



# Small Business Ethics



## The Democratization Of Corporate Ethics

(NAPSA)—Is the ethics barometer different for large, public companies versus small private firms? The answer is “no.” To illustrate the point, here’s a typical scenario of unethical behavior rampant across corporate America:

After proven to have unlicensed copies of software installed on its computers, a 20-person civil engineering firm settled with the software developer for \$100,000, an amount that included penalties plus new software licenses to correct its shortages.

The majority of software piracy involves civil infringement perpetrated by small and medium-sized businesses. According to copyright laws, software piracy is a crime no different from shoplifting software from store shelves. Purchasers of software merely own the right to use the software, which is typically limited to a single copy per PC.

Perhaps with so much media attention focused on the ethical demise of large corporations, the smaller firms think they can fly under the radar. Maybe they believe they won’t be caught or they won’t be subject to the same level of scrutiny. The “democratization” of corporate ethics means that all companies, regardless of size, are being made to adhere to the same ethical standards.

Ignorance is no excuse, especially in smaller firms where it is more difficult for employees to copy software without management’s knowledge. Many of these smaller companies are project-driven and therefore copy software for short periods to accommodate consultants. Management may try to justify or even endorse the practice by claiming that copying software is a victimless crime, that it is necessary for business survival, or that “no one will ever know.” However, smaller budgets



**Pirating software is a common, but still unethical and illegal, business practice.**

and difficult economic times do not justify illegal behavior.

Small companies can be damaged even more than large companies by bad publicity from shoddy ethics. They often do not have the legal or public relations resources to get out of hot water and rebuild their image. With competition so great, one misstep is all that is needed to go under in the business world.

According to Sandy Boulton, director of Piracy Prevention at Autodesk, Inc., the world’s leading design software and digital content company, “Approximately 80 percent of Autodesk’s piracy losses are attributable to corporate copying by people who could afford to pay for the software but have poor software management policies or fail to budget for additional software resources. To address these challenges, we support our customers with software management tools and purchase options such as subscription-based licensing that offers simplified software management and easy budgeting.”

To report suspected illegal use of Autodesk software, people can call 1-800-NO-COPIES or visit [www.autodesk.com/piracy](http://www.autodesk.com/piracy).