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SECTION 1: APPLY EDM

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of technologies, the role of information technology (IT) becomes more important in more areas. Technologists will face challenges when they enter the industry as there is immaturity and gaps in the industry brought by the rapid expansion. It is crucial to navigate ethical dilemmas to maintain industry integrity. This report demonstrates the ethical decision-making process by applying an Ethical Decision-Making Model (EDM) to a study case with an aim to guide members of the IT industry.

In the case study, a graduate student John faces various ethical dilemmas in three workplaces (see Appendix). At the first workplace Allthe.news (Workplace 1), he faces unethical business practices such as misinformation and propaganda. He faces competency issues and leadership responsibilities for Dev A, and Dev B at the second workplace Steele Software (Workplace 2). He is also challenged by his previous supervisor Bruce asking inappropriate requests and his defamation attempt. At the last workplace (Workplace 3), a morally questionable CEO asks John to obtain insider information from Steele. Relevant topics to the industry such as professionalism and competence compliance, legal issues, social norms, and expectations will be discussed linking to several normative theories.

2. Analysis

This section identifies relevant factors in six categories to analyse the case with the application of theories and research. Factors will be prioritised and used for decision-making. The case is separated into three scenarios that link to each workplace.

2.1. Legal factors

2.1.1. Workplace 1

A country with no recognition of international laws

John's employer, Allthe.news is registered in a country which does not recognise international laws. Their website is also hosted in that country; therefore, it is out of reach of regulations around defamation and data privacy such as the GDPR (European Commission, n.d.) and the Australian Privacy Principles (OAIC, 2020).

2.1.2. Workplace 2

Dual employment concerns

Dev A's simultaneous employment with both XYZ and Steele could potentially lead to legal complications. If either of the employment contracts contains an exclusivity or non-compete clause, Dev A might be in breach of contract. However, such clauses must be reasonable in scope and duration to protect the legitimate business interests of the companies involved (Hoyle, 2019). Additionally, the intellectual property security of both organizations could be at risk, given that Dev A has access to proprietary information from both employers. This situation raises concerns about the potential sharing or misuse of sensitive information, which could result in legal disputes and damage to the businesses.

2.1.3. Workplace 3

Defamation laws

Bruce's report and rumours that he spread to damage John's reputation may violate laws to control damages from defamation. It is regulated by states and territories in Australia at a civil level (Gordon Legal, 2018). In Queensland, Defamation Act 2005 rules around defamation and damages (Queensland Government, 2021). In this case, if the report and rumours are not true, John could claim his financial damage from the defamation and the court may award him compensation (Hollier, 2022).

Non-disclosure and/or non-compete agreement

John may have agreed to a non-disclosure agreement with clients or organisations when he was employed at Steele Software. A clause may also be included in his employment contract to prohibit him from disclosing confidential information. If John agrees to the CEO's request to detail Steele's pricing strategy, he may breach the related agreement with Steele. It is also important to check if there is no non-compete agreement between John and Steele to restrict him from working for his new employer (Emilio, 2023).

2.2. Professional factors

2.2.1. Workplace 1

Low journalistic standards and bad business practices

Allthe.news publishes articles lacking accuracy, fairness, and integrity that infringe on journalistic standards such as Australian Press Council's principles (2023). They also conduct misinformation and publish fake news and disguised advertisement articles.

Excessive personal data collection

Allthe.news collects users' personal data such as political views that have no clear purpose directly relating to the website use. The website should give users a specific purpose for data collection (Intersoft consulting, 2013).

Professional conduct

John as an Australian IT professional has an obligation to adhere to the ACS Code of Professional Conduct to prioritise the public interest and endeavour to improve the quality of people's lives (ACS, 2014a). He also should not conduct any work that may tarnish the profession's reputation.

2.2.2. Workplace 2

Dev A's competence and professionalism

Dev A has a responsibility to maintain competence in his job to serve the best interests of various stakeholders, including fellow employees, the employer, and the client (ACS, 2014a). He should proactively communicate any delays or obstacles to the stakeholders and seek assistance from other project members as needed. His confrontational behaviour towards John does not align with the professional standards outlined in the ACS Code of Professional Conduct (ACS, 2014a). Upholding professionalism and adhering to ethical guidelines are essential to ensuring a productive and respectful work environment.

John's leadership responsibilities

As a team leader, John has an obligation to support and care for his team members, including assisting Dev B in adapting to her new environment (Northouse, 2019). It is crucial for John to foster a positive work environment and promote a supportive and inclusive workplace.

Furthermore, John should address the issue of Dev A's disproportionate pay to ensure fair compensation for all team members, thereby contributing to a sense of fairness and equity within the team (ACS, 2014a).

John's response to Bruce's requests

John exhibited professionalism and ethical decision-making by rejecting Bruce's inappropriate requests, which not only undermined John's leadership role but also threatened the integrity of the industry (ACS, 2014a). By standing firm on ethical principles, John demonstrated a commitment to maintaining high standards and promoting a responsible work culture in alignment with the ACS Code of Professional Conduct.

2.2.3. Workplace 3

Bruce's professionalism

If Bruce produced the report about John without truth based on his resentment at John's refusal, he is violating the honesty and professionalism clauses in the ACS Code of Professional Conduct (ACS, 2014a). He should endeavour to promote professionalism and trustworthiness in the industry and not bring his personal feelings to professional conduct.

CEO's professionalism

The actions and behaviours of the CEO do not align with several values in the ACS Code of Professional Conduct (ACS, 2014a). He is planning on cheating the fair competition practice by obtaining the competitor's pricing strategy. He may also be failing to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment by taking John to the men-only club. Insinuating the club membership as a reward for an insider report may also be unfair and it limits opportunities for others. Overall, CEO's actions damage the image of the profession and industry.

John's professionalism

John has an obligation to adhere to the ACS Code of Professional Conduct and make ethical decisions to maintain his integrity as an ICT professional (ACS, 2014a). He should prioritise the public interest and promote fairness for the industry when he responds to the request for an insider report from the CEO. Additionally, he must separate his personal resentment and professional opinions to advise the CEO about Bruce truthfully.

2.3. Employment and Social factors

2.3.1. Workplace 1

Remote work employment

Allthe.news employed John as a web developer. John worked remotely for 25 hours per week for above-average pay. The arrangement suited John's needs.

Propaganda machine

Allthe.news specialises in spreading fabricated news, misinformation, and propagating client-driven agendas, which include certain governments and political organisations from various countries. The company's structure is intentionally designed to circumvent compliance with regulations and laws. Consequently, their business practices deviate from the social norms that would typically apply if the company were operating in a country that adheres to these regulations and rules (Friend, n.d.).

2.3.2. Workplace 2

John's new full-time team lead job

As an employee, John is obligated to adhere to the organisation's protocols and procedures, which represent the social norms within the workplace. In addition, as a team leader, he is expected to supervise his team members and strive to manage the team effectively, ensuring the smooth and successful delivery of the project. John's leadership approach should align with the social contract theory, which emphasizes the importance of cooperation and mutual understanding in achieving shared goals (Friend, n.d.). The performance report of Dev A may be the company's procedure that John followed.

Dev A and Bruce's relationship

Bruce seems to share a strong bond with Dev A, possibly resulting from their previous teamwork at XYZ and their professional relationship as a leader and team member. Such affection could be attributed to the development of trust and familiarity that often emerge in the workplace when individuals work together over time (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

Dev B's difficulties in settling in

Dev B, being from overseas, is encountering difficulties in adjusting to her new environment. This could be due to workplace culture or broader cultural differences. As part of their social responsibility and in line with the social contract theory, the organization and its leaders should identify the root cause of these challenges and actively work to support her by addressing any underlying issues (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999).

2.3.3. Workplace 3

John's new workplace culture

The ethicality of company culture is doubtful with the CEO's behaviours such as asking John for an insider report and the use of the men's club. Therefore, the workplace values should not be trusted at this organisation and John must pay attention to deter groupthink within the culture (Cherry, 2022).

John's reputation

Job references and recommendations are built upon a social contract that professional recommendations should be honest and truthful to maintain the integrity in the industry (Cranston, 2023). If Bruce made a false claim in the report, he broke the social protocol and trust, as a result, John's reputation is damaged.

2.4. Personal factors

2.4.1. Workplace 1

John's moral discomfort

John experienced discomfort with Allthe.news's unethical practices, such as deceptive designs, disguised paid articles, and the low standards associated with publishing inaccurate articles and misinformation. This discomfort can be attributed to the nurture aspect of the nature-nurture theory, as it may have arisen from the moral values instilled in him by the society and family he was raised (Bandura, 1977).

2.4.2. Workplace 2

John's ambition for a leadership role

John's ambition for a leadership role could be shaped by various environmental factors, such as his upbringing, family, or work experiences. This aligns with the nurture side of the nature-nurture, which suggests that external factors contribute significantly to an individual's development and behaviour (Plomin et al., 2016). John may have gained confidence in his leadership abilities through his prior work experiences, mentorship, or observing other leaders in his personal and professional life.

Bruce's inappropriate requests

Bruce's deep attachment to Dev A led him to make unreasonable demands for John to safeguard Dev A's position at Steele. While leaders who exhibit care and support for their team members can generally foster stronger connections and positively influence both individual and team performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), Bruce's actions in this case crossed the boundary between professional and personal. Moreover, his attempts to intervene in the situation at Steele indicate that he may still perceive himself as a leader within the organization, despite no longer being employed there. This inappropriate involvement complicates the situation and undermines John's authority as the current team leader.

2.4.3. Workplace 3

CEO leadership style

The CEO's behaviours portray his style of leadership. He expects others to respect and follow by presenting his status, wealth, and power as desirable. He offers John a club membership as a reward which resembles a transactional leadership style. While it is effective, it does not promote a creative environment (Betz, 2021). His leadership style may be acquired from his past leaders or upbringing.

2.5. Intrinsic factors

2.5.1. Workplace 1

John's ethical dilemma

Although John was concerned about the unethical business practices at Allthe.news, he also needed the job as the pay and remote work arrangement were favourable. He was weighing his care for the public as a virtue against his need for a job as a vice (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022).

Degradation of John's integrity

John's association with Allthe.news could potentially erode his moral integrity and tarnish his professional reputation, as highlighted by the ethical theories concerning moral degradation and the negative influence on an individual's integrity (Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2013; Darley, 2005).

Impact of Allthe.news articles

The spread of misinformation and propaganda through articles on the website has the potential to manipulate public views and cause harm to society. This connects to the harm and degradation aspects of moral foundation theory (MFT) (Haidt & Graham, 2007). The Cambridge Analytica case serves as an example of how data misuse and targeted misinformation can have a significant impact on public opinion and democratic processes (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018).

2.5.2. Workplace 2

Bruce's morality

Bruce's inappropriate requests suggest that he might be driven by vices rather than virtues, which raises questions about his moral character (Hoyle, 2019). Bruce appears to lack virtues, which may have contributed to his sudden departure from Steele. His actions demonstrate a deficiency in moral principles, which is essential for ethical decision-making and leadership.

John's project management

As a leader, John faces various challenges, including time constraints, scope creep, and team management in the project. To navigate these difficulties and make ethical decisions, he can draw upon the care, fairness, and loyalty dimensions from MFT. By focusing on these aspects, John can effectively address the challenges and foster a more ethical workplace, ultimately benefiting the project and stakeholders (Haidt & Graham, 2007).

2.5.3. Workplace 3

John's morality

John's level of moral development determines how he responds to the request from the CEO as well as the question about Bruce.

Sabotage by Bruce

John believes that his struggling job hunting and damaged reputation are caused by Bruce's vindictive actions which originate from John's refusal of Bruce's inappropriate requests. This could become a motivation for John to revenge. Revenge can be perceived as a vice in virtue theory (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2022). While forgiveness can be an ethical option, ignoring Bruce's misconduct may be a practical option (Scheiter, 2016).

2.6. Prioritisation

2.6.1. Workplace 1

| | Factor | Related Issue |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Professional conduct (Professional) | John did not prioritise the public interest over his personal needs. |
| 2 | A country with no recognition of international laws (Legal) | No legal power over the practices at Allthe.news. This fact influences the importance and nature of other factors. |
| 3 | Low journalistic standards and bad business practices (Professional) | John could act on the bad business practices. |
| 4 | Excessive personal data collection (Professional) | John could seek some external help to resolve the issue. |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 5 | Propaganda machine (Social) | No rules to govern Allthe.news business practices. |
| 6 | Impact of Allthe.news articles (Intrinsic) | The potential harm to the public from misinformation and propaganda. |
| 7 | John's moral discomfort (Personal) | John cared for the public but did not act. |
| 8 | Remote work employment (Employment) | John did not quit the job because of the favourable arrangement. |
| 9 | John's ethical dilemma (Intrinsic) | John did not act on the unethical business activities. |
| 10 | Degradation of John's integrity (Intrinsic) | John may have already been losing his integrity. |

Table 1 Priority List for Workplace 1

2.6.2. Workplace 2

| | Factor | Related Issue |
|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Dual employment concerns (Legal) | Dev A's employment may not be legitimate. Possible conflict of interest. |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 2 | John's leadership responsibilities (Professional) | John's obligations to stakeholders. The report of Dev A's performance. |
| 3 | John's response to Bruce's requests (Professional) | John's integrity as a leader and Bruce's morality. |
| 4 | Dev A's competence and professionalism (Professional) | Dev A's contract not renewed. |
| 5 | John's new full-time team lead job (Employment/Social) | John's expected responsibilities. |
| 6 | Dev B's difficulties in settling in (Employment/Social) | Team performance and work environment. |
| 7 | John's project management (Intrinsic) | John's obligations and responsibilities. The report of Dev A's performance. |
| 8 | Dev A and Bruce's relationship (Employment/Social) | Bruce's requests to John. |
| 9 | Bruce's inappropriate requests (Personal) | The report of Dev A's performance. John's refusal of the requests. |
| 10 | John's ambition for a leadership role (Personal) | John's new leadership role. |
| 11 | Bruce's morality (Intrinsic) | Bruce's requests to John. |

Table 2 Priority List for Workplace 2

2.6.3. Workplace 3

| Factor | Related Issue |
|--------|---------------|
|--------|---------------|

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | Non-disclosure and/or non-compete agreement (Legal) | John's new employment and CEO's request for an insider report. |
| 2 | Defamation laws (Legal) | Bruce's report and John's reputation |
| 3 | John's professionalism (Professional) | John's obligations as a professional. |
| 4 | CEO's professionalism (Professional) | CEO's unethical behaviours and practices. |
| 5 | Bruce's professionalism (Professional) | Report and rumours about John. |
| 6 | John's new workplace culture (Employment) | John's moral principles. |
| 7 | John's reputation (Social) | Bruce's actions and John's employability. |
| 8 | John's morality (Intrinsic) | Response to CEO's request and question. |
| 9 | Sabotage by Bruce (Intrinsic) | Response to Bruce's actions and CEO's question about Bruce. |
| 10 | CEO's leadership style (Personal) | Workplace culture and CEO's unethical conduct. |

Table 3 Priority List for Workplace 3

2.7. Decision

This section proposes ethical decisions that are based on the EDM analysis from previous sections to solve the challenging ethical dilemmas in the case study (see Appendix). These decisions are led by a consideration of the utilitarian approach, the greatest good and the least harm, as well as other normative theories such as virtue, deontology, and ethical egoism for balanced and holistic resolutions (Husick, 2019).

2.7.1. Workplace 1

Since the company is registered in a country that does not adhere to international laws, the ACS Code of Professional Conduct become the law to follow for John (ACS, 2014a). For the public interest, he could attempt to raise concerns internally to resolve the ethical issues around the business practices. If the internal efforts fail, he could ask for advice from the Australian Computer Society (ACS). Whistleblowing can be an option; however, the almost non-existent legal responsibility of the company may make the action worthless. He should also consider the risks of whistleblowing as the company's origin is unclear and their clients range from governments to political organisations. If all efforts fail, he should seek another job opportunity that aligns with his goals and ethical values. The possible best case of this decision is that John contributes to the improvement of Allthe.news business practices with removal of the harm to the public. The worst case could be that John becomes the target of retaliation by following the path of whistleblowing to expose the company's unethical practices. This may be unlikely due to the support that John can gain from the ACS (2014b).

2.7.2. Workplace 2

At Steele Software, John encountered numerous ethical challenges as a team leader. In line with the ACS Code of Professional Conduct and social norms, he was obliged to address the issues of competence and performance within his team (ACS, 2014a; Friend, n.d.). An investigation into Dev A's dual employment status could serve as an initial step, ensuring the arrangement's legality and that it poses no threat to either organisation's intellectual property.

As a leader, John should strive to enhance his team's capabilities, particularly when he perceived them as inadequate. Providing training and additional support could be a potential solution. Furthermore, John bore the responsibility of assisting Dev B in acclimating to her new environment and fostering an inclusive work atmosphere for all members. The disparity in Dev A's compensation should also be addressed to uphold fair work conditions. John's decision to conduct a performance review and his refusal of Bruce's requests demonstrated his commitment to the principles of fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity as outlined in the MFT (Haidt & Graham, 2007).

The deteriorating project alarms John's competence as a leader and his transparency with the client. It was incumbent upon John to communicate the project's progress to the client, mitigating potential damages resulting from delays and scope creep (ACS, 2014a). John should strive to improve his leadership competencies, possibly through additional training or assistance. If he is unable to achieve the necessary level of competence, the ethical course of action would be to step down from his leadership role.

The best case could bring a more productive and harmonious team by John resolving the ethical issues. The transparent communication with the client and improved leadership skills could lead to the success of the project and securing his position. The worst case could be that team's performance and John's leadership abilities do not improve despite his best efforts. He steps down from his leadership position and the project faces further degradation. He may lose his job as a result.

2.7.3. Workplace 3

After leaving Steele Software, John faces challenges that he needs to address which include the unethical conduct of Bruce and the CEO's unacceptable request.

Firstly, he must resolve potential legal issues with his previous employer. If he agreed to a non-compete agreement, he needs to seek legal advice to rectify it. He should also seek legal advice for the potential defamation caused by Bruce. If legal action is not a practical option, John should try to resolve it directly with Bruce peacefully. If the attempt fails, it may be best to ignore his actions to avoid any escalation of harm (Scheiter, 2016).

Regarding the request to help the CEO to obtain Steele's pricing strategy, John should stand by his commitment to the ACS code of conduct and refuse the request (ACS, 2014a). Moreover, he should also condemn such unethical conduct and seek the ACS's help to resolve the issue to protect integrity and fairness in the community. He should also endeavour to maintain his ethical principles to navigate the challenging work environment and confront any unethical conduct in future to improve the organisation's morality.

Despite Bruce's unacceptable actions and John's possible personal resentment toward him, John should maintain his professionalism to give an honest opinion of Bruce's professional capabilities and quality to answer the CEO's question (ACS, 2014a).

The best possible outcome from the decision could be that the potential non-compete issue is addressed without any legal dispute and Bruce stops bothering John from a professional and empathic communication between them. Initiated by John, the company reinvent itself to be more ethical.

The worst case could be that John faces legal responsibility for breaching a non-compete agreement. He could also lose his job as John's refusal and confronting unethical business practices upset the CEO. Bruce may start working for the company and John may face further difficulties at the workplace. John may struggle to find another job because of his damaged reputation.

3. Discussion

This section discusses the thought process and background of the EDM application described in previous sections. It also describes justifications and evaluations of the analysis process.

3.1. Workplace 1

The prioritisation of professional conduct comes to the fore due to the absence of legally binding regulations for the company. The legal factor is secondary, yet still fundamental because it influences other factors. Professional factors carry weight as the code of conduct serves as the governing rule in this scenario. Social factors are also significant, given the potential for extensive public impact.

The decision-making process is intricate, considering not only the company's location in a country disregarding international laws but also the involvement of government entities and political parties. John could raise his concerns internally, or consider whistleblowing, in line with utilitarian principles aiming for the greatest good for the largest number (Byars, 2018). This scenario echoes aspects of the Cambridge Analytica case (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). However, unlike that case, the lack of legal mechanisms to address unethical practices complicates the situation (McCallum, 2022). Given the potential for severe personal risks to John, ethical egoism might provide a simpler decision-making framework, encouraging him to choose the safest option in this complex situation (Britannica, 2019).

3.2. Workplace 2

The situation is linked to John's leadership. The related professional factors are placed second only to the legal factor. Other factors tied to leadership, including employment and social aspects, are deemed more significant than personal factors.

The application of the code of conduct and social norms is crucial in this model, as they help to articulate the vision of ethical leadership. The potential worst-case scenario outlined in section 2.7.2 mirrors the actual outcome, possibly due to John's ethical decisions which upheld integrity and loyalty. The pursuit of ethical leadership not only involves adherence to professional standards and laws but also requires consideration of the social and personal impacts of one's decisions (Brown & Mitchell, 2010).

3.3. Workplace 3

The scenario is mainly about ethical challenges that are brought by others' unethical conduct. The legal factors are top priority as John must follow the obvious social contract. Professional factors are placed high because of the use of the code of conduct for assessing stakeholders' ethical obligations and adherence. The workplace culture and John's reputation are both linked to society's benefit therefore they are ranked higher than the intrinsic and personal factors.

Laws for defamation have limitations such as location, scale of damage, and prosecution as there is no federal law and it is limited to the civil level (Gordon Legal, 2018). A legal conflict with the CEO's plan to manipulate the competition was considered; however, regulation was not found at the time of research. The code of professional conduct measures the ethicality of the stakeholders' behaviours and actions. Social and organisational theories were used to understand the organisation culture and magnitude of the professional reputation. The impact of John's damaged reputation could be severe, and it may be difficult to reverse. This limits John's option to find other employment.

4. Section 1 Conclusion

The EDM was used to analyse the case study by categorising factors into legal, professional, employment/social, personal, and intrinsic. Relevant laws, the code of conduct, and various theories such as normative theories were applied to assess each factor. The prioritisation process ranked them by importance according to public interests. This informed ethical decisions such as whether to confront business practices and actors, how to be an ethical leader who supports team members and foster productivity, as well as adhering to laws and contracts. These decisions aimed to deliver the greatest good with the least harm in the situations. As highlighted in the case study, IT professionals face ethical dilemmas, which can be challenging to make ethical decisions. The report aimed to showcase an example to address a challenging situation by utilising the EDM analysis application.

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8. Appendix: Case Study

3410ICT & 7101ICT The Ethical Technologist Case Study 2023

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Allthe.news is a start-up news service entering an already crowded on-line news market.

It is noteworthy that it is registered and web-hosted in a country that does not recognize international laws and conventions governing such matters as privacy protection, censorship, libel etc.

John Ridgely is a recent graduate of Griffith University IT, now looking for a job. He sees an ad for a web-developer and applies. *Allthe.news* is looking for someone to work remotely, developing the service's website. John gets the job. The pay is above average for a 25 hour per week commitment working remotely in a post-pandemic world.

Purveyors of Fake News. Before long, John realizes that *Allthe.news'* journalistic standards are low. Articles are published lacking proper fact-checking. Some articles are sensational "click bait", a vehicle for advertisements.

They routinely publish fake news with headlines like "Joe Biden a Shape Shifting Alien Reptile" and "Ukrainian President's Love Child Bares All"

Allthe.news also deals in [misinformation](#), and [disinformation](#).

John is uncomfortable with putting inaccurate and deceptive information out, but he needs the job. He swallows his pride and carries on.

Dark Pattern website. John also has concerns about being told to incorporate deceptive design features on the website, aimed at tricking people into subscribing with discounts and 30 days free. Once subscribed and credit card locked in, there is no obvious way to unsubscribe.

Allthe.news is keen to gather as much data about what reader's political opinions, what they like, don't like etc. He is told it is to

better target advertising. John is sceptical because the purpose seems to be tricking readers into providing more personal information than they intended. It is a practice known as "[privacy zuckering](#)".

The Parent Company. Amid his mounting concerns, John decides to do some digging into *Allthe.news'* background. A talented amateur cyber-sleuth, before long he discovers that while *Allthe.news* is registered and hosted in a third-world country, its ultimate ownership is indeterminate.

It can be assumed that in the parent company's jurisdiction, data privacy laws, or lack thereof, allow the government to acquire the data generated in the course of running their business, regardless of which country that data is collected from.

With *allthe.news* clients ranging from certain governments, political parties around the world the context of the fake news stories comes into focus. At its core *Allthe.news* is a propaganda machine, paid to generate positive publicity for their client and negative publicity for the client's competitor.

John notices that some of the news stories make favourable mention of the same companies who buy advertising with them. He learns that this practice is called "[Native Advertising](#)". An advertisement masquerades as a news story. Native advertising is largely a response to more and more people using adblockers on their web browsers.

A year has passed, and John has found himself another job, this time with an Australian developer - *Steele Software* - specialising in custom ecommerce platforms for clients across a range of industrial and commercial sectors.

Steele has its head office at Robina on the Gold Coast, not far from where John lives at Broadbeach.

It is a full-time position mainly at Robina, but also at client sites around Australia. This remote work is about installation and training.

Bruce Bennett Quits. Six months after John started, his supervisor Bruce leaves suddenly - no

pg. 1

explanation. John seizes his chance to step up and do Bruce's team leader job until the directors decided on a permanent replacement.

Several weeks later, John is confirmed in the team lead role.

But all is not well. John notices that two of his three developers (Dev A and Dev B - both hired by Bruce) did not seem competent to perform the work. Dev A and Bruce had both previously worked for a different company - XYZ P/L - doing work for a client of John's current employer.

Furthermore, Dev A is still nominally employed by XYZ. He is working at Steele Software as a highly paid contractor.

Meanwhile Dev B is competent but is a new arrival from overseas and is having difficulties settling into her new environment.

Dev A does not get his Contract Renewed. This unsatisfactory situation persists for a few more weeks until schedule slippage on this important job becomes an issue. John decides to replace Dev A with someone competent. Dev A becomes angry and confrontational. John initiates a formal review of Dev A's performance.

Pressure to cancel the Review. Bruce Bennett (John's former boss who left suddenly) contacts John soon after the blow-up and in a closed meeting, asks John to retract his request for a performance review and declare Dev A to be competent.

John refuses both requests.

Not long after this the project that John oversees is placed on hold. The project scope had crept alarmingly to the point where it was thought that delivery by the required date would be impossible. John's future at Steele Software is suddenly at risk.

Payback Time. When John's project was halted and ultimately cancelled John found himself again on the job market. Jobs he was qualified for went to other applicants, time and again. He could not understand why.

After many months, John was short-listed for a senior developer role. A job interview was arranged but the

day before they phoned John to say that the interview was cancelled. John would not be considered due to a bad report. They didn't say who, but John later found out from a reliable source that it was Bruce.

Time passes and John eventually finds another job, though the rumour about him started by Bruce took some time to live down. He goes to work for a competitor of the original ecommerce company (Steele Software).

Lunch at the Club. A month into his new job, the CEO invites him to lunch. No ordinary lunch, he is taken to an exclusive men's club in Brisbane, the kind that is selective about membership, and which is known to be used by senior business and government figures to do the informal, behind closed doors networking where deals are done while reclining in leather armchairs with cigars and cognac.

John is treated to an expensive meal with fine wine in a wood panelled dining room. "Man, this is the good life, I could get used to this!" Over desert, the CEO compliments John on his job performance and hints that he might have a promising career ahead. Perhaps even club membership.

The boss then casually suggests that a detailed insider report on Steele's pricing strategy on IT projects might be of 'some use' when bidding in future tenders. 'You'll do that for us won't you John, there's a good chap.'

Oh, and by the way, we're thinking about hiring someone you know, Bruce Bennett. What do you think of him?'

End