

Scenario of an ethical dilemma

This is a fictional story. Any resemblance to real people, alive or dead, is... something to think about.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS

Engineer Tremblay has worked in the computer field for C-Za Inc. since 2007. His immediate supervisor, Engineer Sansfaçon, was his teacher in university and offered him a job after graduation.

Moreover, Engineer Sansfaçon was Engineer Tremblay's mentor during his internship. For these reasons, Engineer Tremblay is very grateful to his mentor and supervisor.

THE BACKGROUND

C-Za Inc., established in 1998, is a world renowned company. Specialized in information technologies, it created the first antivirus software, among other things.

THE MEETING

One day, Engineer Sansfaçon suggested Engineer Tremblay take part in a meeting with a man from India who claimed to have created a new innovative software and wanted to sell it exclusively to C-Za Inc.

During the meeting, Engineers Sansfaçon and Tremblay realize that this is a highly performing software and that the company would profit greatly from selling it.

The software developer declares that he has not offered it to any other company and that his product is not yet protected by copyright.

Engineer Sansfaçon asks the developer to lend him the documents relating to the software, including those describing preparation design work, so that he and his colleague can submit them to the CEO of the company. The software developer accepts and thanks the engineers for agreeing to meet with him.

THE DILEMMA

Two days later, Engineer Sansfaçon asks Engineer Tremblay to help him test the software.

Once the tests are completed, Engineer Sansfaçon explains to Engineer Tremblay that he copied the documents entrusted to them by the software developer and that they have just carried out tests on a software that he had developed himself based on these documents. He then suggests that Engineer Tremblay accompany him to a meeting scheduled for the next day with the CEO of C-Za, during which he intends to submit "their" creation, that is to say a copy of what was presented to them a few days earlier.

Blowing the whistle or not... a calculated risk

Engineer Tremblay tosses and turns all night, pondering a million questions. Should he go to the meeting and act as if everything was normal? Could he simply withdraw from the file and do nothing. Or, on the contrary, does he have an obligation to act? If he blows the whistle and tells the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec's Office of the Syndic what is happening, what will happen to him? Will he lose his job? And what will his supervisor and mentor be exposed to? In short, what to do?

To be continued... in the next issue of *PLAN*.

To help you make an ethical decision, you should: Analyze the situation

- What is the cause of the problem?
- What is the ethical dilemma?
- What are the consequences and repercussions with respect to the people involved?
- What are the rules and standards governing the situation:
 - statutory or regulatory provisions (including the Code of ethics of engineers)?
 - professional or workplace rules?
 - social standards or conventions?

Clarify conflicting values

- What are the values at issue in this situation?
- What is the main conflict of values?

Make a reasonable decision

- Which value should take precedence in this situation?
- Which means of action should be chosen in order to reach a balance between the two conflicting values?

Establish a dialogue between those involved

- What are the main arguments justifying the decision to others?
- Can the decision get everyone's approval?