

Ethics Essay

ITEC 810

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ETHICS ESSAY

At the present time the IT professionals and the computers are playing an important role in the different business areas such as commerce, advertisement, education and entertainment; that is because the Internet is part of the society's everyday life. The IT professionals are those who have direct or indirect participation to the different stages of the software life cycle. Therefore these experts because of the role that are carried out by them may enable people to do good or be the cause of damage; also they could help to influence the people's decision in the good way or in the wrong way; moreover, they may have the power to help people or cause damage [ACS; 1999]. Therefore, in order to ensure that the software or the tools which have been developed by the IT professionals are going to be used for good they have to commit themselves to make their profession respectable and with a beneficial effect over the society.

However nowadays there is a hard economic crisis around the world; it makes more difficult for the professionals and companies making a correct decision. Some companies will come under financial pressure; therefore this situation could tempt them to sacrifice their ethics commitment and principles in order to gain an economic benefit (Hill; 2009).

The following scenario is going to show the reader an example of a situation that more and more companies have to face in which their ethical commitment and principles have to be considered in order to make a decision that may affect the economic stability of the company:

- You work for a large software company. You are involved in preparing a tender for a project which is essential for the company's survival: if you don't win the contract, you will have to fire two employees who report to you.
- The software you would be developing is intended to track consumer buying habits in order to predict where advertising will be most successful.
- Over a coffee, a friend suggests to you that one of the client's key market objectives is to determine the most effective way of reaching school children in the 16-18 years age-range with cigarette advertising

This essay is going to describe the course of actions that I would like to follow in order to make a correct decision for the company and for the society. This document has the following sections: The first section is going to describe in detail what are going to be the steps that would

like to follow for making a decision based on my reasoning and principles. The second section is going to describe the rules that are behind of my decision and that may support my point of view; these rules are based on the ACS Code of Ethics. A third section with some suggestions in order to improve the Code of Ethics. Finally a conclusion about this problem will be provided.

Course of Actions

The first action that I would take is to carry out an exhaustive investigation about the company that is my potential client. This investigation should find the company's market objectives, its vision and mission. Another important aspect that needs to be part of the research is the image of the company and its commitment with the society. The following step within the investigation will be about the stakeholders. I need to know what are their principles, their image and if they are social responsible or not. The reason behind the investigation is that I need to be sure who are the people who my company may work for. The other reason is the suggestion that was made for my friend. Therefore if the company or the stakeholders do not have a good image because they have been faced different complaints about social responsibility or have been acted against the law then it is more possible that my friend's suggestion will be true.

However, even if the client had faced some problems in the past, it does not prove anything. So my following step will be ask the client what will be expectations that they have for the software and how it can increase its profits. In the process of solving this question the company could tell me what are its target market. After that I would like to ask the stakeholders what is their point of view about selling alcohol or cigarettes to underage people and what is the probability that my software could be use for achieving this purpose. Their response could confirm or refute my friend's suggestion.

The purpose of the previous two main actions is to make clear the company's position about my friend's suggestion because as a person in charge of the tender I cannot dismiss his/her idea without further investigation because I could help the company to cause harm over the young people; but I cannot take as a truth either because I could affect the economic stability of my company and the future of two employees.

As a result of my investigation and the interviews with the company's stakeholders I may have two possible pictures:

The first picture is that as a result of my investigation I found that the company is going to use our software for the objective that was suggested by my friend. As a consequence my first action will be to have a meeting with my employers and to explain them my findings and the decision of refusing to continue with the negotiations with this company. Of course my decision is going to have as a consequence the dismissal of two employees. However they are competent professionals, so they are going to be able to find other job and I am going to do everything in my hand to help them with this purpose. In contrast if I continue with the negotiations my company could help to unscrupulous to cause harm to thousands of younger people. The next step will be to try to find other potential clients which can be interested in our software without cause damage to the society. By applying this last step it is possible that in a short time my company gain the stability that is needed and we can hire the employees who were dismissed before.

The second picture is that as a result of my investigation I found that the company is not going to use our software for the objective that was suggested by my friend. Therefore I am going to continuo to do my best in order to win the contract. In order to achieve this goal we are going to offer the company our best performance, competitive costs and high quality of software. The software that will be developed should comply with the high standards of quality for ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the product. Moreover I would like to suggest to my client to make a campaign for protecting its image that could be damaged by the rumours; because a great number of people can get confuse with this information and make the wrong decisions that could affect the company and its profits. In addition the agreement that could be signed by the client if we win the tender should contain an condition that states that the software cannot be used with the purpose of reaching school children in the 16-18 years age-range with cigarette advertising

Rules behind the Course of Action

The ACS Code of Ethics states a set of rules that may support my point of view [1995-2009]; this set of rules will be explained in the following paragraphs:

The NR 4.1 states that “To uphold and advance the honour, dignity and effectiveness of the profession of information technology and in keeping with high standards of competence and ethical conduct, a member must be honest, forthright and impartial” [ACS; 2009]. This statement

supports my decision of carrying out an exhaustive investigation about the company and its stakeholders because in order to be impartial I need to hear the both sides of the story. On one side I have my friend's suggestions that cannot be true only because it was suggested by my friend; on the other side I have the result of the investigation and the company's history as well as its image. Therefore my decision will be based on the facts and do not on the rumours.

The NR 4.3.4, also supports my concern about the underage people as potential key market for cigarettes. It is because this rule states that I should act with responsibility and put my effort to improve the quality of life of the people that could be affected by my software. In this case if the result of the investigation and interviews is the second picture the health of a great number of underage people could be in danger. Other rule that support this concern is the NR 4.8.1 that is about social implications. This statement specifically talks about to promote the health and safety of the people who will be affected by my work.

My decision of rejecting the contract and firing the two employees is supported by 4.3.1 that states that I must to put in the first place the community's interests over those that are personal or sectoral.

I also will comply with the NR4.6.6 statement because I am going to explain to my employer that if we go further with the negotiations with this company, our organization is going to be in conflict with our code of ethics, and our image could be harm; as a result we could loss more clients.

On the other hand if as a result of the investigations and interview we get the second picture; then the NR 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.6 will support my decision of working with high standards of quality because is our responsibility to bring value to our clients.

Suggestions

The ACS code of Ethics covers almost the most important regulations; however there is lack of regulation about the rumours. It does not say anything about what should be the point of view of a professional about a rumour. This regulation is important because a rumour could be innocuous or could be harmful. The second one was shown by the scenario that was analysed. In this case the rumour could cause harm to different people in different ways. For instance, if I do not decide to carry out an exhaustive investigation in order to confirm or dismiss the suggestion

I could make the wrong decision that could affect to thousands of underage people or the professional future of two employees.

In addition the rumour could be harmful for the client as well, because if the rumour is not true it could affect the company's image with catastrophic consequences for its future.

Therefore the Code of Ethics should add some statements about the responsibilities and actions that must be took into account by the IT professionals in order to make decisions based on facts instead of rumours.

Conclusion

At the present time it is common for the companies to face this kind of scenarios. The stakeholders and IT professionals have to be strong enough to not be tempted by the economic gains and place their ethics commitment above the profit. Finally it is precise to say that a practice that is based on ethic is going to increase the loyalty and trust from the clients and staff. Therefore the profit will be increased but not for a short- term expediency. With the increase of social responsibility and ethical commitment the next generations could have a better place to live.

References

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