

CPE 399 Ethics Scenarios

Read both scenarios and choose one to complete the assignment

Both scenarios are adapted from <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/more/engineering-ethics/engineering-ethics-cases> by Clare Bartlett and

Scenario 1: A violation of privacy

Marcus is a computer engineer who has recently developed an app which helps users keep track of medical information, doctor's appointments, and prescriptions.

Information about the user is stored in this app, including what prescriptions they are taking and how frequently they schedule doctor's appointments. As the developers of the app, Marcus and his company have access to this information.

The marketing department requests Marcus supply them with customer-specific information so they can better target ads and app suggestions to the users. Marcus understands that he is part of a company, but also feels that the privacy of the app users should be protected. Additionally, Marcus feels that as an engineer, he should be responsible to those who use his technology.

How does Marcus determine how much of the user's information should be shared with marketing? Is this an ethical use of information or a violation of the user's privacy.

Scenario 2: May the Truth be with You

Catherine is a new hire at a startup that produces LCD displays for large venues, such as shopping malls. Part of her job requires her to troubleshoot malfunctioning displays.

One day, a shopping mall reported that two display units out of twelve had stopped working from their installation three months prior. The customer also noted serial and revision numbers on the two units were different from the rest of the units.

At the job site, Catherine inspected the displays and realized her company had sold units that were from a bad batch (i.e. group of displays that did not have over 50% yield during manufacturing). Catherine wanted to tell the site why the units failed, but recognized that if she disclosed this information, the site would be eligible to receive replacement displays at no additional cost. On the other hand, if she blamed the failing units on a weaker cause, such as improper installation, her company would be able to charge the site for replacement units.

Catherine knew her manager would want her to choose the option that would minimize the company's losses; however, she wanted to be honest with the site as they were one of the company's best customers.

What should she do?