TEAM PROJECT WEBQUEST
THE ETHICS OF E-COMMERCE

Introduction

In the wake of the Enron scandal and the dot com bust, ethical business practices have become increasingly critical for the success of a company, and the well being of its employees, and the loyalty of its customers.

E-Commerce companies are faced with ethical dilemmas beyond those of traditional businesses. E-commerce is the beginning of a global transformation to a new business model. In this new environment, the Web has become the primary point of contact with customers, and their expectations are changing. Employees may be located in different parts of the world; they may telecommute, and may never establish camaraderie typically developed in a traditional business. Managers must develop new organizational skills while leading the business into uncharted territory. Along with tremendous new opportunities, the online world creates fresh ethical quandaries that must be addressed by every business with a home on the Web.

The Question

What should be included in an ethical code of conduct designed for an e-commerce company?

Task

Your task in this WebQuest is to explore the legal and ethical concepts and realities of online businesses, and reach a consensus on an ethical code of conduct for an e-commerce company. This is a small group project where each student will choose a role to play. Through group discussion and individual research, your group will collaborate on a presentation to be delivered to the class.

Objectives:

1. Your instructor will assign you to a team of 3-6 students.
2. Each student will choose a WebQuest role to play.
3. Use discussion boards, face-to-face meetings, or email to communicate with each other throughout the project.
4. Collaborate to create a presentation to the class describing the results of your team’s research.
5. Your presentation should define the ethical code of conduct for an e-commerce company. Each student will become an expert in one of the following roles:
   a. Manager
   b. Employee
   c. Customer
6. Your presentation must include supporting resources.
7. Each team member must complete a self-assessment.
8. Each team member must complete a team assessment.

Process and the Resources

During the course of the project, you will be meeting with your team often. These meetings, depending
on how the team conducts itself, may be accomplished via email, discussion boards, teleconferencing or face-to-face meetings. There are no hard and fast rules. Each team will need to discover what works best for them.

**Phase 1: Assigning Specialized Roles**

To maximize productivity and minimize frustration, it is helpful to assign specialized roles for your team. To begin this WebQuest, initiate a meeting of your group and assign these specialized roles.

**Specialized Roles**

These roles are in addition to the normal team roles that each person plays. They should be assigned for each meeting or discussion session. It is important that these roles be rotated among team members. Note: An assigned leader is not one of the specialized roles. Teams do need effective leadership, but they do not need a leader. It is best if the leaders develop as a result of the team process and change over time.

**Facilitator:** The responsibilities of the facilitator are to schedule the meeting and to manage the meeting.

**Recorder:** The responsibilities of the recorder are to make sure that the team stays within agreed upon time frames and to keep a record of the meeting.

**Spokesperson:** It is the responsibility of the spokesperson to clearly represent the team results to the instructor and the class and to act as the team’s liaison with the instructor.

**Phase 2: The Big Picture**

Together, your team will gather to investigate the topic of ethics in business. What are the major issues? Before tackling the subject from the perspective of your role, the entire team should meet to discuss the ethical issues affecting business in general. Use the Web links below to answer the basic question. Be creative, insightful, and curious as you explore the Web for answers. Begin with these resources:

- Better Business Bureau Online Program  

- Online Business Ethics Association  
  [http://www.obea.biz/](http://www.obea.biz/)

- Creating a Code of Ethics for Your Organization  
  [http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/](http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/)

**Phase 3: Digging Deeper**

Each team member will now assume the role of manager, employee, or consumer. They will become a spokesperson for all people who perform those functions in daily life. What are the ethical issues most important to you as a stakeholder in an e-commerce company?

Read through the files provided for your specific role. If you print out the files, underline the passages that you feel are the most important. If you look at the files on the computer, copy sections you feel are
important by dragging the mouse across the passage and copying / pasting it into a word processor
document or other writing software.

Note: Remember to write down or copy/paste the URL of the file you take the passage from so that you
can quickly go back to it if you need to access it quickly if needed to support your findings.

Be prepared to articulate what you've learned into one main opinion. Answer the WebQuest based on
what you have learned from the links provided for your role.

WebQuest Roles

Manager: The student or students choosing the role of manager will wrestle with some very
tough questions. Just what limits should there be on how online businesses use the
information they gather about their customers? If a company is considering using software
to monitor its employees' computer use, is it a legitimate way to ensure productivity or a
violation of employees' privacy?

Links for managers:

- A Question of Ethics
  http://www.informationweek.com/825/ethics.htm

- Business Ethics for IT Managers – What You Can Do
  http://www.informationweek.com/825/ethics_side.htm

- Ethics, E-Commerce, and the Future of the Past

Employee: The student or students choosing the role of employee in an e-commerce
company will research the types of ethical dilemmas encountered in the workplace. What
are the important aspects of an ethical code of conduct? How can companies rebuild the
trust they lost in the wake of the latest scandals? The long list of egregious legal and ethical
violations is causing even the most loyal corporate employees to wonder: Who can we
trust?

Links for employees:

- Online Ethics Center: IEEE Code of Ethics
  http://onlineethics.org/codes/empemp.html

- Ethics in the Workplace

- All You Have is Your Integrity
  http://humanresources.about.com/library/weekly/aa100202a.htm

Consumer: The student or students choosing the role of consumer will research the
expectations of consumers when dealing with e-commerce companies. IBM conducted a
multi-national privacy survey that found 78 percent of U.S. consumers say they have
decided against an online purchase because of concern about how their personal data might
be used. Jupiter Communications found that 58 percent worry about a company selling their personal information to a third party. If businesses adopt the W3C Consortium’s set of Internet-wide privacy standards, would consumers be more inclined to participate in online purchasing? *Links for the consumer:*

- Consumer Protection from the FTC: E-Commerce & the Internet

- Consumer Web Watch

- Econsumer.gov

- World Wide Web Consortium
  [http://www.w3.org/](http://www.w3.org/)

**Phase 4: Debate, Discuss, and Reach Consensus**

Now you should have a team meeting. Each student will provide a list of suggestions for developing an ethical code of conduct based on the needs they have found when researching their role. Then, work as a group to create consensus for developing a code of ethics. Refer to *Creating a Code of Ethics for Your Organization* by Chris MacDonald, PhD ([http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/](http://www.ethicsweb.ca/codes/)) for guidance. Everyone should be prepared to contribute to the discussion.

Decide as a group how the team will collaborate to create the final presentation to the class. At the end of the meeting, make of list of steps that must be done to have the presentation ready by the due date.

**Phase 5: The Presentation**

The team can choose any medium to deliver their team presentation. It may be presented as a Web site, a PowerPoint presentation, a paper, or a narrative story.

The presentation must define and describe the following:

b. Rationale from a management perspective.
c. Rationale from an employee perspective.
d. Rationale from a consumer perspective.

Be sure to include appropriate references to the resources you have used.

**Assessment and Evaluation**

- **Self-assessment:** Each team member assesses her or his own behavior over the duration of the WebQuest by completing the WebQuest Rubric. This will be done for the team member’s own use in assessing his or her team skills. This assessment will provide a basis for individual grading for the WebQuest project and will be handed in to the instructor at the end of the term by the individual team member.
- **Team assessment:** Each team member will assess the success of their team through the completion of the WebQuest Rubric. This will provide the basis for a team discussion about its performance and will be handed in to the instructor at the end of the term by the team spokesperson.
- **Evaluation:** The instructor will use the WebQuest Rubric to evaluate the team’s successful completion of the project, the team process, and the quality of the final presentation.
- **WebQuest Rubric:** Use the following rubric for the self-assessment, the team assessment, and the instructor’s evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Beginning 1 point</th>
<th>Developing 2 points</th>
<th>Proficient 3 points</th>
<th>Exemplary 4 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Effort</strong></td>
<td>Very little effort or understanding of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Evidence of effort, but lacking in preparation and understanding.</td>
<td>Clear learning on the topic has occurred. Ability to discuss topic effectively.</td>
<td>A sound understanding of the topic is exhibited with enthusiasm and creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Effort</strong></td>
<td>Team members did not function as a group when given the opportunity. There was only individual work with no evidence of collaboration.</td>
<td>Team members had some major problems working as a group. There was little collaboration and teamwork evident.</td>
<td>The team members mostly worked well together, with few problems. There could have been improvement in the level of teamwork that was utilized.</td>
<td>The team worked as a cohesive unit. There was mature collaboration, compromise, and discussion evident all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Product</strong></td>
<td>The final presentation had major grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. It seemed rushed and incomplete.</td>
<td>The final presentation had a significant number of grammatical, spelling, or formatting errors, but is complete.</td>
<td>The final presentation is a carefully developed product with few grammatical, spelling, or formatting errors.</td>
<td>The presentation developed and creatively interest, it is interesting, polished, and error free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructor Feedback</strong></td>
<td>Little or no attempt was made to receive feedback from the instructor.</td>
<td>Feedback was received, but none of the suggestions were incorporated into the presentation.</td>
<td>Feedback was received and the suggestions were incorporated into the presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>0 points No assessments were completed and handed in to the instructor.</td>
<td>1 point One assessment was completed and handed in to the instructor.</td>
<td>2 points All assessments were completed and handed in to the instructor.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>