Unit 1

Computing as a Profession - Responsibilities and Challenges

This week's reflection concerns the **collaborative discussion** related to **data privacy**, and the role of a **code of conduct** within organisations. Prior to this discussion, I was aware of the role that GDPR[1] plays in European requirements, however I was not as well-versed in the depth and impact that it has had not only in Europe and the UK, but for other countries too.

Together with the forum discussion was the topic of **threats** that relate to professionals in the Computer Science field. Threats such as data hacking, data leaks, distributed data attacks, cyber terrorism, data privacy, data confidentiality and an increase in an "always-on" mentality, together with the potential threat posed by Artificial Intelligence. Looking for underlying common patterns, I note that **threats to data** is a major theme and that such threats have ethical and legal challenges. From this foundation, **data privacy** and **Code of Conduct** are very much related to each other in aiding computer scientists along their careers.

ePortfolio Setup

This unit was the start of establishing an academic eportfolio. Reading references were provided for consideration and attempt to establish the importance of the relatively weak-value proposition of an eportfolio.

Collaborative Discussion

For the forum discussion I focused on the human rights aspect of the policy, and the role of a code of conduct for IT professionals in ensuring data privacy in organisations.

I began consideration by looking at GDPR policy, becoming acquainted with its purpose and content. I considered the various actors involved in GDPR policy, such as *data controllers, data subjects, protection officer* or *data processor.* Each has a specific definition and scope within the policy where *data subjects* are the actors I was most interested in since data privacy revolves around data subjects and *their* right to privacy.

[1] GDRR (2021) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – Official Legal Text Available from https://gdpr-info.eu/. Accessed xx yyy 2021.

An outstanding observation from this post was how little understood GDPR seems to be in the UK context. This drove home the importance of being knowledgeable on topics that may have impact on an organisation, and for this reason, I found the discussion topic to be helpful.

Reflections on Code of Conduct

I referenced the BCS Code of Conduct to consider what an IT professional's conduct should be based on. Reading through their charter and certifications, I was initially thrilled that an organisation exists to uplift the general standard of IT professionals. However, several points in their charter raised more than an eyebrow upon further consideration. And considering the nature of several points, it seems the BCS charter attempts to amalgamate conduct policies, found in most organisations, into a single comprehensive list. However, several of the points seem overbearing and related to the intangible nature of human characteristics, which does not sit right in my opinion.

For example, a point such as "have due regard for public health, privacy, security and wellbeing of others and their environment" has no value for software developers, DevOps engineers, data scientists, or business analysts who bear no public responsibility. These IT professionals are paid to do what is required, and they do not necessarily interact with the public or the environment. Another example is "respect and value alternative viewpoints" borders on attempting to change the unchangeable: one's personality. Why? Many people (management or otherwise) are incapable of receiving alternate viewpoints, no matter how many psychological sessions they pay. Change comes from within; therefore, this point has no power to enforce.

Overall, it is not clear what value a BCS certification brings to an IT professional's career other than providing a list of prescriptive "Do" and "Do not" items. Regardless, I believe being professional depends entirely upon one's personal desire to deliver a quality service, to commit and to fulfil. Despite that viewpoint, I do agree that the BCS charter has some valuable ground to guide individuals in their careers.

Reflections on Data Privacy and GDPR

Lastly, I considered GDPR data privacy policy. I come away thoroughly impressed with the extent to which Europe defends their citizens' right to remain anonymous and to provide them with tools to control the data collected about them.

Looking at the concerns addressed by GDPR, I questioned why does a nation-block need to establish such policies? I concluded: organisations exist to generate revenue. They often utilise underhanded tactics—the collection of private information about individuals without consent—to generate (unwarranted) profits at the expense of society. And from an ethical viewpoint, this practice is corrupt, a symptom of our global society. So, thankfully, Europe arose with the foresight to defend against such damaging practices and instituted a set of data privacy policies.

Even more impressive is the impact that data privacy concerns have on citizens in other countries. I would argue that Europe is a leader in this regard, raising the cautionary alarm bells, to which global citizens now respond; evidence by countries such as Japan agreeing to provide similar data privacy assurances as Europe.

Conclusion

In summary, data is the underlying risk and the thing that requires protection. No matter the role or responsibility one fulfills as an IT professional, one's duty is to ensure the data is treated in a manner commensurate with system (or legislative) requirements.