

CAREER EPISODE PIECE 2

In week 5 we learnt about being ethical in research. Referring to the lecture and the study case in the tutorial I systematically studied what is being ethical in research, its importance and what to do to be ethical in research. Meanwhile I had some reflections on my previous projects.

I used to develop a web-based POS system in a team. Similar with the SOCOG case that the developer of the website ignored the accessibility of people using screen readers, we also needed more concern about the usability and ease of use for some people. When designing the page, since only typography and aesthetics were considered, we used a grey font with a white background. It is okay for most people but caused problem for those people with poor eyesight like some old people since they could not see the text clearly especially when the light is strong. As developers we should consider all the different users. In this case we could improve it by allowing users to adjust font size or providing different theme colors to make the text clearer. In the future before making a new product I should think about different conditions and different user groups, think about their potential needs and try my best to make the system easy to use for every user and avoid making some users feel discriminated against. Another similar case is that we only provided the English version, however some of our users have staffs from the other countries and their English is not such good, which made it difficult for them to understand the text, which will be good to provide different languages to users from other countries. To avoid this in the future I may also need to think about users from different countries and regions and respect everyone's culture. Every user should be considered along the project, the special needs of minority groups should be taken into account and make everyone feel respected.

Along that project our client asked to allow their staff to edit the information of their

members. However, while developing I found that these information could be easily gotten by their stuffs without the permission of the members, which may cause privacy information leak. Since this what our client asked, I did not discuss this to our group. Now I know that because this might cause potential privacy issues, I should tell our project leader and discuss this problem with our group then find out a solution like asking for a password from the members or hiding the existing member information. As a professional software engineer, once there is anything that may cause ethical issues it needs to be brought up immediately and discussed in the group, even it is asked by the client. We need to think about not only the clients and ourselves but also the effect to the others, to the whole society, which is more important than individual interests. We should undertake the responsibilities not only to our clients, but to all the stakeholders. When we find any ethical issues, we need to be brave enough to point them out and try our best to solve them. Actually by solving these ethical issues we can also improve the project as well as ourselves and get long-term benefits.

It is important to be ethical as a professional software developer. Based on what I have discussed above, it is essential for us to critically consider all the stakeholders and all the related ethical issues in a project. A good approach of analyzing ethical issues of a project might be following some sort of ethical guidelines. There are several guidelines developed like DET and others which we can follow in the future projects. By exploring the ethical issues in the guidelines, we can analyze the possible problems more comprehensively and carefully, avoid the ethical issues as much as possible, and finally find a satisfactory solution. We may also ask for the appropriate response from the belonging professional societies.

In conclusion, through study and reflection I have learnt the importance of being ethical in research and what should I do in projects. In future projects, I am willing to use what I have learned to solve ethical problems that I may encounter.