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MS&E 254

Ethically Sensitive Situation Writeup

Summary

The first video was about an individual asked to come up with a solution at work which would have automated their supervisor's job, so the supervisor did not pass along the solution. In the end, the individual decided to speak with the supervisor about the situation. In the second video, during the pandemic, the individual was asked by a friend to break the honor code by doing a final together. Although the individual felt that cheating would ensure them a higher grade in the course, she decided not to cheat. The third video revealed an instance in which a student needed to travel during COVID to see family and although she was concerned about spreading the virus, she decided to go while taking all necessary precautions. In the fourth video, the student felt that the company he was interning for was not protecting people's data privacy, but he felt uncomfortable and didn't speak up.

Themes/Similarities

The first theme/similarity we observed in every case, was choosing between the more prudential and the more ethical option. Oftentimes the situation was one in which outcome options were legal but potentially unethical. We realized that hypothetically it is easier to make a decision than in real life.

Differences

Cheating on the test is more of a black-and-white situation since it was in violation of the honor code. Feeling uncomfortable with issues related to data privacy is also a natural response. For the other cases, the situations were more complex. Travelling during COVID can be justified based on the necessity of the travel, but there are health-related consequences nonetheless. In the Nigerian internship, you could go straight to upper management, but that would strain the relationship with your manager.

Values / Principles

The student in the data privacy dilemma valued their job while the student in the Nigerian internship valued their professional relationship with their direct supervisor. The student who avoided FaceTiming during an exam valued their academic integrity over higher grades. Finally, the student traveling during COVID valued their family over added risk to public safety.

Outcomes

For the first video, we think that talking to multiple peers/managers about the situation could have resolved it more fairly (i.e. giving the intern's idea a chance to flourish while not revealing

the supervisor's actions). We don't want to get the supervisor in trouble but feel like the idea is for the broader benefit of the company since the person worked at the company to contribute to it.

In the second video, we all agree that we would have also used the data seeing as it was legal. Also, since the position was a temporary internship, this could play a role in the internal decision-making process.

For the two COVID related videos, we agree that *not* taking the final exam together is the ethical choice. As for travelling during COVID, we also agree with taking necessary precautions to minimize the severity of their COVID spread during travel.