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CPRE 394 Ethics Essay

Following a Code of Ethics is important in software engineering because many software products store user data. A lot of that data can be important to the user like passwords, messages, and pictures. It is important for software engineers to keep that data secure from any bad actors, but also keep it secure from themselves and fellow developers. When a software engineer is faced with an ethical situation, I would ask myself, would I want my family, friends, and users to see the decision I made on the news. This question helps keep the focus on just the ethical dilemma and not anything else like the money that would be in my pocket. Factors like the public opinion including customers are important in ethical dilemmas because they are the users of the product and keep the product alive. The ethical considerations introduced in class did not differ much from my own since they were mostly instances where the company put their own agenda in front of the well being of their customers. Examples include vehicle manufacturers rushing cars to the market, only to lead to harmed consumers and major backlash, like how Ford released the Pinto even though they knew it had safety issues. Our class was able to come to the general consensus that rushing products out to market is wrong and that the safety of the users is much more important than the deadlines.

The 3 "Virtue Ethics" traits that related most to our case study is Integrity, Fidelity, and Responsibility. Integrity is to have strong morality and good ethics. I choose this trait because some companies do not demonstrate good ethics, like the ones that rush products to market or companies that cheat at meeting standards. For example, Volkswagen implemented a temporary solution that made their vehicles pass environmental regulations so they could release the vehicle. I chose fidelity, since companies should support and be loyal to the public as they are most likely the reason the company exists and will continue existing. I believe being loyal to customers should be a top priority for the company. I chose responsibility as my third trait because companies should aspire to be trustworthy and dependable to their customers. Making decisions like Ford and VW made to release rushed vehicle designs, is what causes customers to switch to using products to another company. Another example of a company with a huge responsibility is Amazon with their Amazon Echo product. Amazon Echo has a microphone to hear its user; it needs to know everything the user is saying to be able to catch the key word "Alexa." This causes major concern with privacy since consumers are not sure what Amazon could be doing with all of the conversations Echo may have recorded. It is up to Amazon to be responsible and not use the conversational data of the users without their permission as it would be a breach of privacy. The other virtues are still very important, like honesty. However, these three are the most relevant to what was discussed in class. The virtue of charity is good for a company to have, but companies still need to make a profit to continue their operations. Charity is very good for the employees of the company as they are what make the distribution of goods and services possible.