COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION 1: CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Initial Post

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INITIAL POST

For this discussion, I have selected the ACM case study **"Dark UX Patterns."** It presents the case of Stewart, a UX designer tasked with making subtle interface changes—such as modifying button shapes and colour schemes—intended to mislead users into choosing more expensive options. Identifying these as deceptive dark patterns, Stewart raises ethical concerns, which his superior dismisses in favour of client satisfaction (ACM, 2018).

Application of the ACM Code of Ethics

This scenario violates several principles of the ACM Code of Ethics:

- **1.2: Avoid harm –** Misleading users into unintended transactions causes financial harm and erodes trust.
- **1.3: Be honest and trustworthy –** Deliberately misleading users undermines honesty and trustworthiness.
- **1.4: Be fair and take action not to discriminate –** Vulnerable users are more likely to fall victim to manipulative interfaces.
- **2.5: Evaluate system risk –** The organisation failed to assess the ethical and social risks associated with dark patterns.
- **3.4: Promote social responsibility—**Dismissing ethical concerns demonstrates a lack of corporate responsibility (ACM, 2018).

Comparison with the BCS Code of Conduct

The ACM and the BCS Code of Conduct are aligned. Section 1 emphasises the public interest, which is violated by misleading UX. Section 3 cautions against behaviours that harm the profession's reputation, such as disregarding ethical concerns to satisfy client demands. Section 2 emphasises the importance of maintaining professional honesty and transparency (BCS, 2015).

Legal and Social Implications

Dark patterns could lead to legal penalties or prosecution for violating UK consumer legislation. Socially, they undermine brand loyalty, erode user trust, and heighten public mistrust of digital services (Mathur et al., 2019; Albesher and Heider, 2023).

Professionalism in Computing

This case further demonstrates the need for management support in promoting ethical behaviour among staff. Stewart's resistance is commendable, and organisations need to cultivate an environment that encourages sound ethical decisions, whether through ethics committees or extending whistle-blower protections (Quinn, 2020).

References:

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