Austin Olbrych

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Code of Ethics

The ACM/IEEE Computer Society Code of Ethics includes many rules and guidelines to use when faced with ethical problems in society. The Code of Ethics "is intended to be used as a standard for teaching and practicing software engineering, and obligations of software engineers." (Computer Society Connection) Not only does this code create a standard, but it provides information to the public about what responsibilities are viewed as needed in this field of study.

The ethical issue being examined in this paper is monitoring websites of network users, keeping logs of visited sites, and if it is negligent to not monitor internet usage to prevent possible us of pornography in the workplace that would create a hostile environment? This would entail keeping track of the websites employees visit. That way you can monitor suspicious activity and have exact documentation in case of any legal issues. Also, should a company monitor internet usage to prevent pornography being spread around the workplace, thus creating an uncomfortable or hostile environment? The three areas that will be used to analyze this issue from the Code of Ethics will be, client and employer, management, colleagues.

Many ethical problems can arise from this issue because it can be seen as an invasion of personal privacy. It may cause negative work habits, but it may also prevent sexual harassment within the company. The topic of computer monitoring is a growing practice that started back

in the late 90's. The idea came about when supervisors wanted to monitor the workplace but couldn't observe a worker's screen all day. An article written by Sonny Ariss states, "around 45% of major US firms monitor employee's communications and computer use and also that about 53% of US companies have a written Internet usage policy. Approximately 25% have also acquired and use software that restricts access to sites that are deemed unsuitable for employees." Employees view this monitoring as negative and say it affects their quality of work. Luckily for management, monitoring and site prevention are both very easy to activate within the company, and "businesses have almost free reign in electronic monitoring." (Ariss)

The first principle, client and employer, states that "Software engineers shall act in a manner that is in the best interests of their client and employer, consistent with the public interest." (Computer Society Connection) When applying this to a case of monitoring internet usage, it would provoke better behavior in the workplace, which fulfils the best interest of the client. Another subsection of this principle is using the property of the business in an authorized manner. In the instance of privacy issues, this can be used to counteract those claims. When completing tasks for employers it is most important to stay on task to finish the project within the timeline given. In a situation where work isn't being completed on time or to its full capacity, administrators are given the right to use internet monitoring to see why the project isn't successfully finished. On the other side of this issue, pornography is very harmful for a workplace environment and can cause many legal issues. Never under any circumstances would it be ethical to disclose pornography to a client or employer. Seeing as that will not be in their best interest, all documentation sent to a client must also be approved by an administrator. If

this were the case, that means employers are not following appropriate guidelines or going about the correct chain of command.

The second principle, management, states that "managers and leaders shall subscribe to and promote an ethical approach to the management of software development and maintenance." (Computer Society Connection) During this specific ethical issue, management would be the group that would initiate the use of internet monitoring to ensure product quality and reduction of risk. Management on the other hand would be the ones experiencing some backlash from their employees for carrying out this monitoring. Since many people feel it violates rights and privacy, it can be the source of a great deal of controversy. The use of monitoring does however go together with workplace pornography. In order to prevent pornography being shared with employers, management must have their employers come forward and divulge information about who is carrying out these acts, or enforce a monitoring system to detect inappropriate content. An article written by Seyfarth Shaw states three preventative steps: ensure employees receive training about acceptable conduct, use monitoring systems, and clear communication with the highest levels of management. Two of these three steps fall back on management to keep an open relationship with their employees, but also make sure management educates everyone on proper conduct. These practices can be seen in many companies, but with pornography, monitoring must be put in place because topics such as these can evolve into more serious problems.

The third and final principle, colleagues, is defined as "be fair to and supportive of their colleagues." (Computer Society Connection) When applied to internet monitoring it would be ethical and fair to make it identical with everyone in the company so no one employee is

exempt from it or not monitoring as severely. In a situation of workplace transfer of pornography, this would be a direct ethical violation because employees are not being supportive when spreading this information to their colleagues. In many cases this can cause disruption in the workforce that will lead to emotional distress for those who are affected by it. This specific principle can reflect one's moral views and this can partially be prevented by the type of people you hire. Application and employment processes are long, but scouring through information about an individual can help employers see if this may be an issue in the future.

It is clear that internet monitoring can be seen as a violation of privacy to some, but I believe the advantages outweigh the drawbacks to this practice. It has already been used by many businesses that have found it to be very successful, and employees agree with it as long as they are aware of the reasoning for initializing it. One solution to this would be to demonstrate to a company's employees the reason for doing it. Show statistics of how it helped others and even conduct an experiment within the company to prove to your employees it is beneficial. Workplace pornography will definitely be resolved by internet monitoring because you may not have a very good relation from employee to management. This will allow management to stop the offender before anything were to be shared with colleagues, or prevent the sharing altogether to ensure this provocative behavior will never arise.

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