

Name: _____

ES 4 Ethics assignment

Due on Gradescope at class time, Monday Nov 22 2021

After graduating, you get a job with Flaretron Microelectronics, which is producing a tablet to run Android 16.0 (“Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup”) on an Allwinner CPU¹. You’re on Flaretron’s power team, which is responsible for tuning the software and hardware settings to optimize performance and and battery life.

A few weeks before the product launch you receive an email from the boss:

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Our team has been tasked with implementing a new feature which we'll call
"preload the fun". For the first 72 hours after the tablet is initially powered
up, it will crank up the DVFS 15% above spec, making the tablet feel faster
for the user's initial experience with it. Of course, this break-in period has
to be short to avoid sustained damage to the hardware, and it will operate
within spec after the 72-hour period. We'll discuss the implementation details
at our team meeting tomorrow.
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-- Jan

Within minutes, a colleague replies:

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This is deceptive and completely unethical.
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- AR

The boss quickly responds:

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No, it isn't. Marketing has discussed this extensively, and will ensure
that it is marketed and handled appropriately.
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-- Jan

What do you do? Use the AIR model of ethical inquiry to construct your response.

Your submission should be at least one double-spaced page and not more than two pages (300-600 words).

¹The other names are made up, but Allwinner is a real company.

AIR model

Awareness

The first step is to reflect on the ethical issues raised by the scenario. Why do you feel the way you do about this situation? What are the concerns? Who is affected? Who *else* is affected?

Investigation

Rather than immediately reacting with your personal views, take some time to investigate relevant perspectives, policies, and codes. Are there laws or standards that relate to this issue? Are there corporate policies, or codes of ethics (such as the IEEE or ACM code of ethics) that relate? Where could you go to find out more?

Response

Finally, decide how you will respond to the situation: send an email, go along with the plan, resign from the company, post everything on WikiLeaks, etc.

Evaluation

You will be graded on the depth of your analysis and the extent to which you are able to reflect on the ethical problems, not on whether I agree with the response you have chosen. Specifically:

- Have you worked through the steps of the AIR model?
- Does your “awareness” step carefully articulate the concerns and the stakeholders?
- Is your investigation thorough? Do you reference appropriate standards, policies, laws, or codes of ethics?
- Does your response follow from what you’ve discovered above?