Ethical implementation of UX and/or UI

The initial intentions of the UX discipline were to improve people’s productivity while reducing errors. Was there any value to these intentions? Various methods were implemented to meet these intentions such as: augmenting human ability, optimization of system’s design and the automation of various tasks. Naturally, these implementations have respective ethical implications.

Automation can easily degrade the emotional and intellectual value of the task/work. For example, if someone’s intellectual reasoning to complete a task can be replaced by a program that can complete the same task in much less time, the worker will be replaced(to improve efficiency and profitability of the company). When this occurs the workers intellectual value and drive will drop. It can create scenarios where skilled operators are easily replaced by those less-skilled as certain tasks are automated and thus there is no need for a highly skilled worker.

By the nature of UX, the intention is to aid productivity and thus decrease the effort required by the user. With this in mind, designs are based on typical human actions and trends. This very idea is powerful and, if used unethically, can result in people designing applications to manipulate people with malicious intent. For example, to unwillingly force users to subscribe to feeds and advertising by placing these items in popular areas on the application. This manipulation can also occur subtly, for example designers will place ‘Pay now’ buttons on popular areas to encourage the user to place their order. The use of explicit language can also push the user to making a different decision than they initially intended. For example, anti-virus software will use words such as ‘Are you willing to accept the risk?’ to encourage the user to buy their anti-virus software.