

# The Ethics of Software Development Project Management

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**Abstract:**

Much has been written about the management of software development projects and no doubt much will be written in the future. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether project management practise effectively caters for the ethical issues surrounding the software development process. To facilitate the discussion Structured Project Management (SPM) methodology is used to illustrate the ethical strengths and weaknesses of project management in a technical sphere.

Eight ethical principals for the computer professional are derived. These principles are then mapped onto the methodological framework of SPM thereby highlighting the areas of ethical concern. Two of the steps within SPM are examined in detail to demonstrate how the application of the relevant ethical principles help to ensure ethical behaviour.

Within a software development project there are numerous activities and decisions to be made and most of these will have an ethical dimension. It is impractical to consider each minute issue in great detail and still hope to achieve the overall project goal. The focus must be on the key issues which are likely to influence the success of the project. There are two of these primary ethical hotspots in project management, the defining of the scope of consideration and the information dissemination to the client. Both are considered in detail in the paper.

By using ethical principles and the identification of ethical hotspots it is possible to ensure that the key ethical issues are properly addressed. Quite simply, project management should be guided by a sense of justice, a sense of equal distributions of benefits and burdens and a sense of equal opportunity. In this way software development project management will become ethically aligned.

Please send your views on ethical and social responsibility issues and cases of ethical dilemmas to:

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