

Eth501, business
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Coca-Cola once used GPS devices in the company cars in order to investigate the bottling theft in their branch located in St. Louis. This issue had an element of violating employee privacy rights and later the company was sued by an employee who was cleared of any wrong that was tracked without the company having his consent. Although the court which was hearing the case cleared "The Coca-Cola Company" of any wrongdoing but this issue had some ethical implications to it. These implications are going to be discussed in the next few paragraphs.

When the employees join any firm, they get some generic rights which are provided by the various ethical frameworks. One such right is employee privacy. This includes physical and information privacy. No company can violate the employee privacy on the grounds of various ethical frameworks. If we look at testing or surveillance of employees without their consent on GPS or through any other means of technology, we can say that it should be discouraged because it renders more disadvantages than advantages to the society. For example, by tracking your employees through GPS, you are getting certain very private information and some information they might not want to tell you. This strips them of their fundamental right. It might help the firm on reducing the current bottling theft and save them a lot of money. These benefits are only for the firm. If we look at the disadvantages brought about by this surveillance of employees without their consent, they will include costs such as costs for the company, cost for the society and cost for the employee who is being monitored. For the firm, the cost would be the cost of equipment being used. For the society, the cost would be that the money spent on new technology could have been used for the benefits of the employees. For employees, these costs will be explicit, for example, this

might give them stress. This might also make them lose their job. However, whether or not the employee's surveillance is justified or not is debatable. Actually, there are more chances that the employee surveillance done by The Coca-Cola Company through GPS system is justified. A company which is as big as Coca-Cola itself generally looks at the costs they are faced with before taking such decisions and only go with the option if the benefits exceed the costs. Hence, they must deem it as more advantageous and hence decided to go forward with it. However, companies are mostly concerned with their own cost and benefit analysis and they might have ignored the societal cost and if these are not taken into account there's a chance that such system is not justified by the Utilitarian framework. Since, we only know that Coca-Cola installed the system to get rid of bottles theft, we may assume that they have ignored societal costs and hence this system is against ethics in the light of utilitarianism.

As far as the deontology is concerned, everything is judged on intentions. Therefore, as there was no malice intention when Coke decided to use GPS tracking, the deontology principle also conclude that the action by The Coca-Cola Company is completely ethical and it can go forward with the surveillance without having any burden of ethical violations on them.

References:

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