Chapter XIV

Limitations of Having Diversity in Codes of Information Ethics:
A Professional and Corporate Perspective

Mary Brabston
The University of Manitoba, Canada

Jennifer Dahl
BestBuy, Canada

Abstract

In this chapter, we examine three frameworks or models that could be used in developing codes of information ethics and then review two codes of information ethics for IST professionals and three codes of ethics or conduct for corporations based on their fit with these three frameworks. Based on our review, we make recommendations that call for a unified code of information ethics based on standardized language and for the possible certification of these codes by professional associations. We also call for stronger language regarding penalties for violations of codes of information ethics.

Introduction

Information is a source of power in society, but unlike money and weapons, information is not tangible. Because information is intangible, unique issues and ethical dilemmas emerge from the information environment. Accordingly, individuals who use information systems and technology (IST) in their work environment are faced with distinctive ethical dilemmas about the use of their power and access to information.

What is meant by the notion of an ethical issue? An ethical issue may be defined as any situation where a party pursuing its objectives engages in behavior that materially affects the ability of another party to pursue its own goals (Mason, 1995). When ethics is applied to IST, it refers to a set of rules or principles used for moral decision making regarding computer technology and computer use (Pierce & Henry, 1996). These sets of rules or principles for guiding conduct are codes of ethics. Many IST professional organizations have ethics codes for their members to follow. Most corporations have general corporate codes of ethics. Some IST issues may be addressed in corporate codes of ethics or conduct, but we question whether corporations address IST ethical issues sufficiently and effectively.

This chapter reviews several professional and corporate codes of information ethics using three different frameworks of information ethics. These frameworks include the entity to whom the ethical obligation is owed and the types of ethical issues that should be included in these codes. This chapter explores the importance of information technology ethics codes in IST professional organizations and in corporations. Unfortunately, the diversity we found in these codes presents limitations, which we then explore. Finally, we propose the adoption of a unified code of ethics for both IST professionals and corporations and possible certification of these codes.

Importance of
Codes of Information Ethics

Codes of information ethics in corporations and professional organizations are important for many reasons. Codes of information ethics for an IST professional organization help to establish the IST industry as a profession by

Related Content

Software Piracy: Are Robin Hood and Responsibility Denial at Work?
Susan J. Harrington (2002). *Ethical Issues of Information Systems (pp. 177-188).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/software-piracy-robin-hood-responsibility/18578

Open Science in Universities: Ukrainian Experience
Iryna Drach (2024). *Methodologies and Ethics for Social Sciences Research (pp. 159-183).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/open-science-in-universities/337055

Chicken Killers or Bandwidth Patriots?: A Case Study of Ethics in Virtual Reality
Kurt Reymers (2011). *International Journal of Technoethics (pp. 1-22).*
www.irma-international.org/article/chicken-killers-bandwidth-patriots/58324

Social Media to Social Media Analytics: Ethical Challenges
Vikas Kumarand Pooja Nanda (2019). *International Journal of Technoethics (pp. 57-70).*
www.irma-international.org/article/social-media-to-social-media-analytics/230343

The Malevolent Side of Revenge Porn Proclivity: Dark Personality Traits and Sexist Ideology
Afroditi Pina, James Hollandand Mark James (2017). *International Journal of Technoethics (pp. 30-43).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-malevolent-side-of-revenge-porn-proclivity/178531