

COM6655 Professional Issues

Autumn 2021-22

Week 2 Tutorial

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Review

- Introduced the idea of the course – to address the wider legal, social and ethical issues around the technical modules you are studying on your MSc course
- Explained the course structure
- Identified major themes running through the lectures
- These tutorials follow up on the previous week's topic

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SLIDE 2

Organisational stuff

- Don't forget to put questions on the Blackboard discussion forum.
- Nobody has written a blog yet. There is a prize!

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SLIDE 3

Today's tutorial

- Download sheet from Blackboard if you haven't already.
- Work in groups (tables) to answer the questions.
- In the plenary session we will go around the tables and ask for comment.
- This is good practice for the final exam – questions in that will be based around scenarios that you will need to analyse and resolve.

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SLIDE 4

What to do

In your groups

- One member of your breakout group should be given the role of rapporteur – they should take notes and be prepared to speak on behalf of the group at the end of the tutorial.

Discussion points

- What are the key facts in this scenario?
- Who are the key stakeholders?
- What are the main ethical issues here? (i.e. should someone have done something, or not done something?)
- Are there any legal issues here?
- What steps would you take to improve/resolve the current situation?
- What policies/strategies would you introduce to prevent reoccurrence?

- Key stakeholders
 - Bill
 - Harriet
 - Betty
 - Other employees
 - Senior management of company
 - Network of customers
- Ethical issues
 - How decisions were made in the company:
 - There is an issue about transparency of the decisions.
 - How they were communicated
 - Bill's role:
 - Utilitarian role, 'cause for the better good' might lead to people being harmed
 - Lack of respect which might lead to greater damage to the company (because it is made public)
 - Email becoming viral becomes 'uncontrollable', which is bad for a company that is already struggling.

- Ethical issues (continued):
 - Betty's role:
 - Encourages the situation
 - Actively decides not to participate actively in it
 - Doesn't assume the responsibility of such encouragement
 - Ends up taking the role
- Legal issues:
 - Professional code of conduct (is it broken in the current situation?)
 - Reasons for dismissal include gross misconduct, the question is 'is this situation an example of that?' (examples of gross misconduct are fraud...)
 - Dismissal was immediate (next day)... seems to have been too quick?
 - Tracking the email back to the source, was this legal? If the email was sent from a company's email address... it is legal for the company to trace the email back to the source, from a personal email... situation might be different (?)

- Legal issues (continued):
 - Was it ok reducing the workforce by 10% 'evenly' without considering any other aspects?
- Steps to improve the current situation:
 - Clarifying situation, more transparency
- Policies/strategies to improve situation
 - Policy on what is acceptable/unacceptable in a company in terms of email use
 - Provide opportunities to employees to voice their discontent/disagreement
 - Prevention better than cure