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## **Introduction**

The essay will focus towards the case study involving a newly allotted project manager for a technology start up. The dilemma he faces due to an unethical act by his boss leads him towards serious re-consideration and confusion as there are no clear specifications in company's rules and regulations along with the set policies.

Leipziger, (2017) suggests that the discussion revolving around ethical code of conduct is a vast subject and one that requires referring to theories, analyzing behaviors and identifying patterns. Michael's boss has acquired information about his competitors through unethical means and wants him to work on it. This would definitely prove beneficial in the short term but has potential to go seriously wrong eventually. Furthermore for employees, it's always a dilemma to work for such companies and Michael has been going through the same predicament.

## **1. What is the ethical issue in this scenario?**

The ethical issue faced by the newly allotted project manager is the realization that his boss has illegally acquired strategic documents of their competitor that has all the relevant data which will help them in contending in the industry. Even though this acquired data can open new doors for the company but it is ethically wrong to use it and to have extracted it through unlawful and prohibited means in the first place.

Martin, (2015) negates that such ethical issues in turn end up leading towards consequences that could affect organization's reputation which will not only lead towards demise for the company itself but the employees of the organization. Michael himself is facing a critical situation as such cases can break an individual's career and hinder their career path as in future there won't be companies that would opt for his services, background checks are an integral part of the recruitment process for hiring, engaging in such illegal activities will only worsen the situation considering both the individual and the organization.

Keeping in consideration the situation Michael is in, another alarming thing is the fact that there are no clear policies mentioned for such situation. Legalities need to be made precise and clear in terms of having employees follow it.

## **2. What should Michael do? Justify your answer using at least two ethical theories.**

The issue at hand is one that could potentially ruin the company's image as well as affect Michael's career if this goes public. Using data and information without the discretion of a company or person will lead to severe consequences with various adversities leading to an overall downfall. Michael should weigh out the Cons with the Pros which will likely be less and violate a lot, on moral and ethical grounds. The end result is always better than the struggle it takes to achieve it and if that is not well defined or disrupts legal aspects than it always needs to be reconsidered.

The first ethical theory that would be considered for this situation is the Utilitarian ethical theory. As per Bell, Dyck and Neubert, (2017) the philosophy focuses and emphasizes on differentiating

right from wrong by calculating the outcomes and final result. The theory focuses on a more consequential theme and idealizes the greater good. There are plenty of arguments with this approach as it has its own limitations. Utilitarianism being an approach to justify the greater good may not always not be the easiest and straight forward option, however in Michael's case it is clearly self-explanatory and gives an obvious solution. It would require him to reason with things on moral grounds, he could discuss this with his boss or the management regarding what could be the actions leading towards this sort of a situation if found guilty. To gain a clear perspective he could acquire trusted colleagues in the workplace and discuss it with them without letting them know its actuality. After weighing out the cost and benefits he could make a firm decision rather than having no clarity at all.

Seidel, (2018) explains in his book about consequentialism; the second theory to consider in this case, through which an individual can judge or predict the consequences of a certain action. This theory is relevant to Michael's case as the task he's about to start already violates a lot of ethical principles and is likely to end up in smoke and major consequences ruining his own and the company's image, there's no job security and neither would it fulfill any job satisfaction if he opts for participating in this as well. Hacking another company's data can result in profits in the short term but with the advancement in technology data breach can easily be identified and if found guilty there are no safety approaches or crisis management policies stated in the company's policies.

**3. Do you perceive Michael's boss to be ethical or unethical? Explain your answer in detail.**

Michael's boss's decision to log into his competitors secured portal through illegal means is an unethical and a low act. Goes as far as to show that his boss can stoop to a low level like this in order to compete with his opponents. His Boss had no shame declaring to Michael how he got access to these files, instead he took pride in acknowledging the fact. It could be concluded that a part of this decision is based on deontological ethics, where intrinsic aspects are considered for the greater good, where consequences may be eradicated or ignored in order to fulfill tasks. However,

even in that theory, moral obligations are still considered to be an important attribute which has been overlooked and discounted by Michael's Boss.

According to D'Cruz, Noronha and Sandvik, (2018) this is a clear abuse of power. People abusing power end up doing a lot of mistakes that affect their subordinates and can potentially hinder the growth of the company, the only thing that is paid heed to, involve their own benefit. These aren't the signs of a good leader, rather someone who is only concerned about their personal benefit and disregards their employees or their efforts. The worst part about such individuals is that they take a lot of other people down with them when they are the one's responsible for an unethical or illegal act, they lack a sense of morality and would do anything to get ahead eradicating the possibility of getting caught and facing the consequences.

**4. Should Michael blow the whistle? Define 'whistleblowing'. Explain what motivates whistle-blowers and under what circumstances whistleblowing is justified?**

Whistleblowing refers to the act of publically or privately declaring information about illegal, unethical acts happening within a company. There is a lot of debate regarding whether this is ethical or not depending on the nature of the information and whether it is for personal gains or the greater good, the individual who is termed as a 'Whistleblower' is sure to face consequences, especially in a private firm (Vandekerckhove, 2016).

Keeping in consideration Michael's case, it is possible that he may be criticized for coming forward with this information externally as the company can face severe consequences along with his boss. Instead of doing that, he could refer to someone trusted in the workplace for advice or take this internally with the management.

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