



Mini Project - 03

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An Ethical Dilemma in the IT Industry

The situation where a difficulty appears in the terms of taking a decision between two or more choices where some ethical principles will be compromised is called the Ethical Dilemma. These dilemmas can occur in any aspect of personal and professional life.

Scenario: A person has a small consulting business. The CyberStuff company plans to buy software to run a cloud data-storage business. CyberStuff wants to hire him to evaluate bids from vendors. His spouse works for NetWorkx and did most of the work in writing the bid that NetWorkx plans to submit. He read the bid while his spouse was working on it, and he thinks it is excellent.

Dilemma: According to the scenario, the dilemma is which decision the person should take in ethical manners. The person can inform the company about his connection to the software vendor. On the other hand, if he strongly believes that he can be fair in considering all bids then it is not mandatory for him to say anything ethically. In this circumstance, should the person say nothing and continue with the consulting job or disclose his connection with the software vendor and lose the job?

Probable Decision:

1. Inform nothing about his connection and continue with the consulting job.
2. Disclose the connection with the vendor to the client and lose the job.
3. Quit the job without disclosing the connection.

The person can choose a decision based on some ethical theories which is given below:

Brainstorming Phase

List of all the people and organizations affected (stakeholder):

- CyberStuff company
- The Person
- His Spouse
- NetWorkx Company
- Other companies whose bids he will be reviewing
- Future customers of CyberStuff's cloud storage service

List of risks, issues, problems, consequences:

- If he informs the client, he will lose the job but the honesty will be valued

- By doing so, in future he can get more other works considering his honesty and unbiasedness
- If he does not disclose and CyberStuff anyhow discovers the conflict of interest later, his reputation for honesty will suffer
- The reputation of his spouse's company could also suffer
- Might put NetWorkx's reputation for honesty at risk

List of benefits:

- He can continue the job and if NetWorkx company is deserving for recommendation both of the companies will be benefited from a sale

List of some possible actions:

- Pay no concern about informing about the connection
- Disclose the connection and keep his reputation and dignity intact
- Quit the job

Analysis Phase

It is common to confuse or combine ethics with other decision-making processes, such as morality, law, or religion. While many faiths encourage moral decision-making, they frequently do not cover the whole spectrum of moral options available to us. A decent legal system ought to be moral, but since the law sets precedent by attempting to impose general rules, it is unable to take account of particular situations.

- In this decision making process at first it is needed to notice who are affected. Here the person oneself, spouse and CyberStuff can be affected. Then the person should consider whose bid he is using as the cloud storage provided by CyberStuff. If the person has no idea who is associated with the bidders then it is better to keep silent.
- If the person is not biased and does not bear any ethical obligation then he can inform the CyberStuff about his spouse. If he is biased then it may affect the spouse. Or, if the person gets another task which is more efficient than this then giving this reason he can leave the bid, it will be acceptable.

Impact:

Probable decisions will have different impacts on each stakeholder.

- If the person gets the job and does not inform the company about his connection with the software vendor it can be harmful for him in the future. If anyhow it gets revealed, his reputation will be in danger. By doing this he may lose his job. Moreover, the client will never trust him. Even if he fairly considers the bids and selects NetWorkx company clients will surely doubt his honesty. In this regard, it can not be the decision to be taken.
- If the person discloses the truth there is a chance to lose his job but his honesty, truthfulness, morality will be appreciated. Appreciating his honesty the company may offer him many other businesses in future which can be more profitable for the person. It is also beneficial for the reputation of the person. For these reasons, this can be a good decision according to our knowledge.
- In case he quits the job without disclosing, he may regret his decision in future. It will have a negative impact on his personal life. He will lose his job and his whole family will get affected. So, this decision is not preferable.

Right Of Stakeholders:

- In this circumstance, every shareholder has a positive right, since they are performing their jobs as part of their employment duties. Therefore, whatever choice is taken, the right will be a positive right because it is provided by the government.

Analysis of consequences, risks, benefits, harms for each action considered:

- In this scenario, we can say in CyberStuff the person should start his work with the maintenance of morality, law, or religion. If his spouse has a connection with the company then he must inform this. Then the company will decide what initiative should be taken. There will be no risk to him. Maybe hiding this, he and the NetWorkx company both will be benefited but if the client gets the knowledge about it, they will take back their task and it will be harmful for everyone.

Kant's, Mill's, and Rawls' approaches:

1. Kant's Deontological Theory:

Kant's theory deploys categorical imperatives. Kant would have us believe, "Telling the truth is always right" in itself even if again doing so might produce some unfavorable results. It argues that morality, that is the rightness or wrongness of a human act, depends on whether such an act fulfills a duty or not, rather than on its consequence.

Based on the theory, the choice should be telling CyberStuff about the spouse's connection with NetWorkx. Though by disclosing the connection there is the possibility of losing the job in the scenario, still he should disclose it because he is telling the truth regardless of the consequences. Without saying anything about the connection and getting the job refers to manifestations of immorality which is a violation of this theory.

2. Mill's Utilitarianism Theory:

Utilitarians agree that a moral theory should apply equally to everyone. But they thought the way to do that was to ground it in something that is really intuitive and there is nothing more basic than the primal desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain. It says we should pursue pleasure or happiness not just for ourselves but for as many sentient beings as possible. We should act always so as to produce the greatest good for the greatest number.

From the scenario, the choice of saying nothing and getting the consulting job will bring him the desired happiness which goes with utilitarians one part. But overall the theory says to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, which will not go with saying nothing and getting the job. Because of not disclosing about the connection, the spouse, himself, companies will be affected. So, if he only thinks about himself then, most of the good will not be done. As a result, in this case also disclosing the connection is preferable..

3. Rawls's Theory of Justice:

Justice has been understood in a more utilitarian way, where a society is one that tries to increase the overall quality of life for its citizens. Rawls argued justice as fairness.

In the scenario, based on justice despite his conviction that he is neutral, he could inadvertently be biased.

Categorization of ethically obligatory, ethically prohibited, ethically acceptable:

From the scenario, it is not only right to disclose the connection with the company, but it is wrong to not disclose because of this so many things can be affected and it is a matter of morality. The action of not disclosing and getting the job is ethically prohibited because it will not be justifiable for the CyberStuff company. The decision to inform the CyberStuff company goes with ethical values and principles that are appropriate and relevant to the situation.

According to the SE Code Principle 4.05 it is mentioned that disclosing to all concerned parties whose conflicts of interest can not be avoided is mandatory. Besides, according to ACM Code 2.5 it is stated that to give comprehensive and thorough evaluations of computer systems and their impacts, including analysis of possible risks. Analyzing those mentioned information it is quite clear that the person should take the decision of disclosing his connection with the NetWorkx company.

Decision:

With the aforementioned circumstances, it can be decided that the ethical obligation is to inform CyberStuff of the conflict of interest. Only then the degradation of morality will not happen.