

E-BUSINESS - CODE OF ETHICS AND SECURITY STRATEGY

LUMINIȚA ȘERBĂNESCU

UNIVERSITY OF PITEȘTI, PITEȘTI, STRADA NEGRU-VODĂ, BL.D3, SC. A, AP.1,
luminitaserb@yahoo.com

Abstract:

E-business has many definitions, but it is essentially the use of networks and information technology to market, buy, sell and deliver products and services worldwide. Values such as veracity, authenticity and respect for other persons and for different cultural sensibilities shall be of great importance. These shall be translated into the information provided and into the way products on the net and in the real world are targeted towards potential customers.

The development of ethics in e-business is necessary but will require time. It will not be merely the result of intellectual lucubration, rather it will emerge from studying and reflecting on many real cases. Its development will provide an important educational element which will help net users to become more and more conscious..

Key words: *ethic, security, e-business, technology, code*

JEL classification: *M13, M15*

INTRODUCTION

The essential characteristic of the informational society consists of the integrated, massive and generalized use of information and communication processing means in all fields of economic and social life, from material production to service providing, administration, to artistic activities and civil services.

The concept of informational society is one that is generally accepted nowadays. Starting from Moore's synthesis[3], we can underline four aspects:

- a) information is a resource available to organizations and individuals, becoming the main source of a company's or a person's wellbeing;
- b) information is found at the basis of new, rapidly developing, sectors of the economy;
- c) information may be used and shared without being depleted;
- d) the development of information technology revolutionizes fundamental activities in human society: business, education, company management, government.

E-Business is in full swing, representing one of the key factors in ensuring competitiveness on the global market. E-Business implies reengineering the company's processes, due to important changes in the roles of supplier and customer.

Doing business on the Internet is faster and unfolds at relatively low costs – irresistible reasons for companies to consider business on the Internet valid alternatives for their normal operations. The Internet economy has grown faster than was initially predicted a few years ago. What started as an alternative channel for marketing quickly turned into a complex economic system consisting of:

- diverse communications and communication networks at low prices, which use Internet technologies and standards;
- applications and human capital that allow running business through this network infrastructure;
- interlinked electronic markets that operate using the existing network and applications infrastructure;

- producers and intermediaries that supply a large variety of products and services in order to facilitate efficiency and liquidity;
- a legal framework, still incomplete, for doing electronic business.

E-BUSINESS SECURITY

Using the Internet brings numerous benefits and allows the gain of competitive advantages. The Internet allows companies to broaden their businesses in ways that were impossible before. This is a new world of business, one filled with possibilities, elaborated by the development of distributed electronic media, allowing companies to benefit from fast communications, advanced methods of collecting data, chains of electronic suppliers and other advantages of this new era of information processing. These solutions have enhanced – and will continue to enhance – the efficiency with which companies operate as well as their financial results – but, at the same time, they have increased the risk of informatics insecurity.

The information security technologies are not only aimed towards preventing disasters, but they also represent means of attaining business objectives. The information security technologies, especially when the information is distributed by computer networks, are absolutely necessary in order to ensure success, and, subsequently, they must be included in the company's strategic thinking process. Informatics security must be seen as an essential process in fulfilling the needs of partners and clients and not as something that "can be added". On the other hand, companies must ensure their market and public relations departments are skilled in the principles of information security, in order to be able to effectively communicate to the public the measures which are being taken to protect clients' money and intimacy.

Effective IT security management is based on a comprehensive and integrated strategy[5] that includes three major components:

1. Identity and access management (IAM) - create and manage user identities, their accounts and access entitlements, and enforce access policies across the environment.
2. Security information management (SIM) - aggregate, filter and provide reports and analysis of all security-related events within the environment.
3. Integrated threat management (ITM) - identify and combat electronic threats such as viruses, spyware, spam, etc.

The information security techniques of an economic nature have certain components and attributes which must be taken into consideration when the potential risk is being analyzed. Broadly speaking, these can be classified into four categories:

1. Confidentiality represents the protection of the information within the system so that unauthorized personnel cannot access it. It refers to controlling the right to read information. Almost every organization holds information that, if stolen or released, may have a significant impact on its competitive advantage, its market value, or its income. In addition, a company can be held responsible for releasing private information. The identification and authentication of users are crucial aspects of confidentiality. For certain types of information, confidentiality is a very important attribute. Examples include: data obtained from research, medical and insurance records, new product specifications and corporate investment strategies. In some places, there may exist a legal obligation towards protecting individual intimacy. This is true for banks and credit companies, hospitals, medical testing laboratories, psychological practices and tax collecting agencies.

2. **Integrity** represents the protection of information against unauthorized, accidental or on purpose, modifications. It refers to the need to ensure that the information and the programs are modified in a specific and authorized manner and that the information is original, unaltered or deleted in transit. Similarly to confidentiality, the identification and authentication of users are key elements of an information integrity policy. Integrity is important especially for the critical safety and the financial data used in activities such as electronic fund transfers, air traffic control and financial accounting.

3. **Availability** refers to ensuring that the computer systems are accessible to authorized users when and where they need them and under the required form (the condition that the information stored electronically is where it should be, when it should be and under the necessary form [7]). The importance that each of these requirements has within the operations of a company varies from one industry to another and from one company to another. Availability is often the most important attribute in service-oriented businesses that depend on information (airline reservations and online bookkeeping systems). The availability of the network is important for any person whose business or education depend on network connections. When a certain user cannot access the network or a specific service provided on the network, he is experimenting a denial of service.

The objective of informational security technology consists of “protecting the interest of those who rely on information and on the communications delivering that information against the damages that may result from the inability to ensure information availability, confidentiality and integrity”.

4. **Non-rejection** is the characteristic of the transactions in which both parties are attested, so as none of the involved parties may complain against the participation or the details of the actions or decisions taken during the participation [2].

By following the problems which information security technology must solve, we can define a series of ethics principles characteristic of information technology professionals:

- a). As regards the confidentiality, we can conclude the following:
 - Each user has an ID assigned. No one else can use this ID without the user’s permission;
 - All files belong to someone. They are private and confidential until their author decides to make them accessible to other users;
 - Network traffic should be considered private.
 - Records relating to the use of computing and information resources are confidential;
 - Messages sent to other users must always be signed.
- b). From a resource point of view, we may state the following:
 - Nobody can willingly act towards the degradation of the performance of the information system or act against the interface to other users;
 - The installation of physical equipment is done only by the specialized department;
 - Loopholes in computer security systems or knowledge of a special password should not be used to alter computer systems, obtain extra resources, or take resources from another person.
 - Computing and information resources are community resources. Theft, mutilation, and abuse of these resources violates the nature and spirit of community and intellectual inquiry.
- c). For the system administrator, we define the following principles:

- If a security problem has been identified in the system, it must be reported immediately to the system administrator and must not be used for personal purposes or to disturb the work of others;

- The distribution of programs and databases must be accompanied by copyright laws and a license;

- Sometimes, IT personnel may access some files belonging to other users only when this is important for solving security issues.

This code of ethics lays down the general guidelines for the use of computing and information resources. Failure to observe the code may lead to disciplinary action.

THE ETHICS CODE IN E-BUSINESS

Ethics represents the ensemble of moral principles and behavioral codes that regulate inter-human relationships as well as relations between authorities, public institutions and organizations, representing one of the essential reasons establishing man's personal and/or managerial decisions.

Ethics is considered a science that teaches humans how to behave in the workplace, in society and with family.

The concept of applied ethics defines the analysis of concrete situations from a fair and correct point of view, in order to make a decision. Being ethical does not represent an obligation, ethics being a rational form of behavior which refers to honoring values and acting in the best interest of you and others, according to certain moral principles [4]. The ethics principles that are valid in any business environment apply to Internet business as well.

Computer ethics today is rapidly evolving into a broader and even more important field, which might reasonably be called "global information ethics". Global networks like the Internet and especially the world-wide-web are connecting people all over the earth. Technology has advanced in such way that it has become impossible to tell if a website belongs to a serious company or to kids playing business. How do we manage to prove, online, that we are part of the good guys? For this, we have designed an e-Business ethics code, as follows:

a). The "About Us" page must demonstrate seriousness, professionalism and ethics [1]. I believe that the respective page should be displayed as follows:

- Curriculum Vitae or a short paragraph detailing the managers' or founders'/owners' and even a few words on their personalities;

- Photographs of the management or sales team;

- Photographs of the company headquarters;

- Elaborate contact details: company address, phone numbers, fax;

- Data about the company: the Trade Registry number, and any other information that can be made public about the respective company (for example, in the case of corporations that are obligated to make their sales figures and other information public, these reports can be displayed on the website);

- E-mails belonging to the company's website, and not to public domains, such as Hotmail or Yahoo (e.g.: luminita@companyname.ro, not luminita@yahoo.com);

- A brief company history;

- Mission Statement – a statement of the company's mission, the purpose of its existence, its organization etc.

All these will prove to a potential client that he is interacting with a serious, stable company. Transparency is the sign of seriousness.

b). Regarding e-mail addresses we must the following principles into consideration:

- Respecting other people's e-mail addresses: Do not give out others' e-mail addresses without first obtaining permission to do so - this would constitute a breach of trust and an invasion of privacy.

- Collecting e-mail addresses for "spam" or "bulk" mail purposes: Do not collect other people's e-mail addresses you come across for such purposes. You will have attained the exact opposite of what you aimed for. You and your company will be disliked and ruled out. If you do bulk-mail anyhow, have the courtesy to give a genuine return e-mail address to which the recipient may write to ask to be removed from your list. No one wants unknown intruders!

- Properly identify yourself and your business: When establishing a first contact with a person or company, identify yourself and your company, giving full name, title or occupation, address and genuine e-mail address. It would be improper to present yourself with a cloaked e-mail identity such as a "yahoo" or "hotmail" address unless you can explain the reason for it (being on travel or using someone else's computer).

- Addressing others: When sending an e-mail to someone for the first time, you must also address that person formally, as is done in all business communication. Write the person's full name, title or position, company name and address, followed by a formal greeting (Dear Sir/Madam or Dear Mr./Ms...). It would be a good idea to add that person's phone and fax numbers under the address to enable the recipient to correct us if necessary.

c). Asking for information. When you ask someone for information, remember that you are imposing on that person's time, attention, and expertise[4]. The least courtesy is for you to explain who you are exactly and why you need this information.

- Thanking people who answer you: Every response you receive, whether satisfying or not, deserves a courteous return "thank you" note to the sender. When thanking, remember to quote the subject at hand so the other party will remember who you are (e.g. "thank you for responding to my query regarding your services"). People who use the net are extremely busy managing their business and communications with a multitude of people and companies. They may wonder who you are if you just send a simple thank you. Do not forget to write your full name, company name, address, and URL (web page address) in your signature; this will ensure your being included in "the good books" of the person or company you are thanking (good public relations and marketing tactic).

- If you want something, offer something in return: If you ask of others, you should be ready to give. What you give should be of value. You can offer return assistance, or mention a resourceful web site you know, or invite that person to visit your web site (which should offer value and benefit to visitors).

- Respect proprietary rights: When you find on someone else's site information you wish to have at hand, you can usually download it, save it and print it out. However, if you want to use it, you must respect proprietary rights. The creator or author invested all he/she has to come up with this creation. It has been posted there for informational purposes - not for others to use as their own. Sometimes authors clearly write that you may print out, photocopy, and use the material even professionally - however they do ask that whoever does so will keep the name and address of the author intact. You should respect copyright.

- Behave courteously and professionally: When you ask someone for information, use the usual courteous language, such as "please" "I would appreciate" and thank the giver for his/her time and attention. Some people tend to adopt

unacceptable dictating tones such as "send me" "give me" etc. This gives rise to immediate dislike and disrespect.

- If you ask for assistance, show that you did some hard work yourself before turning for assistance: Do not fall into the trap of thinking everyone there on the net who appears so courteous, ready and eager to offer advice or give assistance is ready to do work you should be doing yourself. Do not be misled by the thought that you can obtain free professional work through the net. If you ask for assistance, expect guidance, not unpaid work by others. Demonstrate that you yourself have invested serious effort towards your goal but find that you need advice from others.

- Newcomers: If you are a newcomer to the net, do not be ashamed to admit it. Many people on the net like to act as mentors. It is up to you not to abuse their kindness, but treat them with courtesy and respect their time.

- Free on line courses or working tools: Some sites, such as government or association sites, offer free courses or working tools they allow you to download and use, even professionally (i.e. for profit). If you download or use such material, why not extend a word of appreciation to the givers and creators of this material? Send a letter of appreciation for their material and say that you find it useful in your line of work or business. This will not only be appreciated by the people you write to and put you and your company in good standing with them, but may lead them to copy you on further material or invite you to participate in an on-line live chat forum on the subject. You will find yourself placed on the map of that particular industry or occupation!

d). Bulletin Board and Chat Forums - the heart of networking on the net. For these communication tools there already exists a series of rules that must be observed. Using these communication instruments in e-Business imposes the elaboration of an "honor code" that must be observed by all visitors and looks as follows:

- Avoid using jargon. If you love using abbreviations, such as P.R., EEO, ROI, follow up each abbreviation with the complete words, e.g.: public relations, equal employment opportunity, return on investment. What you say has to be totally and clearly understandable to any viewer.

- Answer questions others have posted only if you have something of value to respond. Do not respond with a short "contact me" (the other viewers want to see what it is you can counsel that person - you should at least give a guideline response). Do not jump at every enquirer to push for your services without even bothering to offer some intelligent response to the question.

- This is no place for foul language. Respect yourself and respect others.

- Do not use bulletin boards and chat forums for blatant advertising purposes. They are intended for networking and a healthy exchange of ideas. If all everyone does is push for his/her services, we shall find ourselves in the Tower of Babel with no one listening to or understanding the other.

- Do not destroy the effectiveness of these forums. Do not go in surreptitiously to collect e-mail addresses for bulk-mail purposes. If you do so you may cause everyone to assume an "anonymous" identity with no address.

- Help maintain a higher level of communication. If someone makes a contribution of value, say so, give a compliment, even to your peers. Everyone needs to be rewarded with acknowledgment. Not only will you help in encouraging positive and useful contributions, but you yourself will earn respect and attention. Such behaviour also leads to unexpected friendships.

- "Anonymous" postings: Some people list themselves as "anonymous" when participating in chat forums or bulletin boards. They have their own reasons for keeping their identity and their company's identity anonymous. You can also be "anonymous". However, do not follow the example of some of the negative "anonymous" people -

those who remain anonymous in order to treat others with cynicism or disrespect. If someone likes what you say, wants to pursue the relationship, or even offer you a work or business opportunity that person has no way to contact you. It is best not to be "anonymous" unless you have serious reasons for being so.

e). Business opportunities arising from participating in bulletin boards and chat forums:

- The organizers usually post guidelines and explain the purpose of such boards or forums (networking, exchange of ideas, etc.). Stick to the stated guidelines and give meaningful contributions. Before you know it, business opportunities will open up - either directly from among the active participants or from silent viewers and observers.

- Some heads of companies read these forums to discover just the right person or business they are looking for. If your proper identity (genuine e-mail address, type of occupation, and possibly name of company) appear with your posting, they will contact you directly explaining that they liked your responses or approach and would like to know you better. A business rapport will be established. Quite often they will reveal what services they need and negotiations can begin.

- When you offer valuable advice to an enquirer, in most cases, the enquirer will write to you directly thanking you, saying how your advice has helped/him her achieve the desired goal. Even if this does not generate immediate business for you, it will in the long run. You will be kept in mind for future business opportunities and will earn word-of-mouth advertising through the enquirer. Such a direct contact will enable you to better explain your services or the products you offer, which may indeed lead to business.

f). Professional attitude. It is advisable to adhere to basic business rules and etiquette:

- Do not try to "grab" or pounce upon a business opportunity
 - If what is required by the potential client does not fall within your area of expertise, refer the enquirer to a peer or other source specializing in that particular area.
 - Treat your peers with the respect and consideration you extend to your customers. Compliment them for their achievement or positive contribution.
 - Behave with integrity at all times. Make sure that what you offer is for your client's best interest.
 - Maintain good, mutually respectful relations with peers and the public at large.
 - Speak well of your peers and clients - it will repay itself tenfold.
 - Be truthful. Do not pretend to be what you are not. If you need advice, consult with your peers; they will appreciate it and you will receive the best advice available.
- Professionals on the web seem to communicate and cooperate more than in real life - the spell of the web has created a new universe with a new way of doing things. With technological advances, it became almost impossible to hide behind an elegant bold front.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethics can have two possible emphases: on judgments or on agents. A judgment emphasis in ethics results in judgments of the behavior or character of others. An agent emphasis in ethics provides guidance for an individual trying to decide what to do. Ethical solutions must be based on higher level principles, because, in the end, this is the only way we can deal ethically and consistently with the rapidly changing environment presented to us by IT.

Issues about privacy, security, piracy, and ownership take on new aspects when applied to new IT applications. So far, in discussions of ethical issues of IT, these types of issues have been the most discussed. Yet other important issues that raise difficult ethical problems also need to be addressed, for example, the outsourcing of high-level jobs and the value of information technology itself.

Addressing the business ethics problematic today is very frequent, not just theoretically, but also practically. Even if modern society, the dynamic and ever-changing economic environment, raise a lot of barriers in front of those who base their daily lives or their business on the principles of ethics, there are numerous „survivors” that do not hesitate to demonstrate that ethics is a necessity, and, even more than that, it is profitable.

Based on commentaries of this article, we come to the following principles that summarize the most part of ethics in e-Business:

1. Without ethics, there is no future for either a company, or for modern society.
2. Within e-Business, ethics is mostly a morality revolving around money.
3. Progress is based mainly on practicing ethics, rather than on its content.
4. It is not enough to impose ethics within an organization; it is also necessary to impose a penalty system.
5. Transparency is the ethics weapon of our time.

The goal of this article is to formulate how information technology might interact with ethical principles required at the species level, ecosystem level, and the level of being as a whole.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Andriescu Cristina, "Codul de onoare" in afacerile pe Internet, <http://www.link2ec.ro/>.
2. Caruso Judith B., Information Technology Security: Governance, Strategy and Practice in Higher Education, ECAR, 2003
3. Moore, N., The information society In: World information report 1997/98 Unesco, Publishing Paris, 1997, pag. 23-56.
4. Schultz Robert A., Contemporary Issue in Ethics and Information Technology, United States of America, IRM Press, 2006.
5. Sumner Blount , Security Management: A New Model to Align Security With Business Needs, August 2006, CA
6. Sumner Blount, Security Management: Aligning Security with Business Operations, June 2007, CA
7. The IT Governance Institute, Information Security Governance: Guidance for Boards of Directors and Executive Management, 2001
8. Worstell, K., Gerdes, M. and Kabay M., Net Present Value of Information Security, <http://securityportal.com/articles/npv20001102.html>, 2001