Scenario

- You work as an application developer for a small contracting business, OPS P/L. Your speciality is in 'Office' applications, specifically spreadsheet and small database applications.
- You have been assigned the task of developing a forecasting spreadsheet application for a new client, ABCD P/L, a small business that has just set up a brand new peer-to-peer network of PCs, each installed with a modern 'office' suite of programs. This represents ABCD's first move into computerisation.

Upon talking to the owner/manager of ABCD about the requirements of the spreadsheet you are developing, you by chance ask them about where they purchased their computers and network. The owner/manager of ABCD replies that they got a "really good deal" and that "one quote stood out from the rest". The PCs and network were installed by CSP P/L, a business you are familiar with.

After further examination, you determine that one of the reasons for the low quote was that CSP P/L provided the PCs and network, and "threw in" the software. You determine that there is an unlicensed copy of the office suite on each PC. What do you do?

- Nothing - Design the spreadsheet as requested
- Inform ABCD about licensing responsibility, and still design the spreadsheet
- Refuse to design the spreadsheet until they have legal copies
- Other ???

What do you do about ABCD?

- Nothing
- Ring them and give them a chance to 'fix' it by providing licensed copies
- Report them to an association like the ACS
- Report them to the legal authorities
- Other ???

What do you do about CSP?

Ethics defined

- A code or set of principles by which people live
- What is considered to be right and what is considered to be wrong; what ought to be done, not what is being done
- A complex issue based on the assumption that people are rational and make free choices
- Ethical rules are normative rules to follow in our interactions with other people

Ethics...

Theories

- Plato (429-347 BC): 'the good life'
- Aristotle (384-322 BC): 'moderation in all things'
- Epicurus (341-270 BC): 'pursuit of pleasure'
- Kant (1724-1804): deontologism
- J.S. Mill (1806-1873): consequentialism
**Ethics...**

**Theories explained**

- **Deontologism**
  - An action is right or wrong regardless of motive or consequences
- **Consequentialism**
  - Right or wrong depends on its consequences
- **Relativism**
  - No absolute or universal right and wrong
- **Universalism**
  - What is right/wrong applies to all
- **Egoism**
  - Everyone should act out of self-interest

**Ethical dilemmas faced by IT/IS professionals**

- Exist in their everyday work life
- Obligations toward their employers, customers, co-professionals, and the general public
- Issues arise from devices, systems, their quality and safety, and services of professionals
- Obligations often come into conflict with one another, and require resolution
  - Sale of an over-engineered and expensive system to gullible customers
  - "Throwing in" unauthorized copies of copyrighted software
  - Doing a job for a client which you may find offensive
  - Possession of unsolicited information

**Ethics vs. Law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical</th>
<th>Legal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Based on customs and beliefs about how people should treat each other</td>
<td>- Based on precedence, or code law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Judged by individuals</td>
<td>- Appointed judges</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Price of nonconformance is criticism or ostracism</td>
<td>- Price of nonconformance fines or jail sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- May differ from society to society or region to region</td>
<td>- Also may differ from society to society or region to region</td>
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**What are the issues?**

- **PAPA**
  - Privacy; Accuracy; Property; Accessibility
  - Acronym coined by Richard Mason in 1986

**PAPA**

- **Privacy:**
  - What information about one's self or one's associations must a person reveal to others, under what conditions and with what safeguards?
  - What things can people keep to themselves and not be forced to reveal to others?

- **Accuracy:**
  - Who is responsible for the authenticity, fidelity, and accuracy of information?
  - Who is to be held accountable for errors in information?
PAPA

• Property:
  Who owns information?
  What are the just and fair prices for its exchange?
  Who owns the channels, especially the airways, through which information is transmitted?
  How should access to this scarce resource be allocated?

Something to ponder on

The government has decided as a security measure to implant microchips under the skin of all asylum seekers and refugees who enter Australia. You are a software developer who has been asked to build the database which will keep track of these people.

What are the arguments of the case for and against whether you should take on such a project?

Professional codes of ethics

• Many professions have established their associations or societies
  > AMA (American Medical Associations)
  > ACS (Australian Computer Society)
  > ACM (Association for Computing Machinery)
  – Codes of conduct

The purpose of Professional Codes

• Inspire – stimulus for ethical conduct
• Guide – for morally complex situations
• Educate – members about their ethical responsibility
• Discipline – specify grounds for punishing members

Professional Codes

• Rules that govern the conduct of members
  • Members assume a moral obligation to conform
  • Conformity is a condition of membership
  • Violation can result in exclusion
ACS Code of Ethics

- **Note 4.4 Standards of Conduct**
  - "The list of standards is not necessarily exhaustive and should not be read as definitively demarking the acceptable from the unacceptable in professional conduct in all practical situations faced by a member.
  - "A member is expected to take into account the spirit of the Code of Ethics in order to resolve ambiguous or contentious issues concerning ethical conduct."

Advantages of a Code of Ethics

- Set out the ideals and responsibilities of the profession
- Exert a de facto regulatory effect, protecting both clients and professionals
- Improve the profile of the profession
- Motivate and inspire practitioners, by attempting to define their raison d'être
- Provide guidance on acceptable conduct
- Raise awareness and consciousness of issues
- Improve quality and consistency

Disadvantages of a Code of Ethics

- Whether the so-called standards are obligatory, or are merely an aspiration
- Whether such a code is desirable or feasible
- Whether ethical values are universal or culturally relativistic
- The difficulties of laying down universal guidance considering the heterogeneous (widely dissimilar) nature of the profession
- What is the point of specifying responsibilities, given the limited regulatory function of a code.

Influences on behavioral choice

- Environment: time, place
- Individual: family, peers
- Society: social norms
- Belief system: religious, morale
- Legal: environment, current laws
- Professional: current code of conduct

Role of Ethical Education and Training

- To make defensible moral judgment
- To reflect critically on the moral principles and ideals involved in a particular situation
- To have a framework for critical analysis

The Professional Dilemma

- Professional duties and responsibilities (sometimes) conflict with organisational goals and outcomes.
- Ethical behaviour can conflict with legal statutes and/or contractual obligations
- The professional needs knowledge and skills to resolve these conflicts by themselves as the situations arise in particular contexts.