

### Case Analysis on Professional Ethics

In 2015 Bill Sourour, a full-time coder, was tasked by his interactive marketing firm in Toronto, Canada to create a code that would be presented to the public in the form of a quiz regarding recommendations for a type of drug based off the quiz takers answer. The marketing firm Sourour worked at cliental were mainly pharmaceutical companies considering the firm was founded by a doctor. Due to stricter laws on how prescription drugs can be advertised in Canada than in the U.S., pharmaceutical companies have to find unique ways to advertise their prescription drugs through online websites. However, Sourour felt uneasy about the requirements the client wanted included in the quiz; the requirements being that no matter what answers were selected during the quiz the drug recommended at the end of the quiz would remain the same. Sourour's uneasiness only grew when a young girl killed herself after taking the drug recommended in Sourour's quiz due one of the drug's main side effects being depression and suicidal thoughts. Sourour soon learned that his sister had been recommended the same drug based off his quiz and urged her to stop taking it immediately. Soon after these events, Sourour resigned from his job realizing that the future code the firm would have him write could potentially have live altering affects on those using it. In this Case Analysis I will argue that the Consequentialism/ Utilitarianism tool shows us how Sourour's marketing firm and the firm's client lacked professional ethics and action that lead to causing harm to those who used their end product/ website.

One of the more centralized concepts in the code of ethics was the IEEE Code of Ethics, specifically rule number one surrounding making sure safety, health, and the welfare of the public are of first concern and rule number nine to not avoid injuring anyone, their property, or their reputations by false or malicious actions. The IEEE Code of Ethics is a set of obligations those involved professionally in technologies try to hold themselves accountable as they realized their technologies have a monumental impact on the quality of human life. Those who have a heavy impact on the development and production of the heavily used technologies in the daily lives of individuals should adhere to these professional ethical practices to refrain from future disputes and causing harm to those who use their products.

In the case of Bill Sourour creating a drug advertising quiz for a client of his marketing firm, professional ethics appeared to be swept under the rug by the client who requested the website, Bill's manager who reviewed the end product before it was released, and by Sourour himself. Although there was nothing illegal in the way the code was produced according to Sourour, the code was written with deceit whether the client realized it or not due to the end drug recommendation not changing regardless of what answers were selected on quiz. The way in which the code was written tricked user's into thinking they would be getting a drug recommendation that would benefit their health, but instead they were really getting the one

and only recommended drug that would benefit the pharmaceutical company. This lack of professional ethics to avoid harm caused a young girl to kill herself due to the side effects of the drug that was being recommended through the online quiz.

From a Utilitarian point of view Bill Sourour, his marketing firm, and the marketing firm's client can be seen perpetuating bad into the world because the consequences of the code used in the website ended up harming someone. A utilitarian will judge an action as good or bad not by the action itself but by the consequences of the action taken. So, the action of the client wanting every end result of the coded quiz to only recommend one particular drug would not be seen as a bad act by a utilitarian. However, once the harm was caused by the drug recommended in the quiz to the young girl, a utilitarian would see the act as deceitful and wrong because a consequence of the quiz caused a death to a user. The marketing firm manager noticed this deceitful act and overlooked it because it was what the client wanted. Bill Sourour is also on the bad end of utilitarianism as instead of reporting his uneasiness about the requirements for the quiz he continued to code it. Although his action to resign was on the better end of utilitarianism because he realized he did not want to continue coding for his firm where he would potentially receive more work requests to code projects that are unethical and that can end up harming people.

In Armstrong's article on confidentiality one of the main concepts described was the social contract between the professions and the larger society. One of the main goals of the social contract between professions and the public was for the professions to act in the public interest and protect their confidentiality. Confidentiality was supposed to be an expected given when conducting professional business however the legal system has been denied and stripping individuals of their confidentiality in the more recent years depending on the profession who holds the information and the scenario at hand.

In relation to the case revolving around Bill Sour, the pharmaceutical client did not act in a way that benefited the overall well being of the public, they instead sought out profit by having only one drug recommended to those who used their website to find a drug that best benefited them based on the symptoms they were having. The pharmaceutical client took advantage of the sensitive data which is a breach of the social contract between professions and the public. However, confidentiality was not actually broken according to the recognition statements Bill Sourour gave in his case as no private information was released or compromised by legal entities. The pharmaceutical client broke no laws by deceiving its users into thinking they were going to be recommended a drug that was going to help them with whatever health symptoms they were having. Although many would still deem their actions unethical due to the fact that the quiz took advantage of the people to turn a profit and because it was not in the public's interest.

From a utilitarian point of view, a social contract between professions and the public would definitely be seen as an action of good due to the contract promoting the most amount of good for the public at the cost of a few professions making a profit. Maintaining

confidentiality also promotes good as much of the public prefers their sensitive information to be unseen and kept out of court viewing if all possible. In the case of Bill Sourour, the social contract was breached when the client used its website to solely promote a singular drug to users regardless of their symptoms. This created an action that was not in the interest of the public and led to a young girl killing herself due to the side effects of the drug recommended. Sourour maintained confidentiality when he wrote about his case as he named neither the girl involved or the companies he worked for and coded the quiz for.

Ultimately Bill Sourour, the firm he was working for, and the client he coded the quiz for represented the complete opposite of what would be considered good by a utilitarian. Neither of those three entities did anything that contributed to the greater good of the people. Instead of looking the other way Sourour should have notified his manager that the requirements bothered him and appeared questionable especially when his manger said no matter what they implemented they continued to get the same result. The client should have realized how unethical their request was for the quiz and should have foreseen the damage recommending a singular drug to people who have a variety of symptoms could have been. Although no laws were broken, a death was caused by the lack of professional ethics and should be looked at as a teaching moment for others who look to disregard ethics for profit.