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3410ICT Professional Issues

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Professional Issues Assignment Part 1

The ethical decision model is explored in this assignment and is applied to a fake scenario in order to come to a decision. The situation is complex, meaning there is no clear answer to what should be done. By analysing the scenario it becomes clearer to what should be done by allowing the different factors to be weighted and judged accordingly. The weighting scale is based on benefitting the greater good of society and applying professional values. Based these weighting factors, the character Emily should leave her job and her co-worker James should turn himself in and discontinue his plan to sabotage Calder + Fleetwood.

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Lecturer: David Tuffley

Campus (GC):

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# Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyse and apply the Ethical Decision Making (EDM) model to a hypothetical scenario. To begin with the different factors in the scenario placed into the following categories: legal, professional, employment and social, personal, and intrinsic. Secondly, the factors are ranked based on priority in a chart. Thirdly, a decision is made based on the analysis of the situation. Lastly a discussion section talks about why the different factors were ranked accordingly.   
  
The scenario involves three main characters working at a advertising and marketing agency company called ‘Calder+Fleetwood’. Michael Fleetwood and James Destry already work at the company higher a third individual named Emily Raebrun to work on front-end development. The scenario also includes other minor characters such as another contractor that works on the security of the project and a man named Alexander Kane.

While working at Calder + Fleetwood Emily encounters conflicting problems and has to makes decisions based on influence from her superiors. Her co-workers, Michael and David have a position of authority due to their roles in the organization. It is apparent in the scenario that Emily is coaxed into doing things, which she believes is incorrect or unethical based on opinions of her co-workers.

The focus of this paper is to analyse what each character does and says and then come to a decision using the principles of ethics as a guide. Personal matters aside, the analysis of the characters will be done using the principles of ethics to determine what the proper decision in the scenario should be.

# Analysis

## Legal factors

**Intellectual Property Theft:** Jamesmakes a backup copy of the Reaper database without written permission from a superior at Calder + Fleetwood. James wants to have a backup copy of the database so he can use the information stored in the database to start his own venture.

**Breach of agreement with Calder+Fleetwood** James breaches the NDA (Non disclosure agreement) by selling a list of people in the greater Brisbane area to the Moral Guardians. The Reaper database and the information stored in it is the property of Calder + Fleetwood. By selling this information not only does James breach his legal agreement he also endangers the lives of the individuals that were on the list he sold.

**Code of ethical conduct:** James has minimized his integrity since selling contact information from Reaper and making backups from of the database and storing them at home.

**Piracy**: James plans on using the Reaper database taken from Calder + Fleetwood to start his own venture. It is his intention to use the existing work of Reaper to start his own venture.

## Professional factors

**Complying with employer’s demands:** Emily suggests to clearly state up front that entering personal details may result in contact from third parties. Even though Emily knew this should be stated clearly, she succumbed to her employer’s request to embed the information in the legal notice. Emily knew informing users clearly is the correct practice but did not follow through on what she thought was right. It was not the best and most ethical decision on Emily’s part to listen to her employers, as she was not true to her professional code of conduct.

**Calder + Fleetwood not concerned with informed consent**: Michael Fleetwood and his manager James Destry are not concerned with informing users that their information may be distributed and used by third parties. Michael suggested burying the consent inside the legal text. James mentioned that if they tell the truth about personal information possibly being distributed to 3rd parties, people might not sign up. Both of them are neglecting their customers in order to gain more customer information, which is unethical.

**Calder + Fleetwood not concerned with protecting client information:** Emily decides to implement a decent level of security to protect the Reaper database knowing that the information being stored is quite sensitive. However, James thinks that this is unnecessary and sways her to implement a weaker security system. Emily should insist that protecting this information is important and not listen to James.

**Do not respect customer privacy or property of company**: James sells customer information relating to individuals interested in the homosexual lifestyle. The information is sold to the ‘Moral Guardians’ who abuse this information. Members of society are endangered at the expense of making James a quick profit.

**Cleaner steals and goes through personal items**: It is unprofessional to go through other people’s things, and illegal to steal.

## Employment and Social factors

**No audio recording:** Emily wants to record James and Michael’s voice during their meetings to have a record of what happened during the meeting. Michael and James both agree to not having audio recordings and request that Emily takes notes instead. Having an audio recording of the sessions would allow verbatim of what occurred during the meetings. The rules regarding this can vary from company to company and management may have a good reason for not wanting voice recordings.

**Unsolicited Offers:** People across Australia who entered contact details into reaper received offers for lifestyle products. While this is not necessary illegal, it is frowned upon to send people items they have not agreed to receiving.

## Personal factors

**James’ cleaner (friend of a friend) is a thief**: The text alludes that James hangs out with people who hold questionable integrity. As the saying goes, birds of the feather flock together.

## Intrinsic factors

**IT Developer**: Emily is working on implementing a front-end web page that will store information in a database that goes by the name ‘Reaper’.

**Senior Partner at Calder and Fleetwood**: Michael Fleetwood’s position at Calder + Fleetwood.

**Project manager at Calder and Fleetwood**: James Destry’s position at Calder + Fleetwood.

**Ambitious Plans**: James Destry has big plans for Calder + Fleetwood becoming a major player in list broker market. This reveals that James is a motivated individual thinking of ways to improve and grow the company. He openly states at a meeting that he plans on bringing the company into the list broker limelight within the next 5 years.

**Intent to harm and oppress**: Alexander from the ‘Moral Guardians’ wishes to obtain a contact list of people interested in homosexual lifestyle to inflict harm these people.

**Curious personality**: The cleaner likes to go through his client’s employee desk drawers and help himself to whatever perks his interest.

**Betrayal**: It is revealed that James has alternative plans for making back up copies of Reaper. James plans on using Reaper to start his own venture turning his back on Calder + Fleetwood.

**Calder and Fleetwood show optimism for product**:Reaper collects a large number of individual names after launching a test run on ‘Tasty Sizzle’. The company is very pleased with the results and look forward to what the live product will be able to achieve.

## Prioritisation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Factor** | **Related Issue** |
| 1 | Intellectual property Theft (Legal) | 2, 4 |
| 2 | Piracy (Legal) | 1, 4 |
| 3 | Breach of agreement with Calder + Fleetwood (Legal) | 1, 2, 4 |
| 4 | Code of ethical conduct (Legal) | 1, 2, 3 |
| 5 | Cleaner steals and goes through personal items (Professional) |  |
| 6 | Do not respect customer privacy or property of company (Professional) | 1, 3, 4 |
| 7 | Calder + Fleetwood not concerned with protecting client information (Professional) | 4 |
| 8 | Calder + Fleetwood not concerned with informed consent (Professional) | 4 |
| 9 | Complying with employer’s demands (Professional) | 4 |
| 10 | Unsolicited offers (Employment and Social) | 4 |
| 11 | No audio recording (Employment and Social) |  |
| 12 | James’ cleaner (friend of a friend) is a thief (Personal) |  |
| 13 | Betrayal (Intrinsic) | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| 14 | Curious personality (Intrinsic) | 4 |
| 15 | IT Developer (Intrinsic) |  |
| 16 | Senior Partner at Calder and Fleetwood (Intrinsic) |  |
| 17 | Project manager at Calder and Fleetwood (Intrinsic) |  |
| 18 | Ambitious Plans (Intrinsic) |  |
| 19 | Calder and Fleetwood show optimism for product (Intrinsic) |  |

Table 1: Priority List

## Decision

The decision is quite complex because it involves many different characters involved with a number of different factors. The order of decisions made is based on the prioritization hierarchy listed in the previous section. Legal factors ranked at the top of the list meaning they should be dealt with first and foremost.

James Destry’s name comes up quite a few times in the legal section and should be dealt with immediately. James has committed intellectual property theft by knowingly obtaining a copy of the Reaper database with the intent to start his own list broker company. His decision is threatening to himself because he could lose his job and tarnish his name affecting future employment opportunities. The company he works with is also threatened because he would be stealing clientele from Calder + Fleetwood, which could ultimately lead to layoffs or even company bankruptcy.

When joining a company the employee is required to sign agreement forms stating that all work done inside the company is indeed the property of the company. James has violated this agreement and should be fired from Calder + Fleetwood and reported to the authorities for further inquiry. In addition to being fired, the information stolen should be returned to the owner (Calder + Fleetwood).

This would only happen if someone knew about James’ scheme and reported him to the appropriate people in power. In an ideal world James should turn himself in. He should apologize for his actions, and quietly resign from his position.

Professional factors are a domain that Emily prominently comes up in. She should leave Calder + Fleetwood immediately. She has had various red flags come up during her stay working at this company. For starters the company does not want to be recorded during meetings, they do not care about informed consent, and they do not care about protecting customer personal information by implementing proper security. Emily should have stood up for herself and her professional values. If her superiors do not agree with her values, she should begin searching for other work and eventually discontinue working at Calder + Fleetwood.

The cleaner should return the stolen items and resign from his job. He is not acting professionally and can be thrown in jail if someone catches him.

## Discussion

a) The important factors in this scenario are quite apparent that the company Calder + Fleetwood contain a crooked bunch of businessmen putting profits before the wellbeing of others and ethical behaviour.   
  
b) The list was prioritized based on rules outlined in the ethical decision model. The most important factors are listed at the top starting at 1 and the least important near the bottom.

Legal and Professional factors take precedence in any situation. As a citizen living in a society there is an inherent duty to obey the law. By obeying the law society functions more smoothly and benefits the population as a whole. The rule does not hamper personal freedom, but sets guidelines for living in harmony inside a community. Therefore, all legal issues take precedence above all other factors.

Professional factors are ranked secondly after legal because professional issues also take into consideration public interest. For example, according to the ACS (Australian Computer Society) the code states that one should always act in accordance with public interest.

Codes of professional conduct and societal laws function very similarly to one another. Societal laws tend to cover a much larger group of people and tend to have a larger impact. For this reason, professional factors rank after legal.  
  
After professional factors comes social and employment. Employment and social factors are also similar to professional and legal factors with a few major differences. Social factors tend to change with time as society evolves, whereas the law tends to be more rigid and less malleable. For employment this can vary depending on the place of employment. It is up to the culture of a particular workplace to decide what is acceptable and what is not. Since social and employment factors tend to fluctuate and be in a state of change, they rank third.

Personal and intrinsic factors rank as the last two factors because they involve an individual and not a collection of people. While personal factors and intrinsic factors can be used to understand higher-level problems these factors are often internal to an individual and vary from person to person.

c) The decisions I came to were all based on the principle of benefitting society and a large group of people instead of individuals.

# Conclusion

The ethical decision making model can be used to document and analyse a scenario in order to come to a decision in a complex scenario. As an upcoming graduate soon to depart into the working world complex scenarios will more than likely present themselves throughout my career. Knowing how to deal with these scenarios will ensure that I am prepared to make good informed decisions that will benefit society in addition to protecting myself.