**Essay 3 – Case of the Killer Robot**

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The case of the killer robot incorporates several failures in ethical standards, and business practices. Randy Samuels pirated software and passed it as his own, he was dishonest about his abilities and his lack of domain knowledge (physics). This led to further consequences that led to the death of Bart Matthews. He also created a toxic work environment in which he was unable to receive criticism. Cindy Yardley unethically parsed a test that was a forgery. The user interface team was seemingly ignorant of Sneiderman’s “Eight Golden Rules”, despite a leading expert stating these as solid guidelines to follow in development of user interface. One has to wonder why such drastic failures could have occurred. The thought this author was left with was, “Who hired these people?”

The first person up this chain of command would be Sam Reynolds. Sam was put in charge as a cost saving measure, as a quick replacement for John Cramer, who managed previous projects. Reynolds had no training in robotic, and his narrowed viewpoints stifled the progress of this project. He utilized a waterfall model of prototyping. Reynolds was warned of this by another employee and he quickly terminated that employee creating a hostile, and toxic work environment. The most unethical of the lot to this author was Ray Johnson, the infamous creator of the ‘Ivory Snow Hypothesis’. To note, I will be calling it as such as it isn’t a theory, and contrary to what the author of this story believes, theories are actually well grounded in science and are often more right about the universe than even laws. (Ghose) That point aside, this hypothesis commits the naturalistic fallacy, claiming some distorted connection between a snowflake and project development. That because ivory snow is naturally this pure, our product is good enough. It frankly makes no sense, and is bordering between insane, and sociopathy. His desire to see the success of the project, somehow justified his unethical coercing of Cindy Yardley to forge the test. His neglectful hiring led to a disastrous team, and a disastrous user interface. But again the author is left with the question, “Who put this person in charge?”

It was only due to Max Worthington that one can truly peer at the unethical practices at Silicon Techtronics. He revealed how Mike Waterson had set up an oppressive work atmosphere, by spying on his fellow employees, and threatening to fire countless people for being unable to meet his unrealistic deadlines. Mike Waterson set Sam Reynold loose on the Robotics Division, and ultimately Waterson is to this author the most responsible. It only took responsible hiring practices to save a man’s life, but Waterson wanted to cut corners. Those critical choices he made in the running of his company allowed unqualified individuals to manufacture a product that killed someone.

It is important to note that Cybernetics Inc. failed to train Bart Matthews properly as agreed upon, and stipulated in the contract for the Robbie CX30 project. Bart received only eight hours, which is thirty-two hours short of the agreed upon training time. Nonetheless, under Mike Waterson’s guidance Silicon Techtronics violated several agreed upon stipulations of safety as well. Finally the least responsible is Bart Matthews, he is a causality due to unethical practices by others. Bart committed no unethical behavior that led to this outcome, he is just a victim in a horrible accident.

The normative recommendation would envelope several court actions. Though I am not clearly identifying guilt or innocence it seems clear that justice needs to be served to the family of Bart Matthews. His life was lost, due to negligence within a technology development company. This is no different than a company manufacturing a car that explodes and is still selling it. Would our society be ethically justified in remaining hands off in such a situation, allowing for more cars to be manufactured that explode carrying passenger? Then how can we as a society allow for robots to be manufactured that decapitate unsuspecting operators? Our society cannot allow companies to go unscathed when committing such errors in judgement. Responsibility must be claimed, and future companies held accountable. Held accountable not to previous failed standards that led to such a death, but new standards set forth within the country itself, that every corporation need to follow if they desire to produce robots. These strict standards are a necessary guideline to prevent future causalities, and ensure the safety of the public at large.

For this case itself Randy Samuel should be terminated, and stripped of any certifications he possesses that allow him to work in this field. He should also be held accountable in court for stealing software. Cindy Yardley should also be terminated, and stripped of any certifications. Sam Reynolds also deserves similar termination, and decertifying. Ray Johnson should be terminated, and also be held liable for lawsuits. He was the most directly involved with the forging of tests, and the poor development of this robot that led to Bart Matthews’s death. Michael Waterson should also be held liable in court for lawsuits, and possible other legal actions, though it would be difficult to really point out any actual laws that were broken. Cybernetics failure to properly train Matthews should also be reason for the Matthews family to sue. Though I don’t think there is much grounds for a manslaughter convictions, there is gross negligence. These lawsuits should set a precedent, and enough public notoriety to hopefully get the attention of some politician. Politicians who can pass legislation to protect society, and establish strict guidelines for future robotics development. It is through such guidelines that a future in robotics can still exist as well as thrive. Without guidelines individuals can cause a chaotic situation as is evident in the “Killer Robot” story. This is justified through the lens of the Teleological standpoint, that this is the greatest good for the greatest number. (Teleology)

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