

An Ethical Framework for Design Decisions

Step 1

Identify the ethical issue

- Does our design decision have the potential to harm anyone?
- Does our design decision require a choice between a superior and inferior option?
- Is our decision more than a matter of legality? If so, why?
- Is our decision more than a matter of efficiency? If so, why?

Step 2

Uncover the facts

- Of all the facts we possess, which ones are relevant to our design decision?
- Are we missing facts we need to make our design decision?
- Who will be affected by the outcome of our design decision?
- Of those affected, is there an order of importance? If so, what is it and why?
- Have we consulted representatives from those who will be affected by our design decision?
- Have we considered creative alternatives to the options we are deliberating?

Step 3

List the options

- Considering everything that we learned in Steps 1 and 2, should any of our design decision options be excluded?
- List all the remaining options.

Step 4

Weigh the options against ethical standards

- Which option will yield the most good and least harm for all involved? (Utilitarian Approach)
- Which option most fully upholds the rights and dignity of all involved? (Rights Approach)
- Which option treats all involved most fairly? (Justice Approach)
- Which option best guides us to behave like the type of designers we wish to be? (Virtue Approach)

Step 5

Choose an option and scrutinize it

- Now that we've made a design decision, do we believe it is the right one?
- Would we allow the true motives of our choice to be made public?

Step 6

Implement the choice

- What is the most responsible way to implement our design decision?
- Does this way of implementing our decision respect the concerns of all involved?

Step 7

Examine the outcome

- How has our design decision impacted all involved?
- What have we learned about our decision?
- Would we make a different decision in the future? If so, why?