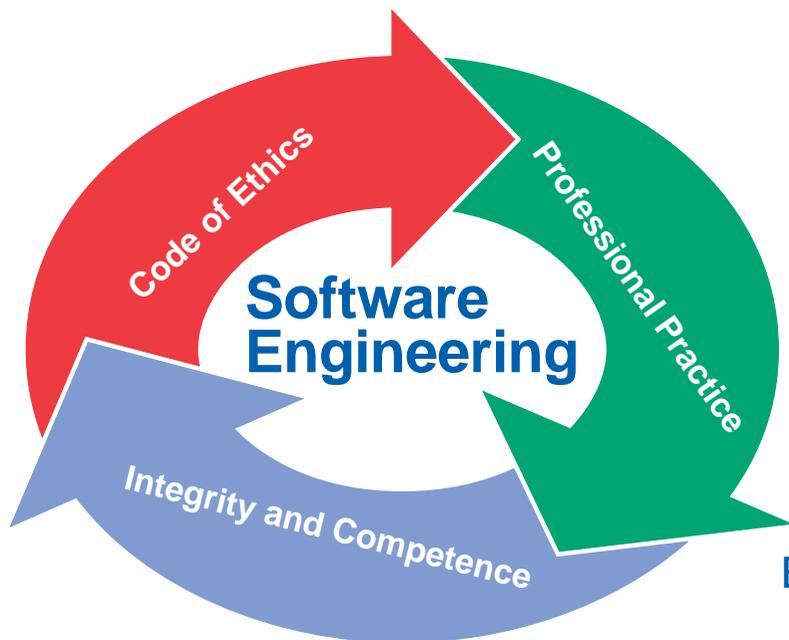


Software Engineering's Code of Ethics and Professional Practice

The Code created by Software Engineers for Software Engineers



The **PUBLIC** is primary

A **SERVICE** to others

Accept your

OBLIGATIONS
to society

Be a **PROFESSIONAL**
integrity and competence
consider effects on others

Software engineers shall participate in lifelong learning regarding the practice of their profession and shall promote an ethical approach to it

Approved by:



Association for Computing Machinery



IEEE Computer Society

Code available at

<http://www.acm.org/serving/se/code.htm>

and in printable PDF format at

<http://computer.org/computer/code-of-ethics.pdf>

Software Engineering's Code of Ethics

Software Engineering now has its own code of ethics. The Code was adopted as the standard for practicing and teaching Software Engineering by both the ACM and the IEEE Computer Society in 1998.

Relevance and Importance of the Code

This Code educates and inspires Software Engineers, and educates the public about the responsibilities that are important to and accepted by the profession. This Code instructs practitioners about the standards that society expects them to meet, and what their peers strive for and expect of each other. The Code offers practical advice about issues that matter to professionals and their clients and it serves to inform policymakers about ethical constraints imposed on software engineers.

Content of the Code

The Code is structured around eight themes: Public, Client and Employer, Product, Judgment, Management, Profession, Colleagues, and Self. The ethical principles written on these themes embody the ethical obligations of all the professional relationships entered into by a Software Engineer. The Code recognizes that the primary ethical responsibility is to the public. The Code concerns itself with several aspects of Software Engineering including management, development, maintenance and education.

Consensus on Ethical Standards

In successive reviews, the Code received overwhelming support both for its structure and its content. In November 1997 the Code was presented in *Communications of the ACM* and *Computer* with a turn-around ballot to encourage comments from the memberships of both societies. Some modifications were made and circulated for additional comment. The Code was then submitted to the IEEE formal technical review process under the leadership of Leonard Tripp. It successfully passed this rigorous process and was unanimously adopted by the ACM Council and the Computer Society Board of Governors. The Code has subsequently been adopted by several major companies, and its principles have been incorporated into their standards of practice.

International Perspective

The Code was developed by participants drawn from all the continents of the world. There were contributions from members of the professional societies of several countries. The participation of this broad-based group has led to a code which represents an international agreement that assists in unifying the profession. This is a landmark in software engineering.

Further Work

Both societies are supporting the professionalism of Software Engineering by establishing the Software Engineering Professional Ethics Project. The focus of this project will be to make the Code an effective practical instrument. Those interested in participating in this project and companies interested in adopting the Code or incorporating it into their standards of practice should contact Don Gotterbarn (sepep@etsu.edu).