


Chapter 5

Ethical Implications of Information Technology

- Ethical, Moral, and Legal Behavior
- Role of Ethics in Business
- Ethics and IS


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Socially Conscionable Citizens

- **Moral:** Social Institution with tradition and set of rules. Commonality among societies.
- **Ethical:** Guiding beliefs, standards, or ideals that pervades a community. *He that shares is rewarded, he that does not, condemned.*
- **Legal:** Formal rules of conduct.


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Laws Lag Behind

- In 1966, a programmer used computer code to keep his checking account from being flagged as overdrawn. When the bank discovered the crime the programmer could not be charged with a computer crime because no computer crime law existed. He was charged with making false bank records.

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Imposing an Ethics Culture

- **Corporate credo:** Statement of values the firm seeks to uphold. See Figure 5.2
- **Ethics programs:** Designed to provide employees with direction in carrying out the corporate credo.
- **Tailored corporate codes:** Code of ethics for operation of firm

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Fig 5.1: Top-level management imposes the ethics culture in a top-down manner



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Ethics and Information Services

- **Computer ethics: Policies for the ethical use of computer technology.**
- **Importance of computer ethics**
 - **Logical malleability: People behind computer**
 - **The transformation factor: Functional change**
 - **The invisibility factor**
 - **Invisible programming: Bugs cause problems**
 - **Invisible complex calculations: Poor Understanding**
 - **Invisible abuse: Privacy and crime.**

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Social Rights and the Computer

- **Rights to the computer**
 - **Right to computer access**
 - **Right to computer skills**
 - **Right to computer specialists**
 - **Right to computer decision making**

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Rights to Information

- **Right to privacy (Big brother)**
- **Right to accuracy**
- **Right to property (Intellectual)**
- **Right to access**

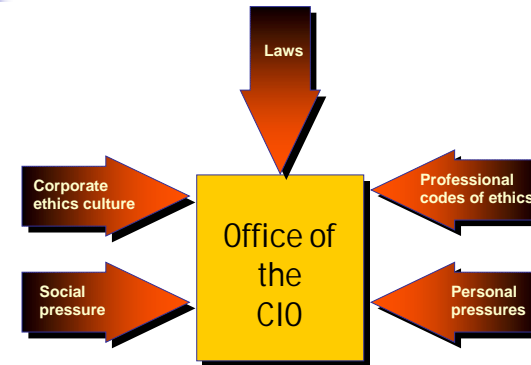
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Ethics and the CIO

- **Perceptions of the CIO's Ethics**
 - Do not take advantage of opportunities to act unethically
 - Ethics breeds success
 - Firms and managers have social responsibilities
 - Managers back up their ethics beliefs with action

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The CIO is Influenced by a Hierarchy of Factors



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Ethics Opportunities

- System loopholes may be sought, but exploitation of them is unacceptable. Policies for reporting and fixing security problems should be clear.
- MIS management may need to emphasize to staff that keeping unauthorized software is a crime.
- All entry-level staff overwhelmingly reject any behavior that is disruptive.
- Very few MIS entry-level staff would take advantage of their privileged access to systems.

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Ethical Intent

- MIS management needs to clearly state policies regarding personal use of corporate facilities.
- MIS entry-level personnel may use corporate resources for personal profit.
- MIS entry-level personnel may not realize implication of unauthorized software copying. Corporate position needs to be explicit.
- Destructive behavior is unacceptable, nuisance behavior is questionable. Corporate policies need to be clear.

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Achieving an Ethical Computer Operation

1. Formulate a code of conduct.
2. Establish rules of procedure relating to such issues as personal use of computer services and proprietary rights to computer programs and data.
3. Make clear the sanctions that will be taken against offenders-such as reprimands, termination, and civil action.
4. Recognize ethical behavior.

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Achieving an Ethical Computer Operation (cont.)

5. Focus attention on ethics by means of such programs as training sessions and required reading.
6. Promote computer crime laws by keeping employees informed.
7. Keep a formal record that establishes accountability of each information specialist for her or his actions, and also minimizes the temptations for violations by means of such programs as ethics audits.

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Achieving an Ethical Computer Operation (cont.)

8. Encourage the use of rehabilitation programs that treat ethics violators in the same way that corporations show concern for the recovery of alcoholics or drug offenders.
9. Encourage participation in professional societies.
10. Set an example.

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Questions That Determine the Ethics of an Action

1. Is it honorable?
Is there anyone from whom you would like to hide the action?
2. Is it honest?
Does it violate any agreement, actual or implied, or otherwise betray a trust?
3. Does it avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest?
Are there other considerations that might bias your judgment?
4. Is it within your area of competence?
Is it possible that your best effort will not be adequate?
5. Is it fair?
Is it detrimental to the legitimate interests of others?
6. Is it considerate?
Will it violate confidentiality or privacy, or otherwise harm anyone or anything?
7. Is it conservative?
Does it unnecessarily squander time or other valuable resources?

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