What ethical issues can exist in web applications? Provide two specific examples and justify your rationale. From a CWV perspective, how would you address this? Review your classmates' answers and offer additional feedback and insight.

Professor and classmates,

There is a new ethical issue that has become apparent in current day and that is the manipulation of children. Generation Alpha are known as “Ipad Babies” and the reason is obvious- they seem to know how to use mobile devices better than most adults. Having worked for AT&T as a representative, I can tell you that one of the most common calls we would get would be that a toddler had accidentally made a purchase on a parent’s phone and thus the parent requests a refund. Refunds could only be given under certain conditions so customers would often be told that nothing could be done. There’s countless mobile app/game developers that specifically target kids and toddlers for this reason by using bright colors and appealing cartoon characters. It’s a quick way to make money, but it’s clearly unethical as it involves manipulating kids who don’t know any better.

Another ethical issue is false advertisement. There was a recent case of a website called BetterHelp that promised therapy sessions over the web by actual licensed psychiatrists. It looked professional enough and it’s users handed over all of their health information to these so-called “professionals” only to find out that many of the psychiatrists weren’t licensed. BetterHelp promised to keep the information safe, but it shared this information with major corporations to be used for targeted ads. This shows that it’s important to advertise honestly and to be transparent towards your userbase.

Developers that avoid either of these cases may stand out as honest and reliable in this current time. You could rest assured that any success that comes from being honest and reliable will feel like it’s truly well-earned. We shouldn’t feel that we have to be unethical in any way to make ends meet as God himself will provide for our needs as we work. (Matthew 6:26-34) If nothing else, avoiding manipulation and false advertisement can prevent future legal headaches.

Scott,

The Edge case you brought up is spot-on! Theres more people that use old technology than you might realize. Many of the elderly continue using the same computer for five or even ten years- maybe longer- as updating to newer technology is both too complicated and too expensive. There’s also young people being raised by the elderly who simply might not be used to newer technologies. Finally, the main reason for people using older technology is low income. When I was going to Texas tech, I was using a 10 year old Macbook that I had bought used (the only thing I could afford) hoping I could run the software required for the engineering program but it was far too old to run any of the engineering software- plus the screen stopped working halfway through the semester anyway dooming me to a semester of failed courses. What I’m trying to say is that there’s a lot of individuals out there who don’t have access to newer technology so I believe it’s important to continue to support older technologies as long as possible. While updates are useful, sometimes the term “don’t fix what’s not broken” can certainly apply for a lot of people.

Professor Estey,

If I fell for any of these malpractices, I’d let people know right away so that they don’t fall for it too. I had very nearly fallen for a scam interview for a data entry job at one point. I started the interview and everything- it started out with seemingly random questions that had nothing to do with the job or my background. It seemed pretty suspicious that the interviewer was trying hard for a good while to seem friendly and not getting to the point. The starting pay also seemed too good to be true- $25 an hour as a starting pay is a really high income where I live. I opened another tab and did some research and realized that the “employer” was phishing for information and the company in question (Nielson) was known for such scammers pretending to work for them and conducting interviews over chat. The actual company never conducts interviews in that way. I closed out of the interview before they could obtain any important information- or at least I hope that’s the case. I left comments on the job ad letting people know not to fall for it. I saw the same ad posted later on and commented on that one too. Unfortunately, I doubt that prevents everyone from falling for it- especially those who are desperate for a job.

Jess,

I absolutely agree with you on social media being addicting. I did my best to avoid social media addiction until recently and now I find that every free moment I have has me reaching for my phone to scroll through Facebook reels. I don’t want my baby to end up addicted to phones and I-Pads so I can’t let myself be like this either. I know that some countries do have limits in place. TikTok features a time limit in China, meaning that individuals can only scroll through TikToks for a certain time limit before they have to take a break. I feel this is a good model of how to limit social media as it doesn’t overstep boundaries.

Dioukou,

You know the CWV pretty well. It’s important to treat other human beings with respect. I’ve found that the human mind is quick to focus almost entirely on the individual, completely disregarding others as just being “in the way” or “taking up space.” I feel this mentality is what leads developers to so easily breach privacy or spread misinformation. They view users as statistics instead of individuals. Keeping the humanity of the users in mind is one way to help think and work in an ethical way.