COSC 3050, Spring 2016
Privacy

Case 1:

You know that reading the content of emails is perhaps the highest level of intrusion on confidential communications, but what about reading email logs that show details of who is sending email to whom and when? Traffic analysis does not involve content, so it is okay, right? In addition, traffic analysis is a method that intelligence agencies use to glean information about enemy activities, even when they cannot decipher their encrypted communications. Who communicates with whom, when, and how often, can be almost as important as what is said. Is it appropriate to look for patterns in email and try to determine what they mean in terms of personal relationships and other aspects of people's lives?

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Case 2:

You are checking out the data integrity after a database upgrade and perform some SQL queries on the sales data table to make sure everything is as it should be. You accidentally discover that some of the sales people are getting higher commissions than others. The percentages seem to be random, not based on experience or sales performance. You are close friends with some of the members of the sales team. Do you say something to your friends or just keep quiet?

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Privacy

Case 3:

An ISP installed filters to prevent customers from visiting Web sites that are operated by spammers who use these Web sites to harvest email addresses. They also filtered their incoming email, sending unknown message oringinators to a junk mail filter. One day, they reported blocking 2.4 billion spam messages in a 24-hour period. When you block 2.4 billion emails, chances are you will lose some valid messages. It has been stated that the ISP did not sufficiently explain the ramifications to their customers, who were suddenly missing regular email from entities such as church and social groups. Was the ISP wrong to implement the filters this way, since most ISPs and mail programs allow the user to maintain a personal blocking list?

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Privacy

Case 4:

You are the CPO (Chief Privacy Officer) of a midsized manufacturing company, with sales of more than $250 million per year and almost $50 million from online sales. You have been challenged by the vice president of sales to change the company's Web site data privacy policy from an opt-in policy to an opt-out policy in order to allow the sale of customer data to other companies. The vice president has estimated that this change would bring in at least $5 million per year in added revenue with little additional expense. How would you respond to this request?

COSC 3050, Spring 2016
Privacy

Case 5:

As the information systems manager for a small manufacturing plant, you are responsible for all aspects of the use of information technology. A new inventory control system is being implemented to track the quantity and movement of all finished products stored in a local warehouse. Each time a forklift operator moves a case of product, the operator must first scan the UPC code on the case. The product information is captured, as is the day, time, and forklift operator identification number. This data is transmitted over a LAN to the inventory control computer, which then displays information about the case, and where it should be placed in the warehouse.

The warehouse manager is excited about using case movement data to monitor worker productivity. He will be able to tell how many cases per shift each operator moves, and he plans to use this data to provide performance feedback that could result in pay increases or termination. He has asked you if there are any potential problems with using the data in this manner, and if so, what should be done to avoid them. How would you respond?

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Case 6:

You are writer for a tabloid magazine and want to get some headline-grabbing news about the stars of a popular TV show. You decide to file a separate Freedom of Information Act request for each of the show's stars with the FBI. Would you consider this an ethical approach to getting the information you want? Do you think that the FBI would honor your request? Would there be any interaction with Homeland Security?