



PHIL 333 Assignment 1

Professional Ethics (Athabasca University)



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Case Description:

Rachel Hawks, a newly appointed junior engineer, faces a challenging ethical dilemma in her role at a reputable yet struggling Canadian company. Her relocation, along with her husband, underscores her commitment to advancing her career despite personal sacrifices. However, the company's financial difficulties, exacerbated by the economic downturn, threaten job security for Rachel and her colleagues.

Rachel's immediate task involves proposing a bridge to connect a mainland municipality with an isolated Indigenous community, vital for improving access to essential services. Despite investing extensive overtime to develop a comprehensive and cost-effective proposal prioritizing safety, Rachel's supervisor, Peter Brown, demands a significant reduction in cost by falsifying estimates. This unethical directive puts Rachel in a moral quandary, forcing her to choose between compromising her integrity and professional standards or risking job security and the viability of the project.

Peter's revelation about political influence further complicates matters, with incumbent MP support hinging on the project's approval. Pressure mounts as Rachel grapples with the ethical implications of her supervisor's instructions and the potential consequences of non-compliance. While Rachel understands the project's significance for both communities, she recognizes the moral imperative to uphold honesty and integrity in her professional conduct.

Rachel's decision carries weighty implications, not only for her career but also for the well-being of the communities involved. As she deliberates her next steps, Rachel must navigate the delicate balance between her ethical responsibilities, personal values, and professional obligations, ensuring her actions align with the highest ethical standards while striving to serve the best interests of all stakeholders.

Statement of the Ethical Dilemma or Ethical Issue:

Rachel finds herself at a moral crossroads, torn between following her supervisor's directive to falsify estimates to secure a bridge project or upholding her professional integrity by refusing to engage in unethical behavior. This ethical dilemma poses a delicate balance between short-term

gains and long-term consequences. Complying with unethical instructions may yield immediate benefits, potentially securing the project and benefiting the communities involved. However, it comes at the cost of compromising Rachel's integrity and potentially causing harm in the long run. Conversely, refusing to comply preserves Rachel's ethical principles but risks job security and depriving communities of essential services. Moreover, Rachel must weigh the impact of her decision on her career trajectory, the company's reputation, and the well-being of the affected communities. Navigating this ethical quandary requires careful consideration of the trade-offs between immediate gains and enduring ethical standards. Rachel's decision will reflect her values shape the broader ethical culture within the company and influence relationships with stakeholders. Ultimately, Rachel must navigate this complex ethical terrain with foresight and integrity to arrive at a resolution that aligns with her moral compass while considering the broader implications for all parties involved.

Compliance with Unethical Instructions:

One potential option for Rachel is to comply with Peter's instructions to falsify estimates in the proposal. This action could potentially secure the bridge project, offering significant benefits to both communities by providing essential services and reducing transportation costs, particularly benefiting the Indigenous community. However, the ethical implications of this choice are profound. Falsifying estimates violates Rachel's professional integrity and ethical standards, potentially tarnishing her reputation and career prospects. Moreover, compromising on the quality and safety of the project could lead to harm, undermining the very purpose of the endeavor. While compliance may seem advantageous in the short term, Rachel must carefully consider the long-term consequences of sacrificing her integrity for immediate gains. This option presents a moral dilemma, requiring Rachel to weigh the potential benefits against the ethical implications and consider the broader impact on her professional integrity and the well-being of the communities involved.

Refusal to Comply:

Rachel could choose to refuse Peter's unethical instructions, thereby upholding her ethical principles and preserving her integrity. While commendable, this option carries significant risks. Rachel may face repercussions such as job loss and financial hardship, particularly in a small

community with limited job opportunities. Additionally, if the project does not proceed due to Rachel's refusal to comply, the Indigenous community could be deprived of essential services and economic benefits, exacerbating their existing challenges. The decision to refuse compliance is fraught with potential consequences, as Rachel must navigate the delicate balance between upholding her moral principles and considering the broader impact on her career, financial stability, and the well-being of the communities involved. Despite the risks, this option demonstrates Rachel's commitment to ethical conduct and accountability, prioritizing integrity over short-term gains. However, Rachel must carefully weigh the potential consequences and consider alternative solutions that uphold both her ethical principles and the interests of the communities affected.

Seek External Support or Advocacy:

Rachel could reach out to external organizations, such as professional engineering associations, ethics hotlines, or whistleblower support networks. These entities provide resources and assistance to individuals facing ethical dilemmas in the workplace, offering guidance on navigating complex situations and advocating for ethical conduct. Seeking external support can provide Rachel with additional reassurance and validation in her decision-making process, empowering her to uphold ethical standards while protecting her well-being. Seeking external support or advocacy from professional engineering associations, ethics hotlines, or whistleblower support networks offers Rachel the opportunity to access additional resources and guidance in navigating her ethical dilemma. These organizations can provide expert advice and assistance tailored to her specific situation, helping her to better understand her rights and options. Moreover, seeking external support can offer Rachel reassurance and validation in her decision-making process, affirming the importance of upholding ethical standards while protecting her well-being.

Document and Preserve Evidence:

Rachel could document instances of unethical behavior, including written instructions or communications from her supervisor, to preserve evidence of wrongdoing. Keeping detailed records can serve as protection in the event of retaliation or legal action, providing documentation to support her claims and holding accountable those responsible for unethical

conduct. By documenting the situation, Rachel can safeguard her integrity and ensure accountability for unethical behavior within the company. Documenting and preserving evidence of unethical behavior provides Rachel with a means of protecting herself and holding accountable those responsible for wrongdoing. By keeping detailed records of instances such as written instructions or communications from her supervisor, Rachel can establish a clear record of the unethical conduct she has witnessed or been asked to participate in. This documentation serves as evidence in the event of retaliation or legal action, supporting her claims and ensuring accountability within the company.

Reporting the Situation:

Another potential course of action for Rachel is to report Peter's unethical behavior to higher authorities or regulatory bodies. By taking this step, Rachel would demonstrate her commitment to ethical conduct and accountability, safeguarding the integrity of the profession and preventing further harm. Reporting the situation could promote ethical standards within the company and prevent similar incidents in the future. However, this option also entails risks. Rachel may face retaliation from Peter and the company, jeopardizing her job security and personal well-being. Moreover, reporting the situation could strain relationships within the company and the community, leading to potential conflict and reputational damage. Despite these challenges, reporting unethical behavior is essential in upholding professional standards and ensuring transparency and accountability. Rachel must carefully consider the potential consequences and weigh them against the broader ethical implications, taking steps to mitigate risks while upholding her ethical responsibilities as a professional engineer.

Alternative Solutions:

Rachel could explore alternative solutions within ethical boundaries, such as proposing cost-saving measures or optimizing the project's design. By doing so, Rachel could uphold her integrity while still addressing the project's objectives in a morally acceptable manner. However, this approach may not align with Peter's cost reduction targets, potentially leading to conflict and pressure to compromise ethical standards. Negotiating mutually acceptable solutions may require additional effort and delay the project's implementation, further complicating Rachel's decision-making process. Despite these challenges, seeking alternative solutions demonstrates Rachel's

commitment to ethical conduct and ensures that the project is carried out with integrity and in the best interest of the communities involved.

Analysis of the Implications and Outcomes of Each Course of Action:

Compliance with unethical instructions poses significant risks, including damage to Rachel's integrity, compromised project quality, and potential legal repercussions. Conversely, refusal to comply preserves integrity but may lead to job loss and deprive communities of essential services. Reaching out to external organizations may also carry risks. Rachel may also face challenges in finding the right support network or organization that can effectively address her concerns. Additionally, seeking external support could potentially strain her relationship with her employer or colleagues, leading to increased tension or hostility in the workplace. Furthermore, there is a possibility that seeking external support could escalate the situation, resulting in negative repercussions for Rachel or the company. Documenting instances of unethical behavior may require Rachel to navigate complex legal and procedural considerations, particularly if she is concerned about potential retaliation or repercussions. Additionally, there is a risk that documenting evidence could further escalate tensions in the workplace, leading to increased conflict or hostility between Rachel and her colleagues or superiors. Reporting the situation promotes accountability but risks retaliation and strained relationships. Seeking alternative solutions, while balancing integrity and project objectives, may necessitate negotiation and compromise, potentially delaying the project and causing conflicts. Each option entails trade-offs, highlighting the complexity of Rachel's ethical dilemma. In evaluating these options, Rachel must carefully consider the potential consequences and risks associated with each course of action. Ultimately, her decision should prioritize her ethical obligations and responsibilities, while also considering her well-being and the broader impact on the company and its stakeholders. By carefully weighing the facts and consequences of each option, Rachel can make an informed decision that aligns with her values and principles, while also promoting ethical conduct and accountability within the workplace.

Exploration of Ethical Frameworks and Principles in Decision-Making:

In ethical decision-making, individuals must adhere to fundamental values such as integrity, honesty, and accountability, which serve as guiding principles shaping their moral compass. These values form the bedrock of ethical conduct, ensuring that actions align with professional standards and ethical norms. Furthermore, prioritizing the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence underscores the imperative to prioritize the welfare of communities impacted by decisions, aiming to minimize harm and maximize benefits for all stakeholders involved.

When grappling with moral theories like deontological ethics, individuals must recognize the importance of fulfilling moral duties and obligations irrespective of the consequences. This framework highlights the significance of upholding ethical principles even in challenging circumstances. Similarly, considering utilitarian principles emphasizes the need to maximize overall community welfare by evaluating potential outcomes and their impact on stakeholders.

Rachel should navigate these ethical considerations; the objective is to identify the most morally justifiable course of action. By carefully weighing ethical values, principles, and moral theories, individuals aim to make decisions that not only align with their personal ethical standards but also contribute positively to the broader community. Through this process, individuals uphold integrity and ethical conduct, thereby promoting trust, fairness, and social responsibility in their actions.

Resolution:

After thoroughly evaluating the available options, it is determined that the most ethically sound resolution is to reject compliance with Peter's unethical directives and instead pursue alternative solutions that adhere to ethical guidelines. This decision places a paramount emphasis on maintaining integrity and professional ethics while still effectively addressing the project's objectives. By steadfastly upholding ethical standards, Rachel not only safeguards her integrity but also upholds the integrity of the engineering profession and ensures the well-being of the communities it serves.

By refusing to partake in unethical behavior, Rachel will underscore their unwavering dedication to core principles such as honesty, integrity, and accountability, which are fundamental in the engineering realm. Prioritizing ethical conduct sets a commendable precedent for colleagues and contributes to fortifying the long-term trust and reputation of the engineering field. Furthermore, by pursuing alternative solutions that align with ethical standards, the decision-maker ensures that the project is executed in a morally upright manner, fostering benefits for the communities involved.

In summary, the ethical dilemma underscores the intricate balance between professional duties, personal integrity, and community welfare. While each potential resolution presents its own set of challenges, opting to uphold ethical principles resonates with Rachel's moral obligations as a representative of the engineering profession and a member of society. By making decisions grounded in integrity, the decision-maker not only preserves their standing but also champions ethical conduct within the engineering domain, ultimately contributing to the betterment of the communities it serves.

References

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