

ITEC810 - Ethics Paper

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Initial Discussion

There are a few perspectives and roles that must be examined before coming to a decision of the next course of action. As a professional, you have a duty to your employer and the business. As a colleague and a manager, you are liable for your employees. Finally as a member of the public, there is a responsibility to the general public that whatever you do has their best interest in mind.

As a professional, there is a duty to work to the best of you potential. This is both for your employer as well as the company. It is unethical to damage the company in any way, which includes purposely losing a tender process. This is not only an ethical responsibility, but it is also part of most employment contracts, so it is also a legal responsibility. From this perspective, it is the right course of action to submit a tender as strong as it could be in a hope to gain the contract. The benefit is that the company survives for a while longer and no employee is required to lose their job. In regards to the outcome of the project, which is targeting smoking advertisements to teenagers, it is the responsibility of the client to act ethically; it is not the responsibility of the company I work for or my own responsibility as an analyst.

It must also be mentioned that if the company succeeds in the tender process and is awarded the contract, then the analysis and tracking of consumer buying habits must be completed correctly. That is, it is unethical to be awarded the contract only to sabotage the analysis.

From the point of view of a manager, who has a few employees reporting to them, it is your responsibility to ensure they are secure in their job, that they have the tools and skills to do the job and that they get paid in accordance with their employment contract. Therefore it is imperative that a tender be submitted to secure the futures of those employees.

Lastly, as a member of the public, you have the responsibility to ensure that any work you carry out does not negatively affect the public. I would classify targeting teenagers with smoking advertisement as not in the best interest of the public and so from this point of view it is unethical. Some of the targeted teenagers could be family of the employees that report to me, the same ones that require this contract to keep their job.

The extreme course of action is to quit your job, hence not submitting a tender and failing in your duties as an employee, however you may have saved one employee from losing their job. You will also have the peace of mind of not being involved with this project. However this is not practical, since you have the responsibility too provide for your family as well, so keeping a job is also important. A more likely course of action would be to win the contract, since it is the responsibility of your company whether they want to be involved in an unethical strategy, then request not to work on the project. You can delegate the work to individuals that don't have a problem with targeting the teenage audience. This ensures that your employees keep their jobs, so you have fulfilled your duties there. It also ensures the company wins the contract, so again your professional duties are fulfilled. Lastly, you don't have a role in the analysis which satisfies, to an extent, your personal responsibilities to the public. Keeping in mind that if your company is unsuccessful in the tender process, then another company would be successful and the project and advertisement will still move forward. It is up to the company accepting tenders to decide on their moral obligation when deciding on tactics. It is also the responsibility of your company to decide on their code of ethics when deciding which contracts to chase.

Finally, I would have one more obligation, which is to inform my company's senior managers of the unethical situation and to try to convince the client to change theirs. Although it is their decision, I would still have an obligation to bring it to their attention. Although the strategy is unethical it is not necessarily illegal, and so my last course of action is to bring it to the

attention of the Advertising Federation of Australia, as a concerned member of the public, to try to de-motivate these unethical advertising schemes.

ACM Code of Ethics Discussion

According to the ACM code of ethics, section 1.1, all products of efforts must be used in socially responsible ways which does not affect the welfare of the public. This suggests that a tender should not be submitted. It also goes on to say that there is a responsibility to make others aware of any potential damage to the community, which in this case is notifying the authorities, such as the Advertising Federation of Australia.

In section 1.2, the code mentions that if harm to the public is a consequence of assigned duties, then there is a responsibility to undo or mitigate that harm as much as possible.

Section 2 of the ACM code of ethics discusses the professional responsibilities which includes achieving the highest quality of work, and maintaining professional competence. This suggests that the tender be submitted, and further more, that the work be carried out to a high standard, regardless of the consequence. In section 2.5, there is an interesting statement, which suggests that there is a responsibility to communicate your concerns of harm to those with opportunity to change them, so in our case, this is the company I work for and the company accepting tenders.

Section 2.6 addresses the current situation by saying that a professional can refuse to work on a project if ethical principals take priority. However it also says that if a request not to perform a task is not accepted, then the professional still has an obligation to complete the task, and in our case complete the analysis. It is then the professionals ethical judgement to decide wether to move forward with their duties or not, however if they proceed with their duties, it does not alleviate their other ethical responsibilities. "However, performing assignments 'against one's own

judgment' does not relieve the professional of responsibility for any negative consequences." [ACM Code of Ethics, section 2.6]

Section 3 of the ACM code of ethics discusses the responsibility of being a professional leader, and in our case, a manager who has employees reporting to them. In section 3.4, the code states that it is the managers responsibility to inform those who are to be affected by duties. In our case, it would be my responsibility to inform the employees of the company's financial situation in that their jobs might be at risk if the tender is not successful.

The beginning of the code states "Questions related to ethical conflicts can best be answered by thoughtful consideration of fundamental principles, rather than reliance on detailed regulations." In our case there is a direct conflict of ethical duties and by satisfying one ethical responsibility will be ignoring other ethical obligations. In this case the code suggests not to rely on the regulations but to consider the fundamental principles of the code.

There is no win-win situation, so the best course of action, in my view, according to the ACM code of ethics, is similar to my course of action outlined in the initial discussion, with some changes. That is, a tender should be submitted at a high quality. Up front, my employees should be made aware that their job is at risk. The company accepting tenders and my senior managers should be made aware of the unethical consequences of the project, since they have a better opportunity to change the strategy. Once the tender is successful, and your duties to your employees are fulfilled, the analysis work must also be completed to a high quality. If there was no change to the advertising strategy, then I would then suggest not working on the project and delegating it to someone else. If this is unsuccessful or not possible, then I still must work on the project. It is some consolation knowing that I have made a few attempts to change the harmful consequence of the project. However this does not mean I am not responsible for the projects consequences, so I will still fulfill my duties to the public, according to section

1.1 of the code, by notifying the Advertising Federation of Australia. This final action does not conflict with my duties as an employee; since the analysis work is still required, and the tender would still be successful, it will just motivate the client company to change their strategy. Also I would be notifying the authorities as a concerned member of the public and not an employee associated with the advertising company.