IT and Ethics:
Guidelines for Professionals

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Robert Gezelter Software Consultant
35 – 20 167th Street, Suite 215
Flushing, New York 11358 – 1731
United States of America

+1 (718) 463 1079
gezelter@rlgsc.com
http://www.rlgsc.com

The Challenge –

The distinction between legal and ethical is often vague. IT also can enable unethical acts on an unprecedented scale.

What this session is not:

- legal advice - I am not an attorney
- absolute wisdom
- the final word

Privacy

- "The right to be left alone"
  - Louis Brandeis

- recommended reading: "The Right to Privacy" Alderman and Kennedy (1995)

Obligations to others

"What you see here, what you hear here,
  when you leave here, let it stay here"
    - Alcoholics Anonymous

- – customers

- – colleagues

- – superiors

Technology can be very invasive

- Lower Merion School District laptop camera case
- web browsing
- electronic mail
- electronic diaries
- repair technicians
- disposal/destruction

Ethics – "Just Say No"

- Do not gossip
- Make sure bounds are proper
- Get instructions from superiors IN WRITING
- Heed your conscience

Medical Data

- Patient privacy

- You do not know what is sensitive; even the mere fact of a visit

- aggregation

Investigations

- germane

- relevant

- character assassination

- cases

    – Consultant on litigation

    – investigation of 3rd party computer

    – information private to consultant unless matches agreed criteria

Information Gathering

- Transactional data
- Can disclose other information
- Can be misconstrued
- Often less than it seems
  - E-Z Pass
  - Cell phone records
  - bankcard transaction records

Information explosion is an ethical challenge

- Much privacy was guaranteed by economic infeasibility
- Connectedness removes this impediment
- Social networking enables lightning fast spread
- privacy over time
  - persistence
  - changing circumstances
  - example: campus newspapers & online

An evolving area –

- Generation Y/Millenials

- long term impact of searh engines

- the "infinite memory world";
  "somewhere out there";
  there is a copy of something which may
  later become embarrassing

Conclusions –

- Be careful; the landscape is evolving
- Think long term consquences
- Consequences can be severe

Questions?

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Session Notes & Materials:
       http://www.rlgsc.com/trentoncomputerfestival/2010/index.html