a more secure environment for the users in the future. Therefore, it is not just the economic benefit that we can earn; we also aimed for the better future of IT professions in American society. By the cautious treatment of the virus and cooperation, I believe Ms. YY has made the right decision and will positively impact the global IT professions.

Yours Sincerely,

Zhiming Zhao