



CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND ETHICS



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Group management

What is culture?

In my perception culture is a set of rules and traditions created by a (sub)group of people. These groups mostly differ in ethical values and norms. For example: In Japan it's considered rude to eat and walk over the street at the same time because Japanese people really dislike littering. In the Netherlands it's considered very normal or at least people won't judge you for doing so.

Which cultural aspects do you keep in mind when facing cultural differences?

Mostly: language barriers, time interpretation, getting information across and norms and values. These are the most important factors you will need to consider when working with people from different cultures in my opinion.

How can cultures be clustered?

From what I can gather it can be very complicated depending what cultures we are talking about. We have Linear-active, multi-active and reactive cultures. Depending on which type a certain culture associates with makes it either easier or more difficult when working with a culture which has an association with the same or different type. For example: Cultures who associate with the same type will most likely not have much trouble working together but if we would throw in someone from a culture which associates with a different type it will get more complicated. Because it will either make the communication: Satisfactory, difficult or time-consuming.

Can you give an example for things going not as expected when interacting with people from other cultures? What and why differently?

The first thing that comes to mind is time-oriented differences. For example: as a Dutch person I think being on time is very important. But if we take for example a Latin-American person will look at time in a more loosely sense. What I mean by this is that if I would tell this person to be somewhere around 12:00 he would probably turn up around 12:00 or half an hour later for example. In Dutch culture this would seem very disrespectful but in Latin-American culture this would be very normal.

What is your culture?

I'm part of the Dutch culture and if we would be even more specific the Noord-Brabant subculture of the Dutch culture. The Dutch culture has many subcultures which are very different from each other. For example, people from Noord-Holland are very different in the general sense compared to people from Noord-Brabant. This is most likely because these groups have developed in different way through the years. We still value the same core principles, but a lot of other things have changed quite a bit. This is probably because of the environment, religion and political views (In the 1600s the Netherlands was very split in political views mostly between people who believed in the brothers Dewitt and people who believed in Willem II).

How would you act in the future when you know that you need to communicate or collaborate with a person from another culture?

I think I would be smart to talk about the differences and try to find a middle ground between them if we must work together. So, I think it would be smart to first clarify the differences and after that make rules or compromises to make the teamwork as efficient as possible.

Ethics analysis

What is ethics in software engineering?

The implementation of moral and ethical values in software engineering. What I mean by this is that you will need to consider a lot of moral and ethical values from around the world to make your application as accessible as possible for people from around the world. From my perspective this would mean making an application that mainly focuses on American norms and values because this has become a huge part of internet culture.

Why is ethics important in software engineering?

It's important to create an accessible application but it's also very important to protect people from power hungry corporation that will seek out the boundaries of what is legal by law even if it means crossing moral and ethical values.

What do you have to do as a software engineer to address ethical aspects in your work?

We must make sure that our applications are accessible and cannot be used to implicitly cross moral and ethical borders.

How do you know that your ethical considerations match with those of other software engineers?

By making sure you communicate on this subject with your colleagues beforehand.

Which ethical aspects play a role in your project?

My application will save the username of the users and my application will be very controversial in the sense that it will use a lot of dark humour.

Do you foresee ethical conflicts caused by your software? What kind of?

Yes, because my project is about dark humour. And this will most likely create controversies. But I'm a very firm believer that it is important to be able to joke about awful things because it will show how awful these things really are. These kinds of jokes mostly ridicule the idea of these awful thing by making fun of them or by showing how absurd these things really are. So, I think that it's very important to be able to tell/ laugh at these jokes for the above reasons. And even if it would create controversies, I believe that this will ultimately be of much importance to the world.

Can you do something to avoid or minimize these conflicts?

The only real way to minimize these conflicts is by showing the jokes in its truest form. What I mean by this is: show how ridiculous these subjects really are and spread awareness of the fact that these things are awful by making fun them.