

GOOGLE ethical case study plan

Company summary

- Huge multinational technology company
- Software products, hardware products, services
- Issues
 - Data collection/Privacy
 - Voice/facial recognition
 - User search data/history
 - Spying on users
 - Selling to advertising companies
 - Abuse of search engine results
 - Faulty products
 - Google nest smoke alarm recall 2014
 - <https://www.theverge.com/2014/5/21/5739326/440000-nest-protect-smoke-detectors-recalled#:~:text=Nest%20Labs%20is%20recalling%20%22about,worry%20about%20sending%20yours%20back.>
 - Pixel recall
 - <https://www.hardwarezone.com.my/tech-news-google-recalls-faulty-pixel-smartphones#:~:text=Google%20has%20recalled%20affected%20Pixel,complaints%20about%20their%20malfunctioning%20microphones.&text=The%20malfunctioning%20microphones%20were%20caused,the%20audio%20codec's%20solder%20connection.>
 - Security
 - Lots of sensitive data being stored, hence at risk of being stolen
 - Censorship
 - Adhered to China censorship till 2010 (when it got fully blocked)

Overview of ethical issues with google:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_Google#:~:text=Criticism%20of%20Google%20includes%20concern,of%20search%20results%20and%20content%2C

Ethical considerations for each issue

- Data collection
 - Users agreeing to data collection when they agree to terms and services
 - Google not really enforcing that they read it, taking advantage of the fact everyone just hits accept
 - Are users in the wrong? Should they be more vigilant? Or should google be more explicit?
 - Is selling to advertising companies so bad? Is it in the best interest of all parties? How to best get consent?
- Faulty products
 - Shows some negligence from designers/developers, need better regulations and enforcement of best practices
 - Users are put at risk, but could they have used the product better?
- Censorship
 - Helped chinese government censor information from their population
 - Adhering to the countries laws, but obstructing access to information. Is this ok?
 - Is government at fault? Should google have opposed them?
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_by_Google#Australia
- Security

- Google harnesses so much user data, there is so much more to be lost
- There have been past instances where data breaches occurred, exposing millions of users data
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Google_data_breach#:~:text=The%202018%20Google%20data%20breach,million%20user's%20data%20was%20compromised.&text=Google%20did%20not%20disclose%20this%20information%20to%20the%20social%20network's%20consumer%20database.
- Should users be more vigilant with their account security? Should google be implementing stricter security practices?

Initial conclusion

- Overall, Google has done its best to adhere to ethical practices.
- Some preventable failures (data breach, faulty products) have occurred but they're anomalies and Google have done their best to compensate users and prevent future cases
- Other grey areas such as censorship are usually a case of them just obeying laws, its out of their power/scope to actively oppose the underlying values of each countries laws

Possible steps they can take to improve

- More explicitly tell customers when their data is being collected, how its being used, how they can opt in/out
- Implement better development practices to prevent faulty products and security breaches
 - Regular reviews? More ethical security testing?
- Financial compensation where suitable