

Professional Ethics

For the computing professional

What Are Professional Ethics?

- Ethics concerning a *job* as a computer professional.
- Not personal ethics like what to post or view on the internet.
- Not larger issues like:
 - Environmental impacts
 - Selling computers to China
 - Implications of computer gap on economic divisions

As a professional...

- You are an "expert" and as such have ethical obligations to non-experts, just as do doctors.
- Your products (software) can affect people and potentially cause harm to the public.
- You have a code promulgated by your professional organizations (ACM & IEEE CS):
 - Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice
 - ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Code vs. Ethics

- By accepting a job in the industry, you agree to adhere to the professional organization rules.
- You might find that there is no ethical basis for software patents or music copyrights and may personally make copies of songs.
- But you accepted the ACM Code, and agreed to adhere to clause 1.5, honoring copyrights.
- Your behavior at work is limited based on this acceptance.

Basic Rules

- Contribute to Society. They actually mean don't harm society.
- Avoid harm to others. Physical, emotional, property, privacy.
- Be honest and trustworthy.
- Be fair and do not discriminate
- Honor property rights.
- Give proper credit.
- Respect privacy.
- Honor Confidentiality.

Specific Responsibilities

- Strive to be excellent.
- Acquire and maintain competence.
- Know and respect the appropriate laws.
- Accept and provide professional review.
- Be comprehensive and thorough in system evaluation.
- Honor contracts.
- Improve public understanding.
- Access resources only when authorized.

Leadership

- Articulate social responsibilities of organization.
- Manage to enhance quality of working life. (e.g. think about ergonomics)
- Design good rules for authorization of access.
- Ensure end users' needs are understood and met.
- Protect the dignity of users.
- Educate organization on principles and limitations of software systems.

Scenarios

- Select a scenario from section 9.3 in "A Gift of Fire" by Sara Baase
- For your scenario:
 - List the stakeholders.
 - List the risks and who loses.
 - List the benefits and who wins.
 - List the actions that can be taken.
 - Find the relevant IEEE or ACM Code.
 - Describe the merits of each action.