Trevor McGlaflin

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Planned Obsolescence vs Right to Repair

Side 1: Planned Obsolescence is more ethical than the Right to Repair

As seen in recent years, many companies have adapted strategies where planned obsolescence is an integral part of their business plan. For instance, an IPhone 4 or 5 may not be able to support the newest IOS software, which motivates buyers to buy newer IPhones. While it is easy to say that strategies like this are out of malicious intent, often these strategies have other motives from reeling in more sales. In most cases related to software, it is probably the case that there are features on the new platform that are incompatible with older versions of the same software. Therefore, society can not truly unleash the full power of their new software unless a vast majority of people are using it. Also, there may just be so few people using the old software that it is not worth the time/money to keep supporting it. Companies want their products to be viewed as the most cutting edge, so it is not a good look for their brand image to have most people using their older products.

Side 2: Right to Repair is more ethical than Planned Obsolescence

From an environmental perspective, and a consumer perspective, the right to repair is the obvious ethical choice. This is particularly true for hardware products that contain expensive/rare materials in their chips or other parts. For example, right now the world is facing a serious chip shortage which is impacting the car industry tremendously. If tech companies made a better effort to extend the life of their products, and recycle them better, this would probably not be as large of a problem. As a consumer, it also seems unfair that the quality of your product can degrade over time from factors that are out of your control. If you have a pair of pants that you treat well, you know that they will always stay in good shape, where if you treat your phone very well, it may get slower over time due to planned obsolescence.

My Opinion on Right to Repair Versus Planned Obsolescence

In my opinion, I think it is justifiable for companies to create software that no longer supports older products. They are trying to build their brand image and get society to move forward with them technologically. I understand that Apple may not want to spend extra money so that they can continue to support IPhone 4’s on the newest IOS. However, where the line is drawn is when companies intentionally degrade these older products for the sole reason of them performing worse, so they buy new ones. Some people may not really care about having the newest and best, and they should continue to enjoy what they have without the quality degrading. Additionally, I think that companies should make a better effort to recycle old computer parts, particularly chips or parts containing rare earth materials. So many people have 10-20 old computers and phones laying around at home, and there should be better programs to recycle them properly.