

# Assignment 6-Case of the Killer Robot

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The case of the Killer Robot proved to be a monumental case for IT ethics in the Silicon Valley area of California. During the time of the case, there was a great amount of debate among the responsible parties for the death of Bart Matthews, the robot operator and the victim in this fatal accident. After reviewing the compilation of articles and interviews, I believe the most responsible party for his death is Cindy Yardley, the software tester assigned to the project. Cindy was hired on by Silicon Techtronics to perform testing services before the robot was sent to Cybernetics, Inc. Cybernetics was the company which implemented the robot and used robot operators to do further testing and development. However, after reviewing a series of emails between Cindy and Ray Johnson, the Robotics Division Chief at Techtronics, Cindy admitted to developing fake software test results and passed them along in order to ensure the robots were ready to be given to Cybernetics. Cindy was fully aware of the consequences of her actions. She had a degree in computer science, including software testing, and spent most of her life to understanding and performing software test results for development companies. She knew the importance of the testing aspects of software development and what could potentially happen if the test results were not completely accurately. She also knew that the robot was not ready to be given to Cybernetics because it was not passing the original test. This is what led to creating the fake test results. Cindy went on to admit in later interviews that she felt tremendous guilt over the death of Bart Matthews because she knew she had played a huge role in letting the robot reach that point in development. Even though Cindy was assured that the robot was completely safe and was ready for the next stage in development, there's no plausible reason why she wouldn't question her decision to make the fake test if the robot was safe enough to pass the original test.

Controversially, the person that was the least responsible for Bart Matthew's death was Bart Matthews himself. Bart was hired by Cybernetics as a Robot Operator in order to test and provide feedback on the robot's functionality. He was given some training in the robot's operations, which only consisted of one eight hour day. During this training, there was no emergency protocol training and plans of action in case the robots became uncontrollable at any point. Bart was given manuals and tools in order to response to different error messages and a short cut key in order to stop the robot's function but it failed to work during the incident. Additionally, the actual set up of Bart Matthew's testing area was seriously flawed. The robot's control panel and the robot's manual were a significant distance away from each other, causing the user to walk in between the desk to read the manual and the panel to response to the error message. The error messages themselves were also flawed because they were so inconsistent. The error message that appeared before Bart's death was green, the first error message in

this color, and there were no audio alerts when this message appeared. It went unnoticed by Bart until it was too late to respond.

Based on the news articles and interviews covering the event at Silicon Techtronics, my normative recommendation begins at the initial request for the project. Throughout the many news sources, it is apparent that Techtronics has no sense of formal training when it comes to ethical decision making and a sense of ethics in general. Many of the managers would put their employees and other co-workers in situations that would make them choose between their jobs and their ethics. These high pressure situations would be hard for any employee to manage, especially ones with no ethical training or knowledge. They would not be able to fully understand the consequences of their actions or be able to use resources available to them at the company that could help them resolve any ethical issue.

With that being said, Techtronics should implement a formal training time slot for each new hire to the company that specifically focuses on the importance and value of ethics within computer technology. This is a way for the company to ensure that each employee has some specific knowledge about ethics in the workplace and that they can apply this knowledge to their day to day work within the company. This also offers an opportunity for the company to reveal any monitoring software that may be in place, such as tracking email and telephone calls, in order to ensure ethical standards are being followed. Employees will also be made aware of any resources available to them to ensure ethical decisions are being made. These resources include a Human Resources Department which will offer reporting paperwork and documentation of any unethical practices within the company. There will also be monthly reviews with department heads and employees to ensure each employee is doing their expected amount of work and that there are no problems they are experiencing. This is a way to keep the employees and their employers on the same page regarding deadlines and stages in the development processes. In addition to requiring new hires to go through the ethics training, returning employees must also go through some type of ethics training to ensure each employee understands the company's view on ethical decision making. This will further ensure that the company is meeting a higher standard and that the fatal incident with Bart Matthew's will never occur again.

**Works Cited**

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