PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Professional and Ethical Responsibilities

Ethics is the analysis of human actions from the perspective of "*good*" and "*evil*" or of "*morally correct*" and "*morally wrong.*" It deals with responsibilities, rights, use of language, significance of ethical life, and how people make moral decisions.

Code of Ethics

It is one of the methods to navigate new ethical issues in an organization. It outlines a set of acceptable behaviors in a professional or social group generally agreed to by its members. It also specifies various actions that are considered appropriate and inappropriate.

General Ethical Responsibilities

Acquiring new technology can have a powerful effect on human behavior as it offers new and advanced capabilities. Handling the new problems and situations it brings is another question.

Here are the general ethical responsibilities in technology.

1. **Contribute to society and human well-being:** It deals with protecting fundamental human rights and one's right to autonomy. It is essential to minimize the adverse effects of information systems, including threats to health, safety, and privacy.

   Systems should respect diversity, meet social needs, be used in socially responsible ways, and be broadly accessible. It is also encouraged to actively participate in volunteer work that benefits the public good.

2. **Avoid harm:** "*Harm*" means causing adverse consequences, such as undesirable loss of information, physical or mental injury, loss of property, and unjustified damage to property, reputation, and the environment.

   Avoiding harm starts with careful consideration of potential impacts on those likely to be affected. When harm is an intentional part of the system, everyone involved must ensure that the harm is ethically justified and minimized.

   To minimize harm, follow generally accepted protocols unless there is a justified ethical reason to do so otherwise. It is also an additional obligation to report any signs that might result in damages.

3. **Be honest and trustworthy:** Transparency and disclosing a system's relevant capabilities, limitations, and potential risks of a system to the appropriate person is important. Making deliberately false or misleading claims, data falsification, offering or accepting bribes, and other ill-intentioned conduct are violations and should not be tolerated.

   A professional must appropriately represent an organization's policies or procedures and should not speak on their behalf unless authorized to do so.

4. **Be fair and act not to discriminate:** Discrimination based on race, sex, religion, age, disability, and other related factors concerns this ethical responsibility.

   Harassment, such as sexual harassment, bullying, and forms of abuse of power and authority, is a form of discrimination that limits fair access to the virtual and physical spaces in the workplace.

   The workplace should be as inclusive and as accessible as possible to avoid developing systems or technologies that disenfranchise or oppress people.

5. **Respect privacy:** Communication technology enables the collection and exchange of personal information resulting in an increased potential for privacy violations of individuals and groups.

   Maintaining the privacy and integrity of personal data is necessary, including taking precautions to ensure data accuracy and protection from unauthorized access or disclosure to inappropriate individuals.

   Moreover, only the necessary amount of personal information should be collected; retention and disposal periods must be clearly defined and enforced, and only collect information for a specific purpose with the consent of the individual.

6. **Honor Confidentiality:** Protection of confidential information such as trade secrets, client data, financial information, and research data is an ethical responsibility. It is advised to thoughtfully consider whether such information is consistent with the law.

General Professional Responsibilities

Professional responsibilities deal with how to act and behave within the bounds of an organization, including the relationship with their co-workers.

1. **Strive to achieve the highest quality, effectiveness, and dignity**: Excellence is one of the most important obligations of a professional. It is encouraged to strive for quality and be aware of the severe adverse consequences of a poor-quality system.

   The dignity of everyone at work, including the clients and users, should be respected throughout the process.

2. **Acquire and maintain professional competence:** It is best to participate in setting appropriate levels of competence to achieve high standards. Upgrading technical knowledge and competence are achieved through independent study, attending seminars or courses, and involvement in professional organizations.

3. **Improve public understanding of computing and its consequences:** Sharing technical knowledge with the public by encouraging the understanding of computing is a responsibility that shows the impacts of information systems and their limitations. This implies an obligation to counter and disprove any false views related to the systems.

4. **Honor contracts, agreements, and assigned responsibilities:** Honoring one's commitments is aligned with integrity and honesty. This includes ensuring that system elements function as intended.

   The principle here is the acceptance of personal accountability for professional work no matter the results. On occasions that other responsibilities may take greater priority, ethical judgment should be the final guide in deciding whether to proceed or not.

5. **Access computing and communication resources only when authorized to do so:** Trespassing and unauthorized use of a computer or communication systems are prohibited. Trespassing includes accessing communication networks and computer systems, or files associated without explicit authorization to do so.

   Organizations have the right to restrict access to their systems forbidding one's use of someone's computer system, software, or data files. Access must-have appropriate approval before using system resources, including but not limited to communication ports, file space, other system peripherals, and computer time.

Professional Issues at Work

Despite exerting the best efforts, issues will arise causing friction in the workplace. Numerous internal and external issues can make work difficult and slow down productivity.

Here are major examples of challenges at work:

1. **Communication challenges**: Employees communicate differently. Some may tend to respond to emails and messages in a matter of minutes, while others take days. Many do not even respond to them at all.

   This lack of communication and the absence of coordination between employees can pose a challenge to an organization's harmony and success.

   These can be avoided when the willingness to drop personal pride and ego to address the problem is present and setting aside personal problems to achieve the common goal of the company is apparent.

2. **Low employee motivation**: The chance of feeling demotivated is always present despite the desire to work. It is why needing support, encouragement, and motivation from time to time is essential.

   In a desk job, the need for motivation is always reoccurring as people get tired of doing the same work every day.

   To address this challenge, it is advised to reach out to HR or anyone in charge to create activities and seminars to boost workplace morale. It is also effective to find alternative techniques and untried solutions, allowing creativity and making employees more focused.

3. **Difficult people**: In almost every workplace, there are always unhappy employees that feel frustrated or those that are unwilling to welcome change and new activities. These issues can result in bringing others down due to constant complaints and negativity.

   Once the conflict intensifies, reaching out to HR or anyone in charge is ideal. But if it is manageable, communicate properly to understand and acknowledge each other's feelings. It is advised to practice kindness by going easy on treating and handling others.

4. **Lack of skill development and professional growth**: Skill enhancement is too essential to be ignored. Employees need to improve their performance to keep pace with new technologies. Otherwise, they risk becoming outdated and dispensable.

   Seeking out seminars and training is encouraged even if they are not initiated by the company to avoid the feeling of becoming stagnant.

5. **Mental health challenges:** Work is good for mental health, but a poor workplace can lead to physical and mental health problems. Harassment and bullying at work are one of the most reported problems that have a substantial adverse impact on mental health, such as depression and anxiety.

   Taking time off work is valid when dealing with mental health challenges. Creating a personal space outside of work is necessary, as life should not just be focused on work. Spend weekends doing hobbies, or just merely resting or focusing on activities to improve mental health and personal growth.

Ethical Issues and Dilemma

Ethical Issue

It is a condition where moral conflict arises in the workplace where moral standards are challenged.

In creating the company's code of ethics, they must first identify any potential ethical issues that might arise, such as the following:

1. **Unethical Leadership**
   Having issues with a superior is one thing and reporting it is another. Issues can come in any form, from manipulating numbers in a report to spending company money on inappropriate activities.

   However, these can occur subtly in the form of bullying and accepting inappropriate gifts from suppliers.

   The best way to address this is by dealing with the superior and how it affects the team's productivity. If it escalates, HR should be involved to mitigate it.

2. **Toxic Workplace Culture**
   Superiors who easily dismiss bribery or data manipulation are at risk of disrespecting and putting their employees at risk.

   With the mindset of hiring someone "*culturally fit*," a toxic culture can be worsened by repopulating the company with like-minded personalities with toxic mentalities.

   It is encouraged to lead with respect to the code of ethics as well as taking into consideration of everyone's mental and physical wellness.

3. **Discrimination and Harassment**
   Discrimination based on race, sex, religion, age, disability, and other related factors has not just credoss an ethical line but also a legal one.

   Companies are vigilant in avoiding costly legal and public backlash related to discrimination and harassment. This leads to more subtle ways of committing these offenses, from seemingly "harmless" off-color jokes to a more common "group think" mentality.

   Disengaging conversations that lead to discrimination and harassing territory is a good start. Never show enthusiasm with "jokes" with malicious intent, and as always, talking to HR is the best solution.

4. **Unrealistic and Conflicting Goals**
   Companies often set goals that are unrealistic, even unattainable, to motivate employees. While not unethical in and of itself, it is how leaders and employees go about reaching the goals that raise ethical red flags.

   Unrealistic objectives can put heightened pressure on their employees, causing them to cut corners or breach ethical or legal guidelines just to obtain them.

   Making sure that a goal is attainable should be practiced as well as setting up a good timetable and plan for its execution.

Ethical Dilemma

It is a problem between two (2) feasible options wherein neither is acceptable from an ethical perspective.

Ethical dilemmas are complicated challenges that cannot easily be solved, making the ability to find the ideal solution critical to everyone.

Ways to Solve an Ethical Dilemma

The biggest challenge here is that it never offers an obvious solution that would comply with ethical norms.

Here are some approaches to solving ethical dilemmas:

- **Reject the dilemma**: Situations must be carefully analyzed as in some cases; ethical dilemmas can be logically refuted.
- **Value theory approach:** Determine an alternative that offers the greater good or the lesser evil than the other.
- **Find alternative solutions:** Problems can be viewed through a different lens, resulting in alternative solutions.

Ethical Issue vs. Ethical Dilemma

An ethical issue can be addressed based on simply adhering to the provided code of ethics. The ethical decision-making process for an ethical issue should occur quickly, leading to an easier resolution, since the conflict between principles is not present.

On the other hand, an ethical dilemma exists when two (2) or more ethical principles or standards conflict with each other.

Example of an Ethical Issue and Ethical Dilemma:

An ethical issue is when an employee purposely deceives the company by not disclosing all relevant capabilities, limitations, and potential problems of a system. The solution is easy as it is a clear ethical violation.

It will become an ethical dilemma for the employee if his transparency leads other involved co-workers taken down with him. It would directly "harm" others, and it is an ethical responsibility to avoid harming others.

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