Finnish Information Processing Association   **GUIDE**   version 3.0
Ethics workgroup

Code of ethics for information technology professionals

The Finnish Information Processing Association's ethics workgroup has created this code to help professionals resolve ethical problems that occur in their work. The aim of the code is to encourage ethical ways behaviour and to help IT professionals to handle moral problems arising from their work.

The purpose of this code is to reinforce the ethical aspect of information technology professionalism and promote it by raising discussion amongst IT professionals. The code is not final; it will continue to evolve through feedback. Because it is not possible to anticipate all ethical problems, this code should not be taken as an absolute truth, but rather as a guide towards better choices. In the end, everyone is responsible for the choices they make.

Acting ethically is not about following an ethical code to the letter, but rather it evolves as a result of the choices between right and wrong, good and bad that we make. Choices affect our ethics.

If you confront an ethical dilemma, search for help from other IT professionals. You can also contact the ethics work group directly at etiikan.tyoryhma(at)ttlry.fi.

Authority and responsibility

IT professionals must not misuse their power. They must face up to their responsibility, which can be measured as actions and deeds. Knowledge is power, and using knowledge requires wisdom, as does all use of power.

Knowledge and experience

Professionals must understand their limits: they should know the strengths and weaknesses of their skills. In a rapidly developing field, professionals must develop their skills. They must know, for example, any laws regarding personal privacy. Professionals do not hide their knowledge, but instead pursue to enhance their own and others' skills and share their knowledge with the professional community. However, professionals also understand that information which is confidential (and must remain so) and respect the trust of their clients.

Should a professional receive criticism of their work, be it well-founded or even unfounded in their opinion, they should receive it gracefully and learn from it.

Attitude

Professionals do not work just for themselves, but also for others. They will take into consideration the opinions of the subjects of their actions. They should not let greed or lack of consideration affect their decisions. They understand, that their work has meaning only through others.

Communications

Professionals understand the importance of communication. They communicate with their clients, document what they do and inform all relevant parties of their actions.

Professionals must aim to communicate as clearly as possible and when necessary explain the terms they use. The aim of communication is to create common understanding with other parties to achieve cooperation.

In transactions with a client, professionals should also inform the client of anything the client may not know to ask. Professionals should inform others of the bad news as well as the good ones.

Consequences of professionals' work

The results of information technology work receive their meaning through application. IT professionals must understand the consequences of their work, as part of a long chain, at the end of which is the user. Professionals must take into regard the needs and wants of the consumer, the client and their employer.

In their actions professionals should always aim to understand the meaning of their work to the whole community for which the work is done and not limit themselves only to the opinions of the people with whom they have the transaction.

Other people

IT professionals respect the work of other people, and in so doing take other peoples' rights to their creations into account.

The work of IT professionals affect – through various connecting groups – society at large. Professionals must understand the consequences of their work and must also take into consideration human rights, environmental questions, laws and copyrights when pursuing their work.

Promotion of ethics

Professionals must promote ethically sustainable ways of acting within the field of information technology.

To act ethically is to make choices; each person can choose to be, or not to be, ethical. To apply ethics is often not to choose between the "right" and the "wrong" choice, but rather to develop an ethical character by constantly having regard for one's environment and the people in it . These instructions strive to give IT professionals a framework for action that will promote their own and other peoples' ethical growth.

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