

Software Engineering Ethics Scenarios *

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The Test

1. I would be more likely to select a solution to a situation that was ethical rather than expedient.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

2. You have just been named project manager for the new system your company wants to create. You have been given a team of veteran workers who are considered to be the most experienced in the company. When the issues of process and methodology arise, the team informs you they have an established way of doing things. You feel you have knowledge of techniques that could be used on your new project to significantly improve quality and productivity. When you suggest changes to the team, they reject them and tell you that they have been doing it this way for years. Not wanting to disrupt ongoing work, you abandon the idea of process improvement and do not raise the issue again.

— I would accept my work environment as it is.

 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

3. After interviewing with a new company that competes with your current one, the new company offers you a job to create a program that your current company is trying to patent. The new company has also offered a large pay increase and signing bonus.

— I would take the job and create the program.

 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

4. You are the lead developer of a module and your boss tells you that the project is slipping. He desperately needs you to finish the module within the next two weeks. You realize that in order to finish on time, you need to skip putting in any annotation on the documents. You have also to use convoluted coding techniques and patch existing software because you don't have time to design a new module from "scratch". You accept the assignment and create a module that is nearly impossible to understand and thus extremely difficult to maintain. Everyone congratulates you for having met your deadline.

*These scenarios are extracted from Berry, D.M. and Berenbach, B., "Ethics Test Results Before and After Ethics Training: A Disturbing Experience," published in the *Proceedings of the IEEE International Conference on Software — Science, Technology & Engineering (SwSTE)*, pp. 70–76, Herzliya, Israel (DOI: 10.1109/SwSTE.2010.16)

— I would agree to create the program that would be ready for the client by the deadline.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

5. You are project manager for the delivery of a control system and you have just been informed by your staff that the earliest possible delivery date is six months later than contracted. You know that if you tell the client that there is any slippage, the next meeting with the client may be contentious and your client might withhold the payment, or worse, cancel the contract. To avoid this consequences, at the next meeting you reassure the client that the project is on schedule.

— When a situation arises that may jeopardize the contract, I would do what it takes to make sure the client is happy and willing to proceed with the agreement made.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

6. You are in charge of a project to build a new program for computers. After the program is put into the market, you find out that the program occasionally causes computers to overheat and catch fire. Your company has decided against recalling the product to fix the problem because of the high cost. The company will protect you against any law suits directed at you and try to settle any suit directed at it.

— I would agree with my company's decision not to recall the product.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

7. You are asked to deliver a simulator that your company has been working on to a Canadian oil and gas company. One feature of the simulator is a 10 fold speed up, but running the simulator locks the computer by using 100% of the CPU's cycles. Your project manager wants the simulator delivered anyway because it meets the terms of the contract and upon delivery, a large milestone payment will be made.

— I would be willing to implement the program so that my company will receive the payment.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

8. You find out your boss has installed frequently used programs without paying any license fee. You know he is notorious for giving bad performance reviews to any subordinates who has disagreed with him, which translates to unchanged pay or low or no pay raise. With your review coming up within the next two weeks, you do not say anything because you do not wish to harm your relationship with your boss.

— In an effort to guarantee a much needed pay raise, I would avoid confronting my boss about the situation.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

9. You are in negotiations with a company asking you to create a transportation system for them. The contract is a multi-million dollar deal that may be the key to your company's survival. One of the client's terms is that the system be 100% reliable. You agree to their terms even though you know making any system 100% reliable is impossible. You feel that after the contract is awarded you can always renegotiate the terms and if it does go to court the requirement would be voided because it is physically impossible to deliver.
- I would agree to the terms of the contract and proceed with the creation of the transportation system.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
10. The CEO of your company has promised a system to a very important client by a certain date. Your boss asks you to create a schedule that will meet the date promised by the CEO. After review, you come to the realization that you have created a schedule that requires your staff to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for the next two months. Hiring new staff is not feasible because it will take them at least two months to learn enough about the system to be useful. Your boss has promised to compensate you and your team after the project is completed.
- Even after knowing what my team's schedule would be like for the next two months, I would agree to accept the project.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
11. As a senior manager, you have been asked to review a draft contract for the delivery of a large hospital medical system. At the present time, you are swamped with other projects that desperately need your attention. As a result, you quickly scan the table of contents, read 10% of the document and ask your subordinates to read over other selected pieces and report whether these pieces are satisfactory. After they have reviewed their parts and have reported that they are all ok, you sign off on the contract.
- I have enough faith in my employees to sign off on the contract without reading the entire document.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
12. You need all of your employees to be in the office the upcoming week to make sure a project milestone is met before the next meeting with the client. That same week one of your employees is scheduled to be on vacation. He had booked a cruise vacation for his family three months in advance. In order to have everything completed, you force him to cancel his vacation, with a promise to reimburse him for the unused tickets and a promise to make up the time at a future date.
- I would pressure my employee to take off so that the project gets finished.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree