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Perceptions on Software Piracy

“More Awareness,
More Information.”

Research Question: How do recent Iowa State Aerospace Engineering graduates understand and act with respect to intellectual property rights, particularly those regarding software, in a globalized world?

“The things they teach us
in school don’t
necessarily match what
we need.”

Abstract

Iowa State University is creating the next generation of software gurus. Those best and brightest will be creating life-changing software and it's important that their intellectual property is protected on a global scale. As intellectual property rights stand, the laws are often not respected or not in place. The world is going to be increasingly connected; thus, our world needs to protect developers' work and desire to innovate. McGregor's X and Y theory will guide the analysis of data. Utilizing interviews to produce qualitative data, this project will look at the thoughts and perceptions of intellectual property rights of recent Iowa State Aerospace Engineering grads.

Introduction

Globalization is a phenomenon that is making it easier and more likely for us to work with people from other countries. It also subjects people to countries that do not have the same laws regarding IPR as the United States. Aside from a difference in what protections the law provides to creators of IPR, there can be differences in attitudes regarding the protections of these rights; this respect is an issue even within the United States. How does the generation of engineers entering the workforce view the issues associated with software piracy? My hypothesis for the study is that the answers given in the interview will place individuals and others into either the McGregor X or McGregor Y category.

Findings

Global Thoughts:

- 2 of 5 had a basic working knowledge of global IPR
- 4 of 4 indicated that they work for a global organization
- 4 of 5 indicated having safety concerns regarding piracy of “Powerful Software” by others

Personal Piracy:

- 3 of 5 have pirated software in the past
- 4 of 5 indicated that they had no desire to pirate software now or in the future
- 2 of 5 cited personal morals for avoiding piracy
- 3 of 5 cited possible punishment as deterrent to piracy
- 3 of 5 stated they had no need for any software they don't already own
- 2 of 5 stated that any software worth having is worth paying for

Preparedness:

- 1 in 5 felt Iowa State had prepared them for the real world
- 3 in 5 believed the Aerospace Department should teach the basics on the topic
- 1 in 5 indicated that industry had taught him all that he needed to know

Discussion

- As younger individuals, we are more associated with McGregor X theory
- Mature individuals connect more with McGregor Y theory
- Individuals are likely to expect others to fall under McGregor X theory

Recommendations

- Incorporate basic IPR information into Aerospace courses
- Encourage students to take a basic law course, such as ConE 380: Engineering Law
- Corporations should ensure that employees have access to trainings on IPR

Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews
- Purposeful sample of five recent AerE graduates
- All sampled graduated within the past year

Sample Demographics

Gender: Two Female, Two Male

Employment Status: 4 Full-Time, 1 Unemployed

Industry Experience: 4 months – 2 years

Work IP Production: 3 Create IP, 0 Produce Software

Theoretical Framework

McGregor X:^[1]

People are not essentially good

People will only look out for their own best interests

McGregor Y:^[1]

People are essentially good

People will go above and beyond to do the right thing

Legend

AerE – Aerospace Engineering

IP – Intellectual Property

IPR – Intellectual Property Rights

Sources:

[1] Northouse, P. G. (2012). Recognizing Your Philosophy and Style of Leadership. In *Introduction to Leadership Concepts and Practice* (pp. 47-62). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.