

1. You are a database/system administrator for a large medical database company. Some DNA is found at the scene where a child was kidnapped. There is good evidence that time is limited.

You know that you could run the sample against the database which may provide valuable leads - but it violates the reasonable search and seizure clause established by the courts; will open up private medical data for others to see during the search, violate company policy and possibly destroy customer faith in the company. What do you do?

After considering this scenario very carefully, we have decided that the most ethical solution is to not run the DNA against the database. We believe this to be the proper course for the following reasons:

1. This action violates laws present in your country of residence, and violating laws is usually unethical.
2. You have a duty to your employer to do what's best for the company and a responsibility to your coworkers not to jeopardize their livelihoods. The negative publicity of this action could destroy the company's reputation and thus harm both the company and your fellow employees.
3. We consider opening up the private medical data for others an unethical violation of privacy.
4. The negative publicity of this action could destroy your career and/or get you fired.

4. Your company purchases a division which is in direct competition to your spouse's business. You currently have access to the new I.P. How should you (have) handle(d) this situation?

It's ethical to be honest and trustworthy, so we would inform the management of the complexities of the situation immediately. One potential solution could be to request a transfer to a noncompeting division, or reduce your access levels to sensitive information. It's important to be honest and let the management make the call.

8. An embedded system you are working on has a mean time to failure of 20 years. Marketing advertises this unit as having a 20 year lifespan. Should you care about how precise the language is in the media? Does it matter what the item is designed for?

This depends on a few factors:

1. If 20 years is the mean, what is the standard deviation? If most units fail within a range of, for instance, 19-21 years then the matter is trivial, and the advertisement language doesn't matter. If it's not unlikely for the unit to fail within, for instance, 5 years, then we must consider the side effects caused by the unit's failure.
2. If the unexpected failure of the unit could cause significant physical or financial distress, then it becomes crucial to be as precise as possible in the advertisement's language.

In this scenario, we would definitely alert the upper management of this issue as quickly as possible, and follow the issue to its conclusion.

3. If the management ignores the issue, and it is serious enough, we must consider taking further action. An ethical person will prioritize avoiding harm to others and contributing to human well-being over their own job security, so you should work towards raising awareness.

4. If needed, you should consider working for a new company, since your employer's ethics clearly clash with your own. At the end of the day, you need to be able to live with yourself.

9. You are an employee of an education software company and are also on the local school board. The board is asked to weigh in on IT decisions. Are you an expert witness? Or is this a problem?

Firstly, being the member of a school board is a good idea given your qualifications and educational background. In this instance, we think you could still be an expert witness as long as you are forthcoming about your employer. As an ethical person, it should be possible to maintain honesty and objectivity, and so there shouldn't be any problems here.