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# Case 2: Building a "Backdoor" to the iPhone: An Ethical Dilemma

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What dilemmas did Tim Cook face?




In February 2016, Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, **faced a dilemma** regarding whether or not to comply with a court order to unlock an iPhone belonging to one of the terrorists involved in the San Bernardino shooting. The FBI had requested Apple's assistance in accessing the encrypted data on the iPhone, but Apple had refused, citing concerns about the security and privacy of its customers.


Cook was torn between two competing priorities.

- On the one hand, he wanted to cooperate with law enforcement and help prevent future terrorist attacks.
- On the other hand, he was concerned that creating a backdoor to unlock the iPhone could set a dangerous precedent and compromise the security of all Apple devices.





What were Cook's primary responsibilities, which would have influenced his decision to refuse to succumb to U.S. government pressure to build a backdoor to the iPhone? Is there any contradiction in these responsibilities?



# What were Cook's primary responsibilities, which influenced his decision to refuse to build a backdoor to the iPhone?

As CEO, Cook had 2 major responsibilities:



## Apple's commitment to customer digital privacy & security

Cook stated, "Our commitment to protecting your privacy comes from a deep respect for our customers. We know that your trust doesn't come easy. That's why we have and always will work as hard as we can to earn & keep it."

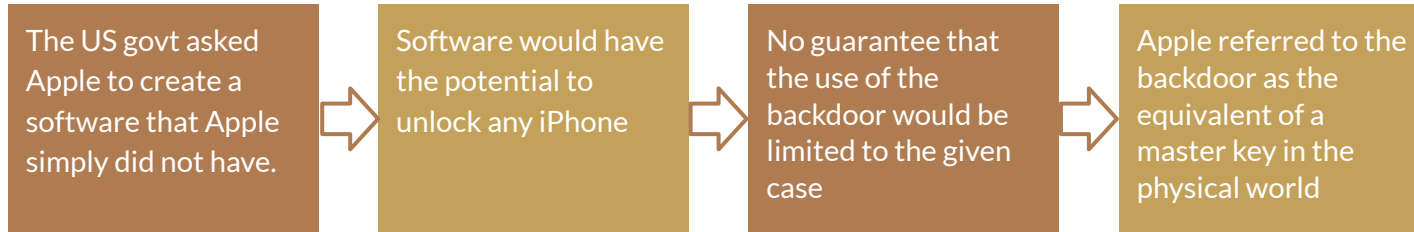


## Protecting national security & upholding the law

Complied with all legal requests for user data including valid subpoenas & search warrants; Apple made its engineers available to FBI & offered its best ideas on no. of investigative options at their disposal.

Is there any contradiction in these responsibilities?

**No, it was in fact not contradictory**



Apple faced an ethical dilemma. The government was asking it to hack its own users & undermine decades of security advancements.



Assess the ways in which Cook may have resolved these dilemmas.

## Assess the ways in which Cook may have resolved these dilemmas

- Tim Cook's refusal to comply with U.S. government requests to build backdoors into iPhones recovered from terrorists is a stand in defense of customer digital privacy. **Cook's decision is justified** because this is not just a phone issue, and it has far-reaching implications for the digital privacy and security of all Apple customers.
- Backdoors: There is no guarantee that backdoors will be created only for investigative purposes. The government could use the backdoor to spy on and access other users' iPhones, which would not only expose users' private data to danger, but also damage Apple's brand image, contrary to Cook's original commitment to protecting user privacy.
- Apple can help the FBI in its investigations by providing some information, such as backups of terrorist phones and iCloud data, but this is based on how the information is used. But this does not mean that Apple is creating a backdoor program for iOS or macOS that can be used by the government.



