

## Unit 1: Reflective activity - Ethics in computing

James Hines

RMPP

### **Being the Stakeholder**

Being a stakeholder in a company that revolves around the specialty of information security as part of computing has responsibilities. Several of these responsibilities are to provide leadership, ensure project success, carry out risk planning and provide communication (Sunder, 2016) while acting on-behalf of the company. For a project to be supported fully and to ensure the project's success, stakeholder buy-in is an essential requirement to have (ISO, 2023). Stahl et al (2016:31) states that "many of the authors involved in researching the ethics of computing remain wedded to their disciplinary traditions and fail to provide actionable advice to relevant stakeholders". The idea that research findings are being held back from stakeholders is disturbing for many reasons.

Greenwood & Van Buren (2010) also state that "When we trust others, we are relying on them to take care of something about which we care, but which they could harm or steal if they wished; hence, we make ourselves vulnerable". The last section of this statement highlights the fact that "we make ourselves vulnerable". This is especially true when stakeholders rely on the trustworthiness of researchers and authors to give actionable advice to which will support the project and decision planning moving forward.

### **Trustworthiness**

When operating as a stakeholder, it is vitally important to project trustworthiness onto those around you, but also to have those around you that you can deem as trustworthy. According to Greenwood & Van Buren (2010), three main elements form trustworthiness, such as: thoughtfulness, ability, and integrity. Coming back to that statement from Stahl et al (2016) at the beginning of this paper, we can now begin to understand the importance and effect of those findings.

Privacy and Consent are two important ethical issues if breached, whether knowingly or unknowingly. But I assume that mistake can be made when acting on both the privacy aspect of computing and the Consent part of being online. A mistake can be made due to the large volumes of data protections rules and exemptions which cross over with each other, combined with information technology architecture.

### **How did the ethical issue affect my role in the company?**

As the stakeholder of the project which had been impacted due to the breach of privacy and consent, an explanation was expected. As a result of the investigation finding that

the breach had not been related to the project's activities, my role had not changed but awareness to create new policies and procedures had now begun. If we first look at the ethical issue surrounding both privacy and consent, then these issues have to be a high priority in any project involving human involvement and intellectual property.

### **Actions would I need to take or can take**

According to Vanclay et al (2013), there are measures which can be implemented to support ethical practice at the individual and organizational level, this will be important to highlight the importance and raise awareness. Some of those measures that we can participate in are: ethical practice induction during onboarding of new employees and team members, ethical behavior seminars to remind existing team members and also a company policy and procedure for incidents of mis-practice.

Several recommendations would need to be implemented immediately to mitigate the ethical issues surrounding both of the incidents of privacy breach and consent. The first step would be to stop all activities where the incident has occurred and observe projects where privacy issues have not yet been identified. Data privacy awareness training to be implemented as a compulsory activity to all team members.

### **Legal issues**

When discussing legal issues associated with privacy and/or Consent, then following local laws and regulations should help guide ethical behavior. If privacy and consent is geolocation based, then the UK stipulates that the information commissioner's office (ICO, 2023) is adhered to, while also ensuring that checks are made for any changes and updates to the regulation (Legislation, 2023). Europe operates under the General Data Protection Act (GDPR, 2023) which, just like the United Kingdom, also has many exemptions for certain situations. But there is also a difference between the UK GDPR (ICO, 2023) and the EU GDPR (GDPR, 2023). The Eu GDPR also allows countries to have their own exemptions built into the data protection act, which highlights to us that this is a complicated topic which requires further investigation into the legal aspects and what has happened, why it has happened and how it happened.

### **Professional issues**

From a professional standpoint, a breach should not have occurred and reflects badly on the image of the company and industry as a whole. Vanclay et al (2013) explained it clearly when they stated that "It is increasingly recognized that professionalism in all fields must be underpinned by ethical practice". This statement is simple but clear in its meaning, we should strongly push for ethical practice awareness in order to raise the level for the industry.

## **References**

GDPR. (2023) General data protection regulation. Intersoft consulting. Available from: <https://gdpr-info.eu/> [Accessed on 18th June 2023]

Greenwood, M. & Van Buren III, H.J. (2010) Trust and stakeholder theory: Trustworthiness in the organisation–stakeholder relationship. *Journal of business ethics*. 95:425-438.

ICO. (2023) Information commissioner's office. Available from: <https://ico.org.uk/> [Accessed on 18th June 2023]

ISO. (2023) information security management systems: 27001 standards. Available from: <https://www.iso.org/standard/27001> [Accessed on 17th June 2023]

Legislation. (2023) United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation. Available from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/> [Accessed on 19th June 2023]

Stahl et al. (2016) The Ethics of Computing: A Survey of the Computing-Oriented Literature. *ACM Computing Surveys*. 48(4):55. Available from: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/2871196> [Accessed on 18th June 2023]

Sunder M, V. (2016) Lean six sigma project management—a stakeholder management perspective. *The TQM Journal*, 28(1):132-150. Available from: <https://www-emerald-com.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/insight/content/doi/10.1108/TQM-09-2014-0070/full/html> [Accessed on 17th June 2023]