

Ethics Essay

A code of ethics promotes an ethical professional culture by demonstrating how people are expected to act. As an engineer, we need to recognize the importance of our technologies in affecting the quality of life throughout the world, so we are supposed to have the highest ethics.

When I'm faced with ethical situations, I will try to follow Code of Ethics. Practically speaking, my decision will depend based on my position in the company as well as the company environment, but generally, I will try to find the best trade-off point between company's profit and customer satisfaction. Talking about the ideal is very easy but I am talking about this in practice because that's what happens in real life situations. For example, if you are in a situation where it is very hard to find new jobs and your company has zero ethical practice. In this situation, you are likely to ignore or follow their unethical practices even though you are not supposed to. So the important thing is that the work environment needs to be such that ethical decisions are always promoted. In healthy corporate environments, employees will naturally choose ethical decisions which lead to higher customer satisfaction and eventually success of the company and your personal semantics toward ethical decisions will be naturally formed.

New questions regarding ethics emerge every second in technology fields. This includes the invasion of privacy as companies gather private data on its users and misuse them such as Facebook data scandal as well as whistleblowers who leak sensitive company/government information to bring change to the current situation such as Edward Snowden. As technology continues to evolve, it's important to implement or ensure that codes of conduct are implemented and enforced.

During this class, we discussed topics related to privacy issues with EE Professor, Dr. Neihart in a group. We couldn't get to consensus but everybody agreed that privacy in our current technology society is not properly protected. For example, phone company is able to figure out your location easily by using cell towers and triangulation. The problem with this is that phone is basically useless if you want to avoid this problem. There is a huge trade off between giving up your privacy and getting ability to connect to the phone network and internet. Although there is an option on the phone to let the phone carriers know not to track your location, but we are not sure if it's enforced or not.

I think the common saying "you are a product" is true. In this era, data dominates the power of company. So they really want to collect as much data from customers as possible. This is why tech companies are very reluctant to ethically dealing with data privacy issues. but after EU regulated GDPR,

the future of privacy is going in a better direction. It's so strict that almost every international companies seem to be following this regulation. I hope this makes a better middle ground for consumers.

After reviewing the 6 virtues of ethics which are Integrity, Honesty, Fidelity, Charity, Responsibility, and Self-Discipline, I found that the three virtues that were most relevant to this case study were Integrity, Charity, and Responsibility. Integrity was violated because moral uprightness is not maintained in some tech companies when it comes to data privacy. It may be mentioned in small text in company privacy policy, so it might be honest. But the big question is who owns the data? In many cases at the current situation, company owns the data. But I think customers should have more control over the data and company should be transparent to how they use the data. Charity is something that a lot of tech companies provide. Since technology is a lucrative field and many tech companies are making huge money, they should always be giving back to the society, both at the organizational level and personal level. Responsibility is violated because companies should be responsible for how they use big data. They mustn't use private data for other purposes unless users agree. It was clearly violated in Facebook data scandal. They used private data just to satisfy their need to spread their right-wing ideals. Private data need to be used with the highest standard. A lot of companies do this properly by classifying data into multiple hierarchies and use complex structures to store the data securely. But some companies don't seem to do this properly. Although unintentional, a lot of small tech companies don't pay attention to data security. Some companies store data without any encryption and we see data leak news everyday. This is also considered irresponsible. Every company has a duty to protect their customer's data. The other virtues are less relevant because each employee could be honest, faithful, and self-disciplined but bureaucracy makes a company as a whole unethical. This is not something an individual can change. One virtue that I think should be included is friendliness. Companies should make user-friendly products and should have privacy policy that everyone can easily understand.