ETHICAL SCENARIOS

TASK
Choose one of the scenarios below. Read the chapter in Baase that is relevant to your topic. Analyse the scenario using the ITGS methodology and note the answers to each key question. Include two different references to your readings from Baase. Present your response as a podcast saved on your wiki.

Methodologies for Analysing Social Impact and Ethical Considerations
Social impact and ethical considerations need to be analysed from both local and global perspectives, recognizing that attitudes and opinions are diverse within and between different cultures

Ethical considerations refer to the responsibility and accountability of those involved in the design, implementation and use of IT.

KEY QUESTIONS

Social issues
1. What are the social issues associated with a particular IT development?
2. How did the IT development emerge?
3. Who are the stakeholders—individuals, institutions, societies who initiate and control the IT developments and are affected by them?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages for the stakeholders?
5. What feasible solutions can be applied to overcome problems?
6. What is the social impact of the IT development on human life? This may include some or all of the following areas: economic, political, cultural, legal, environmental, ergonomic, health and psychological.
7. What are the social impacts on local and global communities?

Ethical issues
1. What are the ethical issues associated with a particular IT development?
2. Who is responsible?
3. Who is accountable?
4. What policies, rules or laws apply to the situation?
5. What are the alternative ethical decisions?
6. What are the consequences of these decisions?

MARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>0-1</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>4-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Little or no reference to stakeholders.</td>
<td>Some stakeholders identified.</td>
<td>All stakeholders identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Little or no consideration of adv/disadv</td>
<td>Considers adv. or disadv.</td>
<td>Considers adv. and disadv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal or no consideration of solutions.</td>
<td>Some consideration of solutions.</td>
<td>Feasible solutions suggested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal consideration of social/ethical impacts.</td>
<td>Social or ethical impacts considered.</td>
<td>Social and ethical impacts considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility/accountability determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant laws/policies identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>At most one reference is included.</td>
<td>Includes 2 out of the 3 references.</td>
<td>Includes 2 relevant references to Baase. Includes 1 other reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Podcast and wiki incomplete.</td>
<td>Podcast complete. Wiki page attempted.</td>
<td>Podcast is clear. Wiki page includes podcast and formal bibliog. of sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scenario 1 (Sackson 1996)
A company bought a microsoftware computer program for a part time student to use at work. The license agreement stipulates, “You should make a backup copy of this program, but you may only use the program on a single machine at any one time.” Knowing you have permission to make a backup copy, why not make other copies for friends? They only use one computer each and these are backup copies. After all, making backups appears to adhere to the ‘spirit’ of the license though not the ‘letter’ of the license agreement.

Scenario 2 (Sackson 1996)
A university student obtained a part-time job as a data entry clerk. His job was to enter personal student data into the university database. Some of this data was available in the student directory, but some of it was not. He was attracted to a student in his algebra class and wanted to ask her out. Before asking her, though, he decided to access her records in the database to find out about her background.

Scenario 3 (Sackson 1996)
An employee at the county courthouse had access to all the records in the county database. Over the past weeks, she had become suspicious about her neighbor’s buying habits. The neighbor had purchased new lawn furniture, had her house painted and purchased an expensive new car. The employee decided to access her neighbor’s records to determine how this neighbor could afford these purchases.

Scenario 4 (Sackson 1996)
A computer programmer enjoyed building small computer systems to give his friends. He would frequently go to his office on Saturday when no one was working and use his employer’s computer in his office to develop systems for his friends. He did not hide that he was going into the building; he had to sign a register at a security desk each time he entered on weekends.

Scenario 5 (Guthrie 1998)
Mark works for an engineering firm. He is fortunate to work in a career that gives him a lot of freedom to experiment with technology. Recently, Mark discovered cyberspace and the World Wide Web. At first, he used the web to investigate engineering products on-line and to contact vendors for information about specific products. Recently, Mark started surfing the web, examining links that were not specifically related to his job. Was Mark’s behaviour ethical, questionable, unethical? What if he just did his on-line banking? What if he surfed cyberspace only during lunch? What if he links to pornographic sites during lunch?

Scenario 6 (Guthrie 1998)
A popular Internet service provider offers on-line registration. Any user with a modem can dial the HomeLink Network and register for Internet service from their computer. What the users do not know is that as part of registration, HomeLink scans their hard drive assessing their system for potential, new software marketing opportunities. Is HomeLink ethical, questionable, or unethical? What if the users were notified prior to the scan? What if the scan was to find pirated versions of software?

Scenario 7 (Guthrie 1998)
The Chip Company feels that they can provide their customers with personalized, customized service by using cookies. A cookie (a tiny fragment of information) is placed on a person’s hard drive by the Chip Company. When the person accesses the web page again, the company recognizes that they have already been to the web site and can customize the page based upon the cookie. Is it ethical, questionable or unethical for companies to use cookies?

Scenario 8 (Guthrie 1998)
Joe is giving an on-line demonstration in which he uses software that was licensed for 90 days. Prior to giving the seminar, he has noted that the license would expire. Rather than pay the licensing fee, he changes the date on his computer, effectively fooling the software into believing it is at the beginning of the licensing period. Are Joe’s actions ethical, questionable, unethical? What if Joe intends to license the software at a later date? What if the software is no longer available for sale?

Scenario 9 (Burmeister 2000)
Jean, a statistical database Programmer, is trying to write a large statistical program needed by her company. Programmers in this company are encouraged to write about their work and to publish their algorithms in professional journals. After months of tedious programming, Jean has found herself stuck on several parts of the program. Her manager, not recognising the complexity of the problem, wants the job completed within the next few days. Not knowing how to solve the problems, Jean remembers that a co-worker had given her source listings from his current work and from an early version of a commercial software package developed at another company. On studying these programs, she sees two areas of code which could be directly incorporated into her own program. She uses segments of code from both her co-worker and the commercial software, but does not tell anyone or mention it in the documentation. She completes the project and turns it in a day ahead of time.
Scenario 10 (Burmeister 2000)
Max works in a large state department of alcoholism and drug abuse. The agency administers programs for individuals with alcohol and drug problems, and maintains a huge database of information on the clients who use their services. Some of the data files contain the names and current addresses of clients.

Max has been asked to take a look at the track records of the treatment programs. He is to put together a report that contains the number of clients seen in each program each month for the past five years, length of each client's treatment, number of clients who return after completion of a program, criminal histories of clients, and so on. In order to put together this report, Max has been given access to all files in the agency's mainframe computer. After assembling the data into a file that includes the client’s names, he downloads it to the computer in his office.

Under pressure to get the report finished by the deadline, Max decides he will have to work at home over the weekend in order to finish on time. He burns the information onto a CD and takes it home. After finishing the report he leaves the CD at home and forgets about it.

Scenario 11 (Burmeister 2000)
A software development company has just produced a new software package that incorporates the new tax laws and figures taxes for both individuals and small businesses. The president of the company knows that the program has a number of bugs. He also believes the first firm to put this kind of software on the market is likely to capture the largest market share. The company widely advertises the program. When the company actually ships a CD, it includes a disclaimer of responsibility for errors resulting from the use of the program. The company expects it will receive a number of complaints, queries, and suggestions for modification. The company plans to use these to make changes and eventually issue updated, improved, and debugged versions. The president argues that this is general industry policy and that anyone who buys version 1.0 of a program knows this and will take proper precautions. Because of bugs, a number of users filed incorrect tax returns and were penalised by the ATO.

Scenario 12 (Burmeister 2000)
Three years ago Diane started her own consulting business. She has been so successful that she now has several people working for her and many clients. Their consulting work included advising on how to set up corporate intranets, designing database management systems, and advising about security.

Presently she is designing a database management system for the personnel office of a medium-sized company. Diane has involved the client in the design process, informing the CEO, the director of computing, and the director of personnel about the progress of the system. It is now time to make decisions about the kind and degree of security to build into the system. Diane has described several options to the client. Because the system is going to cost more than they planned, the client has decided to opt for a less secure system. She believes the information they will be storing is extremely sensitive. It will include performance evaluations, medical records for filing insurance claims, salaries, and so forth.

With weak security, employees working on client machines may be able to figure out ways to get access to this data, not to mention the possibility of on-line access from hackers. Diane feels strongly that the system should be much more secure. She has tried to explain the risks, but the CEO, director of computing and director of personnel all agree that less security will do. What should she do? Should she refuse to build the system as they request?

Bibliography


