

Top 10 Steps To Ethical Software Practices In Business

(NAPSA)—Corporate America is trying to raise the bar on its standards of conduct and moral judgment. Unfortunately, the honor system is not enough and companies need to formalize their ethics guidelines and systems—particularly as it relates to software license compliance. Here are 10 simple steps to start creating ethical software practices in business.

1. Institute a Company Policy Regarding the Use of Software—Communicate the policy clearly and consistently to advise leaders and employees to adhere to software license agreements. Commit to supplying original software to meet the needs of all your users.

2. Create a Software Code of Ethics—Ask employees to sign a letter acknowledging that the company forbids illegal software duplication. This can be part of a new employee orientation packet.

3. Develop a Support Structure—Create mechanisms to support the Code of Ethics such as an ombudsperson, an ethics committee, a suggestion box, or an employee “Help Line.” Employees need to feel safe reporting software copyright infringements to management without fear of negative repercussions or job loss.

4. Establish Realistic Budgets for Hardware and Software—Do not take financial shortcuts to pay for software. Make sure to plan for software purchases as you do for hardware.

5. Anticipate and Fulfill User Needs—Survey your employees once or twice annually to determine their software needs. To deter users from unauthorized copying, make sure bureaucracy does not impede timely delivery of the software.

6. Perform Software Self-audits—Inspect software in use to ensure it was acquired legitimately and is accounted for in your software register.

7. Lead by Example—Senior management needs to act ethically in all business endeavors and reinforce the topic of proper software practices by referencing it in company meetings.



Following the software code of ethics helps keep companies on the road to success.

8. Educate—Continue to provide education on the company's software policy to employees to help clarify any ambiguity on how to deal with particular situations and how to make sound decisions. Explain the negative effects of illegal software duplication including damage to the company's reputation, legal expenses, and software acquisition fees, as well as harm to the economy through lost jobs, lost tax revenues, and less innovation by software developers.

9. Reward / Punish Behavior—Employees that demonstrate proper software practices should be acknowledged and rewarded. Likewise, it is important for management to show employees that illegal software duplication or Internet downloading will not be tolerated.

10. Revise Policies—Policies should be reviewed regularly and revised to clarify existing points and to address new issues, which have become part of the work environment.

Employees who feel good about themselves and their work environment are happier and more productive. If they have clear guidelines for proper software policies and a management and support system to reinforce these policies, the company will benefit. Samples of the above recommended materials can be found by visiting software company Autodesk, Inc. on the Web and downloading its Piracy Prevention Toolkit at www.autodesk.com/piracy.