

Competitive intelligence predicament



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Problem Statement

- Miguel Vasquez, a new product manager for a biotechnology company, was handed with some competitive intelligence from another competing firm.
- The said information, handed to him by his boss, contained proprietary and confidential information that can give a competitive advantage to the firm.
- This information was obviously obtained using an illegal tap into the competing firm's servers.
- With no clear policy on matters that pertain to the above scenario, Miguel is left wondering what to do with the information given to him. Will he use the illegally obtained data for their benefit knowing full well the manner in which the information was obtained or will he opt to proceed without it?

Key Objectives

- The point of view that will be adapted would obviously be Miguel's given the extent by which he is involved in the decision making process. The general question on how Miguel is going to act on the ethical dilemma that he is faced with will impact the outcome of the work. What Miguel must solve in the end is whether or not he should be using the data obtained for the benefit of the company or to leave it untouched and unopened.

Analysis of Causes

- Ethics is all about making choices and in this particular case, the use of the data or the non-use of the same both has its advantages and disadvantages presented to the subject – Miguel. With these taken into consideration, the use of critical thinking in determining the best possible solution is necessary

in order to come up with a viable solution that would impact the firm and the individuals involved in the most positive way.

- Stakeholder's (from company employees who depend on the success of the firm to its clients who need the best possible products in the market) should also be taken into consideration given that they also are affected by the decision that Miguel would be making. The lack of a code of ethics presents challenges that require more thought than just the normal concepts of right and wrong.

Development and Selection of Alternatives 1. Use the data that was given to him and maximize its potential in order to give an advantage to the company that he is working for. Advantages: By using the data, Miguel will ultimately have the information used by the competing firm to advance their own prospects of growth and increased sales. It presents Miguel with options on whether to copy the same or to execute a plan that is superior or better to what is on hand with the opposite company. To increase the gap that will result from the renewed competitive advantage.

Disadvantages: The use of the illegally obtained data does not leave a good taste in Miguel. Miguel will be haunted by the fact that he advanced the company through the use of misguided methodologies. Once found out, there also might be some legal ramifications as using the data and the mere fact of obtaining the same constitutes as theft and can be punishable by law. The company, once found out may suffer more in the long run in exchange for the possible short term positive returns.

2. Do not use the data and rather focus on other matters that would advance the company's growth.

Advantages: By not using the illegal information, Miguel would be free from any ethical and legal ramifications. He also would be forced to develop plans that are more feasible given that he should strive harder in order to maintain a certain degree of advantage over the competing firm.

Disadvantages: By not knowing what the other company is doing, there is no clear way in determining whether the developed plans are better than that of the competitor's. This lack of knowledge may be detrimental for the firm especially if they do not exercise diligence in gathering their own market data.

3. Confront the boss and let him know your thoughts on the matter, use the information that was given to you and then either leave the company or the department to pursue other work functions that no longer involve similar ethical issues.

Advantages: Using the data will possibly be beneficial for the company for reasons cited above. Confronting the boss would also send that message that while you condone this one act, you will no longer tolerate future acts and that you would opt to stay with a more morally correct work function.

Disadvantages: You will still be subject to any ramifications, both ethical and legal, since you still have used the data. Moving to another department or company might provide you with better prospects in the future but what was done in the past may still affect one that was involved in such acts.

Recommendations and Conclusions As mentioned above, ethics is about making choices, and with this in mind, the choice that one has to make should be a result of a stringent critical analysis process that balances the presents needs of the company with that of a morally correct course of action. The best possible solution here is to not use the data and instead concentrate your efforts and thoughts on developing a plan that is possibly far superior to the competing firm.

Option 2 would obviously be a choice to make, for as long as the mind set is there to come up with the best output possible, given the existing resources – sans the obtained data – then, the stakeholders cannot fault Miguel who was already expected to do a similar thing – sans the data.

Work Place Application

In my work, there are several ethical questions that must be answered on a daily basis, not just in susceptible departments such as Finance but it also extends to the other departments such as those in Sales and Operations. Each day presents several opportunities and temptations for managers to pursue actions that may be considered unethical. However, by keeping a critical mind and an eye for the details and possibilities that may arise out of such, one is able to conduct oneself in a right manner without sacrificing production. Competitor information is always present and in my case, since most is public knowledge, then I am able to drive myself to come up with action plans that would benefit the company without having to pry for more information.