

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



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Ethical Considerations in Information Technology

Our age is the age of information and information technology, and with it comes an age of ethics. When we make use of the new technologies introduced every day, we have to make decision what we must consider ethical and unethical. We must keep in consideration all factors in order that the use of the information freely available to many persons is not abused.

Information technology will be the most central area of ethical ease for business in the decade to come. As we enter the information age the novelty and power of information technology test the ethics of an average person not just the criminal and may cause several computer crimes to be committed every day. One of the most common computer crimes committed daily is the illegitimate distribution of computer software.

We do not contemplate even for a while when we share a program with others. We need to think about the programmers of the software who are denied compensation for their achievements every time we distribute a software illegally. A prevalent type of illegal software distribution is through the internet. Software pirates succeed easily online. These so called pirates work by uploading different types of software into an online service's database that can then be downloaded in different ways.

Though many people use their own accounts to access their service, but there are many who get into and use the accounts of others or make fake accounts. When online, these account pirates, regularly, trick other users into giving their passwords to them by impersonating an employee of the online service. There are some others who can hack into the online services mainframe computers and steal thousands of accounts. Perhaps, the most common method of getting online without having to pay is the use of fake accounts. These are made by giving wrong information when trying to get access to an online service. With these stolen and fake accounts, software pirates have virtually unlimited time to download their desired software and other data.

It is not only unlawful, but also unethical to distribute software knowing that the people behind the software are facing the downfalls of it. Every time software companies fail to reimburse their programmers for their work, more people are out of a job.

Mostly, young people interact with hackers, and they incorporate the beliefs of the hackers. And, thus, information technology and computers lead them to a career in computer crime. In most of the cases, it is the lack of education by parents and schools that helps to make these beliefs truer to a young person. Computer criminals have their own set of opinions about information and computers. Their opinions are based on the belief that software should be free and should be available to anyone. They also believe that passwords and other security measures are no more than hindrances to be overcome in finding data that should already be accessible and while data should never be wrecked, there is nothing wrong with viewing and transferring data for one's own use.

The key to stop computer criminals from their deeds is education. It is mostly the case that people commit computer crimes without even realizing that they are doing so and the reason for this is the deficiency of education and awareness. Only few schools teach computer ethics, and parents of the hackers are generally oblivious that their children have been illegally accessing computer systems. Colleges and universities that teach courses related to the technical aspects of computers and information technology do not typically include computer use and abuse in their courses, saying that it is the responsibility of the students themselves or their families.

Similarly, many secondary school educators do not even know for sure about what should be taught and they are mostly hesitant or unable to add ethical computer education to many subjects in the curriculum. Textbooks on computer literacy hardly mention computer abuses and individual responsibilities. Educators and software developers need to work together to prevent software piracy in educational institutions.

The Importance of Aiming Before Shooting

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Imagine somebody give you a bow, arrow and asking to shoot, your first expected response would be, "At what?" When there is no target, there is no purpose for shooting. You could shoot the arrow anywhere and wherever the arrow ended up would be where the arrow ended up. Not much to it. On the other hand, if someone gave the archer a target and challenged to hit the bull's-eye - everything changes. You now gave him something to aim at, something to challenge your skills against, something to measure your progress with, and something that gives all of his effort - purpose, and all by adding in a simple target. That's what a goal does to a person's life - It changes everything. You were given a life and you've been told ever since to, "Live it." Well, in order to answer that question first thought should be, "By doing what?" What is the road maps showing which mission is possible for life? And that is the key focusing question that sets the basis for this list! Everybody in this world has a different set of circumstances, different set of skills, and a different set of opportunities through which they can interact with the world and find their unique sense of fulfillment. Mission in life should be to figure out what unique, "sets" are and how one can take action to best capitalize on them that gives all of its effort purpose and meaning. Goals are the guiding lights that need to build as following:

First step, Setting goals that motivate you when you set goals for yourself, it is important that they stimulate you. This means making sure that they are important to you, and that there is value in achieving them. If you have little interest in the outcome, or they are irrelevant given the larger picture, then the chances of you putting in the work to make them happen are slim. Motivation is a key to achieving goals. Set goals that relate to the high priorities in life. Without this type of focus, you can end up with far too many goals, leaving you too little time to devote to each one. Goal achievement requires commitment, so to maximize the likelihood of success, you need to feel a sense of urgency and have an "I must do this" attitude. When you don't have this, you risk putting off what you need to do to make the goal a reality. This in turn leaves you feeling disappointed and frustrated, both of which are de-motivating. And you can end up in a very destructive "I can't do anything or be successful at anything" frame of mind. To make sure your goal is motivating, write down why it's valuable and important to you. Ask yourself, "If I were to share my goal with others, what would I tell them to convince them it was a worthwhile goal?" You can use this motivating value statement to help you if you start to doubt yourself or lose confidence in your ability to actually make the goal happen.

Second step, set smart goal you have probably heard of smart goal already. But do you always apply the rule? The simple fact is that for goals to be powerful, they should be designed to be smart. There are many variations of what smart stands for, but the essence is this -

goals should be: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time Bound.

Specific goals, Whenever you want to achieve something, keep your eyes open, concentrate and make sure you know exactly what it is you want. No one can hit their target with their eyes closed but if you are tempting to want everything, you are dangerously closing wanting nothing. Vague or generalized desires are not goal they are unhelpful wishes because they don't provide sufficient direction. Remember, you need goals to show you the way where you are heading and "at what" you shoot your life? Make it as easy as you can get where you want to go by defining precisely where you want to end up.

Measurable goals, it Include precise amounts, dates, and so on in your goals so you can measure your degree of success. If your goal is simply defined as "To reduce expenses" how will you know when you will be successful? In one month's time if you have a 1 percent reduction or in two years' time when you have a 10 percent reduction? Without a way to measure your success you miss out on the celebration that comes with knowing you have actually achieved something.

Attainable goals, this rule indicates to make sure that it's possible to achieve the goals you set. If you set a goal that you have no hope of achieving, you will only demoralize yourself and erode your confidence. Anyone whose goal is 'something higher' must expect someday to suffer vertigo. What is vertigo? Fear of falling? No, Vertigo is something other than fear of falling. It is the voice of the emptiness which tempts and lures us; it is the desire to fall and may lead to addictive stuffs in order to fill this psychological gap. By setting realistic yet challenging goals, you hit the balance you need. These are the types of goals that require you to "raise the bar" and they bring the greatest personal satisfaction.

Relevant goals, goals should be relevant to the direction you want your life and career to take. By keeping goals aligned with this, you'll develop the focus you need to get ahead and do what you want. Set widely scattered and inconsistent goals and you'll fritter your time - and your life - away.

Time-bound goals, your goals must have a deadline. When you are working on a deadline, your sense of urgency increases and achievement will come that much quicker. So commit to a deadline or else Open-ended goals tend to go forgotten. The last step; make an action plan prioritizing your goal at top of action plan. However, this step is often missed in the process of goal setting, but this is especially important if your goal is big and demanding, or long-term. You get so focused on the outcome that you forget to plan all of the steps that are needed along the way. By writing out the individual steps, and then crossing each one off as you complete it, you'll realize that you are making progress towards your ultimate goal.

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Closing the Health-Care Data Gap

By Muhammad Hamid Zaman

While much of the world today suffers from information overload, there are still places where information is scarce. And that scarcity sometimes costs people their lives.

In the maternity ward of Zanzibar's largest public-health facility, Mnazi Mmoja Hospital, patient data are listed on a dry-erase board. The information on the board consists of the number of women admitted, the type and severity of their conditions, and whether or not they survived.

These data may be better than nothing, but not by much. There are no dates or timestamps or long-term filing systems. With photographs of the board strictly forbidden, records last only as long as they are on it.

Zanzibar's attitude toward health records is not unique. In fact, Zanzibar is probably more careful than many other places throughout in Africa and Asia, where data-collection systems simply do not exist.

When a country suffers from such a data deficit, its public-health policies, budgets, and strategies are decided by political expediency or guesswork. Sometimes the guesses are right, but most often they are not.

This is a major challenge for health-care systems in the developing world. Collecting accurate information on all patients (while still respecting privacy) is vital to tracking public-health threats, lapses in care, and medical errors, and is a necessary and essential condition for holding open and honest debates about health-care issues that can affect entire communities or countries.

According to a British Medical Journal analysis by Martin Makary and Michael Daniel of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in the United States, medical errors alone are the third leading cause of death, after heart disease and cancer. In the context of their analysis, medical errors could include bad doctors, poor clinical judgment, miscommunications between staff members or departments, and incorrect diagnoses.

There is no reason to think this problem is confined to the US. Health-care settings in the developing world often face even steeper challenges, such as lack of technical capacity among hospital management, staff shortages, poor training, low-quality medicines, and relative impunity for medical malpractice. Unfortunately, because we have such limited data, we cannot know the extent to which any of these factors contribute to poor health outcomes and avoidable deaths in developing countries. Aside from potentially saving countless lives, reliable data can -

duce costs, financially and psychologically. The financial burden of health care in low- and middle-income countries is substantial, despite the progress that has been made in fighting HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis. Beyond these diseases, for which there is treatment and tracking, thanks partly to ample awareness, many illnesses go unidentified and continue to strain public-health services.

Understanding common causes of death is the only way to improve health care in communities with a high disease burden, patriarchal hierarchies, and large and dispersed rural populations that rely on traditional medicine. In these settings, patient interactions with doctors are rare, so it is important to collect records on them at every opportunity.

Different societies have different health-care needs, and fully comprehending what they are is no easy task. But we can begin the process with three steps.

The first is to create awareness within communities. All people want healthy and productive lives for themselves and their loved ones, so they will welcome new insights into why people in their community die or get sick. With the advent of citizen journalism and social media, even in poor countries, public-awareness campaigns are now more affordable than ever.

The second step is to devise better ways to collect data. Many developing countries lack the funds, infrastructure, and training needed to use sophisticated data-collection tools; but that doesn't mean they can't make significant improvements in data collection. As Atul Gawande of Harvard University's School of Public Health has shown, simple checklists can be effective in both collecting data and making better decisions. If health-care workers and policymakers know which data are useful and why, they will already be in a better position to change public-health outcomes. The final step is to establish transparent oversight of the data being collected. Some data may point to politically inconvenient or counterintuitive conclusions, and politicians could be tempted to sweep it under the rug. In the age of social media and open-access journals, we should demand that newly collected data be made available to a broad range of people researching public-health issues and working in health-care settings.

Ultimately, we may not be able to prevent deaths caused by certain illnesses. But with more information, it is within our power to prevent those deaths that are caused by our own complacency or incompetence. (Courtesy Project Syndicate)

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