

## Might Makes Right Teaching Notes

### *What Are the Relevant Facts?*

1. Janice is John's boss.
2. Janice's supervisor has asked her to create an innovative program, but the pressures of her job have prevented this.
3. John designs a creative software package which he shares with Janice, hoping it will bring him a promotion and raise.
4. Janice is thinking of taking credit for John's program. If John objects, she will fire him; if he agrees, she will give him a promotion and raise.

### *What Are the Ethical Issues?*

1. If the software is developed on company time, to whom does the program belong?
2. Is John being treated justly? Are his rights being protected?
3. Is Janice stealing?
4. When, if ever, is it ethical for a manager to take credit for the work of a subordinate?

### *Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?*

- The company
- John and his family
- Janice
- Janice's boss

### *What Are the Possible Alternatives?*

1. Janice can proceed to take John's work.
2. Janice can create a team environment in which the team, in this case Janice and John, present the work together.
3. Janice can give John full credit and print the package to her boss in such a way that it makes both Janice and John look good.

### *What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?*

- Ask questions based on a "utilitarian" perspective. For example:
  1. Which alternative would provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number of stakeholders?
  2. How would costs and benefits be measured?
  3. What is the value of the public knowledge of ownership?
- Ask questions from a "rights and duties" viewpoint. For example:
  1. What rights does each stakeholder have?
  2. Who has the right of ownership for a program developed on company time?
- Ask questions based on a "justice or fairness" perspective. For example:
  1. Which alternative distributes the benefits and burdens most fairly?
  2. If John receives the promotion and raise that he wants, are the benefits being fairly distributed to him if Janice claims authorship of the program?

### *What Are the Practical Constraints?*

1. Janice will incur considerable professional risk if she claims authorship of the program. It could damage her career in the same way that subsequent discovery of plagiarism in a doctoral dissertation can come back to haunt a person with a doctorate.

### *What Actions Should Be Taken?*

1. What alternative should Janice choose?