

Elon Musk Questions Microsoft's Decision to Layoff AI Ethics Team

Earlier this week, Microsoft announced 10,000 more layoffs across the company. Among the employees affected were the company's entire ethics and society team in the artificial intelligence (AI) sector.

The team was responsible for assessing the potential risks and harm posed by AI and then discussing those issues during product development. The team was largest in 2020 at a headcount of 30 before shrinking down to seven in October 2022.

Now, Microsoft has let go of its entire ethics team, a decision some are skeptical of – especially as Microsoft recently invested \$10 billion in OpenAI, the startup that created the increasingly popular chatbot, ChatGPT.

Tech billionaire and Twitter CEO Elon Musk tweeted a link to news of Microsoft's layoffs with the caption: "Microsoft fired their AI safety team?"

Microsoft fired their AI safety team?<https://t.co/bp5vde1clm>

– Elon Musk (@elonmusk) March 16, 2023

Musk has previously voiced concerns about the dangers of unregulated AI and was actually an early investor in OpenAI. The Tesla and SpaceX CEO has been sounding the alarm on the dangerous implications for years, at one point calling it one of "the biggest risks to the future of civilization."

Related: 'Sick and Twisted Irony': Students Call Out Vanderbilt University for Using ChatGPT to Address the Michigan State Shooting in an Email to Students

"Think of any technology which is potentially a risk to people, like if it's aircraft or cars or medicine, we have regulatory bodies that oversee the public safety of cars and planes and medicine," Musk said during a virtual appearance at the World Government Summit in Dubai last month. "I think we should have a similar set of regulatory oversight for artificial intelligence because I think it is actually a bigger risk to society."

Musk also said that he is no longer a stakeholder in OpenAI.

Microsoft still has an Office of Responsible AI to create guidelines and principles for AI initiatives. However, one of the main roles of the ethics and society team was to ensure that those rules were actually being followed throughout the design and product development.

Related: The AI Wars Have Begun: Microsoft Announces ChatGPT Bing Integration After Google Introduces AI Competitor, Bard

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/elon-musk-questions-microsofts-recent-ai-ethics-layoffs/447740>