

ADAPT

Moonshot Audit

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About Moonshot

Moonshot is an organisation that uses online communication to help individuals move away from violence and hatred. It is committed to ethics, evidence and putting people at the centre of what it does. It seeks to provide alternative directions to those attracted to hatred and violence and provides high quality analysis of the problem. In doing so, it seeks to create benefit for both individuals and society.

The Audit

Adapt was commissioned to conduct an audit of the overall policy and operational framework within which Moonshot manages its approach to ethics. Moonshot works in a field where the highest ethical standards are essential in enabling communities to have confidence that their rights are respected and where clients and investors need to be assured that Moonshot can be relied upon to operate with the highest possible standards.

Process

The auditors reviewed a comprehensive array of organisational policies and procedures, specifically documentation relating to ethics, values and human rights. The auditors also interviewed a representative sample of staff from across the organisation. To complement the organisation-wide audit, the auditors identified two projects that raised particular challenges, which were reviewed in depth.

Findings

Over the past twelve months, Moonshot has undergone significant growth, expanding both the scale of its operations and the range of issues it covers. This growth provided a useful stress test of Moonshot's existing ethical policy and operational framework.

Moonshot has a comprehensive approach to ethical policy that is understood throughout the organisation. There are a number of key elements to this.

Firstly, there is an overarching ethical framework for business development and project design, which functions as a tool for developing projects as well as reviewing the ethical basis for conducting the work. This framework is well-established and facilitated by a number of formal policies, agreed and implemented by the executive team. Where questions might arise about the ethics of a project, identified through the application of this framework, a non-conformance report is produced that analyses the ethical risk of the project whether in terms of the client, the risk to the "target" community and any potentially adverse uses to which Moonshot's work could be put. This framework has been applied effectively to date. The auditors found that, where there are significant ethical concerns, Moonshot has refused to undertake the contract however lucrative.

Another key finding from the audit was that there is clear distribution of responsibility to expert staff who are responsible for the management and delivery of projects, as well as a centralised oversight system that ensures a consistent approach is taken across the organisation. For example, Project Managers are identified as being responsible for maintaining an ethical approach in the projects they manage and are supported by an independent ethics committee which acts as a policy development and support function for the organisation as a whole.

This system is operationally effective due to the commitment to ethics throughout the organisation starting with the Founders and with the support of all the senior managers. A culture of challenge is encouraged in the organisation and the auditors found that staff feel comfortable raising ethical questions that concern them to their peers and leadership.

There has been a significant investment in nurturing this culture, through staff support initiatives, and induction programmes. Staff welfare is prioritized when dealing with sensitive or disturbing content.

Overall it is clear that there is a strong ethical sense that runs through the whole organisation. It is a commitment that is shared by all the staff and is reinforced by a visible commitment from the two Founders.

Areas for improvement

The auditors identified three areas for future improvement, which have been communicated to Moonshot's leadership team. Firstly, Project Managers should be integrated more in the bidding process where possible, ensuring potential ethical concerns

are raised and discussed prior to the finalisation of a project's scope of work. Secondly, the Ethics Committee should increase its internal profile, making the full team aware of its function and increase the utilisation of the Committee in overseeing the implementation of Moonshot's ethical framework. Thirdly, Moonshot should review and update its external communications to make its ethical framework more explicit to the public, particularly those who may feel adversely affected by Moonshot's work.

About Adapt

Adapt is a team of data policy, tech and human rights experts with broad experience of working alongside governments and organisations of all shapes and sizes across the globe.

Adapt brings a unique and detailed understanding of security, privacy and ethics within the digital sphere, and practical proficiency in applying those values to startups, high-growth and established organisations.

Adapt's approach focuses on helping organisations establish a secure and ethical platform to enable future rapid growth. It builds partnerships with clients and supports their growth into responsible and ethical companies of the future.

The Founders

Charles Bradley

A leading business management and digital policy practitioner who has worked globally with tech companies and governments.

Andrew Puddephatt OBE

An international expert on data protection, transparency and human rights. An advisor to UNESCO and several major foundations, Andrew has an OBE for services to human rights.

