

# Professional Ethics-1

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# Google Streetview

2010 - Google vehicles doing drive-by photography had been collecting personal data from unencrypted Wi-Fi networks, including medical and financial records, etc.

Google claimed that this data had not been collected - eventually they conceded that complete sets of data had not only been collected but stored.

# Facebook Terms of Service

[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/technology/facebook-tinkers-with-users-emotions-in-news-feed-experiment-stirring-outcry.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/technology/facebook-tinkers-with-users-emotions-in-news-feed-experiment-stirring-outcry.html?_r=0)

2012 - Half a million Facebook users took part in a massive psychological experiment aimed at discovering if emotions could be spread through social media.

Users had no idea it was happening. The experiment altered users' news feeds to highlight items with either positive or negative emotional content, and then measured if it affected the emotional content in each user's future posts.

# Cyber Attacks Reporting

A number of companies have continued to deny cyber attacks, despite reports stating otherwise; including, Exxon Mobil, Coca-Cola, Baker Hughes, and others.

The majority of company lawyers advise not to disclose, pointing to potential shareholder lawsuits, embarrassment and fear of inciting future attacks.

# ETHICAL DECISIONS

# Do Software engineers need to care?

Products of professionals affect large number of people. Hence, professionals **have special responsibilities** to the general public to assess potential risks of their products and take remedy actions to diminish risks that are too high.

**Software Engineers are professionals and need to care about professional ethics!**

How do we recognize we have come across an ethical issue (requiring an ethical decision)?

### Smell test

What would the action or situation we are considering smell like if we read about in a front-page news article or in a popular blog

At ISU - The **Des Moines Register Test**, Would you like your friends and neighbors to read about this?

# Examples

How would these earlier examples fare in a smell test?

- When making decision to record unencrypted personal data from WiFi networks
- When making decision to run experiment on facebook without users knowledge
- When making decision to deny security breaches



# How do we go about making an ethical decision?

(<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/making.pdf>)

## Framework

1. Recognize ethical issue.
2. Get the facts and generate choices.
3. Evaluate choices using alternative approaches.
4. Make a decision and test it.
5. Act and reflect on the outcome.

# FIVE Alternative Approaches

- Common Good (Looking out for community)
  - Utilitarian (Most good/Least Harm)
  - Rights (Best respects rights of all)
  - Virtue (Sort of person I want to be)
  - Fairness/Justice (Treats equally/proportionally)
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- See <http://ethicsops.com/LessSugarMarketing.php> for a complete case study.

# COMMON GOOD Approach

Q. What are the communities? (cols)

Q. What are the "good" of the community? (cols)  
example – trust, education, happiness, safety etc.

Q. What are the alternative actions? (rows)

Q. How are these "common good" affected? (entries)

TAKE ACTION THAT UPHOLDS THE COMMON GOOD

# UTILITARIAN Approach

Q Who are stakeholders? (cols)

Q What are alternatives? (rows)

Q How are stakeholders affected? (harm/good) (entries)  
What are the costs and benefits of each course of action?

The morally right course of action in any situation is the one that produces the greatest balance of benefits over harms for everyone affected.

- Q – will this produce the best outcomes for everyone affected? are we maximizing good and minimizing harm for everyone affected?

# RIGHTS Approach

Q Who are stakeholders (who gets affected?) (cols)

Q What are the rights in consideration. (rows) Right to privacy, Right to make choice, Right to a fair trial, etc.

Q which rights are being violated?

The morally right course of action in any situation is the one that best respects the rights of stakeholders in the decision.

Example: trial by jury (expensive but respects rights of accused)

# VIRTUE Approach

- Also known as mirror test. If you do this, will you be able to look at yourself in the mirror every morning?

Q- Does this action represent the kind of person I am or want to be?

Q - Does it represent my organization's reputation or vision of the kind of enterprise it wants to be?

# FAIRNESS/JUSTICE Approach

Q Who are stakeholders? (cols)

Q What are alternative actions? (rows)

Q What are benefits and burdens? (entries)  
what is the distribution (of benefits/burdens)

Everyone is equal – but everyone does not have equal claim as they contributed less or more or have greater or less need etc.

The morally right course of action in any situation is the one that allows the fairest distribution of benefits and burdens.

Example: CEO pay

- There is an app for that!

<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethical-decision/>

- Practice: <http://quizlet.com/37794904/ethical-decision-making-flash-cards/>



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# Self Check

- Should we care about ethical decisions?
- How do we recognize whether there is an ethical issue?
- What is one way to approach decisions?
- What are five common approaches?