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CEN3031

ACM Ethics Case Analysis

## Case Study 1: To Ship or Not to Ship by Clare Bartlett

In the first case study, the ethical dilemma revolves around Rachel, a Quality Assurance Engineer facing time constraints in testing her company's servers before shipment. The business model dictates a rapid release cycle, leaving a limited timeframe for Quality Control tests. Rachel is compelled to ship products with a higher likelihood of failure, risking data loss for customers, to stay competitive. There are several ACM principles that can be applied in this circumstance.

This situation raises ethical concerns aligned with ACM's Principle 1.1, which talks about benefiting society. By knowingly allowing the shipment of potentially defective products that might result in data loss, Rachel's actions could jeopardize the well-being of users. The ethical dilemma arises from the tension between the company's competitive pressures and the responsibility to deliver a safe and reliable product.

To address this issue, Rachel could prioritize critical tests aligned with ACM Principle 1.3, which involves avoiding harm. By focusing on tests crucial for user safety and product reliability, Rachel can mitigate the risks associated with shipping products with known defects. Additionally, she should uphold ACM Principle 1.4 by being honest and trustworthy by transparently communicating potential risks to stakeholders, fostering trust between the company and its customers.

Negotiating more realistic timeframes for product releases, as suggested in the possible solutions, aligns with ACM principles, emphasizing the need to balance business

objectives with ethical responsibilities. This approach ensures that ethical considerations are integrated into the decision-making process, contributing to the well-being of society and maintaining trust in the profession.

## Case Study 2: Copyright Concerns by Clare Bartlett

In the second case study, Ralph, an entry-level software engineer, inadvertently reuses code from a previous job without recognizing its copyright status, leading to potential legal and ethical consequences. The unauthorized use of code violates ACM's Principle 2.5, emphasizing the importance of respecting intellectual property rights.

The ethical dilemma in this case is rooted in Ralph's lack of awareness regarding copyright laws. The situation highlights the need to adhere to ACM's Principle 1.5, as the code he used without permission constitutes proprietary information belonging to his previous employer.

To address this complex issue, conducting a legal review of the codebase before product release, as suggested in the possible solutions, aligns not only with ACM's Principle 1.5 but also with Principle 2.5. By systematically reviewing the code for potential copyright issues, SDX Alliance can ensure that intellectual property rights are respected, legal risks are mitigated, and the confidentiality of proprietary information is maintained.

Moreover, educating employees about copyright laws and intellectual property rights is crucial. This proposed solution supports ACM's emphasis on professional development (Principle 6.1) and responsible conduct (Principle 2.1). Training programs would empower

employees like Ralph to make informed decisions, fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility within the organization.

Attempting to contact the previous employer to negotiate the use of the code or seek an alternative solution not only aligns with the ethical principles of transparency and respecting property rights but also emphasizes Principle 1.4. This approach reflects a commitment to ethical conduct in software development, ensuring that products are not only technically sound but also developed and released with due regard for legal and ethical considerations. Ultimately, these measures contribute to the responsible and ethical practice of computing within the organization.