



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

IEEE Cases 1999 - Using Other People's Software

Author(s)

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Year

1999

Description

A fictionalized case about an employee who was discharged for bringing attention to the company practice of using pirated software.

Body

Jim Warren was a senior software systems expert, hired by NewSoft, a start-up company, to help in the development of a new product. He soon learned that the product was based on proprietary software for which NewSoft did not have a license. Jim assumed that this was some sort of mistake and spoke to the company president about the matter. He was assured that the situation would be rectified. But time passed and nothing happened except that Jim found other instances of the same practice. Repeated efforts to get NewSoft to legalize its operations failed and Jim, after threatening to notify the victimized companies, was discharged.

Law enforcement officials were brought into the picture and lawyers on all sides began negotiating. At this date it is not clear whether criminal charges will be filed. There appears to be a strong possibility of some sort of out-of-court settlement among the companies involved. It is not clear how this will ultimately affect Jim

Warren.

Notes

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Rights

Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

Topics

Intellectual Property and Patents

Workplace Ethics

Employer/Employee Relationships

Discipline(s)

Computer Sciences