

## CASE 12

## The Engineer and the Teacher

### Copyright Ethics in Schools and Industry

**M**y name is Harrison Granger. Three months ago, I was hired as senior engineer by Googalong Consultants in Dallas. The firm's clients are local utility companies that need solutions to civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical problems. I manage these projects and deal with the associated clients.

The competition for winning consulting contracts is fierce. When my company started in business two year ago, it had only a few personal computers and the bare minimum of engineering, accounting, and office automation software.

As the company grew, it added more PCs and circulated more copies of the original software, along with unauthorized versions of more sophisticated software tools. There were no funds to buy legitimate software. In fact, the company canceled maintenance contracts on the hardware and operating system software during these lean times.

Now, we're located in a new office park. Business is booming in a slumping economy, because the company focus is on quality work at a reasonable price.

Just yesterday my boss told me that he wanted me to take over as manager of Information Systems Resources. It's not that big a deal. It takes only one day a week to keep track of all the software we have, making sure we have backups of the most recent versions and so on.

What bothers me is what I found on this job during the first day. The company's bread-and-butter software, the engineering package we use all the time, the one that is the envy of all our competition, was never purchased. It is a bootlegged copy.

Well, of course I went to my boss.

He said, "My gosh! You don't expect us to buy that now, do you? It costs \$10,000 in bare-bones form. Spending that kind of money would set us back years against the competition. I expect we'll be able to afford it in a year or two, but right now we wouldn't be able to make competitive bids if we were to buy it."

My name is Esther Gooch. Three months ago, I was employed as an adult education teacher for a consortium of several San Francisco-area schools.

This group of schools has set a goal for me and the other AE teachers: We must teach relevant skills and technologies to the area's adult population. Unfortunately, the recent budget cuts undertaken in California towns and cities have forced the teaching staff to stretch all existing resources. We are asked to teach computing without having adequate software.

When I first began three months ago, I was told by my fellow teachers that the only way we could make an impact would be to teach the skills that sell, such as word processing and spreadsheet development, and to use the most current and popular software. Of course, I agreed. But I pointed out that site licenses for these products are expensive. I told them that single-copy versions of decent, though less popular, software packages are often available free, as freeware.

My fellow teachers thought, however, that we have a moral right—and maybe even an obligation—to make multiple copies of “good” software to distribute to as many educators as might find it useful. Even the administrators turn their heads at the practice. They feel the same way the teachers do: Without copied software, the students would not learn the leading-edge software and would stop coming to our classes. Ultimately, we'd be out of a job.

I have a hard time swallowing the line that the software developers are losing money on potential sales. There's no way we could buy it. Besides, by exposing our students to the software, we're training a large pool of potential future customers.

I think it's my moral duty as an educator to give my students the best possible training with the most up-to-date tools. I'm not alone in this opinion, either. Many civic groups donate software and hardware to these schools. They know the good job we're doing, and they know we couldn't do a proper job without some degree of software copying.

What bothers me, though, is this: What are we teaching our students about the value of copyrights when they know they're using bootlegged copies, and they know we know it?

**CASE WORKSHEET**

(See Chapter 3 for details about how to carry out each step of the analysis.)

I. Find the facts

A. List the relevant facts \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. List the stakeholders \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. Make a defensible ethical decision

A. Isolate the ethical issues (Should someone have done or not done something?)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Examine the legal issues \_\_\_\_\_

C. Consult guidelines  
Corporate policies, codes of conduct \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Golden Rule \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Who benefits? Who is harmed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tests for right and wrong \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Discover the applicable ethical principles

Least harm \_\_\_\_\_

Rights and duties \_\_\_\_\_

Professional responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

Self-interest and utilitarianism \_\_\_\_\_

Consistency and respect \_\_\_\_\_

E. Make a defensible choice \_\_\_\_\_

III. Describe steps to resolve the current situation

A. Options \_\_\_\_\_

B. Recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

C. Defense \_\_\_\_\_

D. Implementation \_\_\_\_\_

E. Short-term corrective measures \_\_\_\_\_

IV. Prepare policies and strategies to prevent recurrence

A. Describe the organizational, political, legal, technological, or societal changes needed \_\_\_\_\_

B. Describe the consequences of your suggested changes \_\_\_\_\_