CSCI-471 Professional Communications

An Ethics of Virtue for Software Engineering

The small software development firm that you work for is considering a new policy regarding customer relations and the marketing team has documented a proposal for this policy. The marketing team’s idea is to create a comprehensive “customer relationship management system” centered on service ethics. Essentially, they would like the firm’s Board of Directors to adopt a policy that they believe will increase customer satisfaction, and thereby sales, by enabling the firm’s software engineers to become what they term “reflective practitioners”.

Pro Group: You are on the marketing team that is proposing this new policy, and must define what you mean by a “reflective practitioner”. In general, you believe that the software engineers at your firm should become more service- and client-oriented in order to improve sales. Your proposal outlines a plan consisting of a series of in-house workshops (4 hour each week for 10 weeks) that will show the engineers how to understand the ethical difficulties facing clients, how to sympathize with the client, and how to avoid creating software that is inadvertently culturally foreign or morally jarring to the customer. To convince the Board of Directors, you must explain why the plan is beneficial and specifically what advantages it will bring to the firm.

Con Group: You are one of the firm’s project managers, considering the impact that the marketing team’s proposal will have on the productivity of your software engineers. The Board of Directors is very interested in your input regarding the adoption of this policy, which is why they invited you to this meeting. Your main concern is the practicality of the policy and the effect that it will have on your team’s ability to produce quality code, on-time and within budget. Perhaps something simple such as a brief 2-hour discussion of the Software Engineering Code of Ethics is sufficient to meet this need.

Jury Group: You are a member of the firm’s Board of Directors and must decide whether or not the firm will adopt the proposed policy crafted by the marketing team, perhaps suggesting modifications to the plan.