



DAMA UK

Nurturing a community
of data professionals

An Introduction to Data Ethics

Overview

What are Data Handling Ethics

(per the DAMA DMBOK)

Academic Definitions

Ethics are principles of behaviour based on ideas of right and wrong:

- Fairness, Respect, Responsibility, Integrity etc

For organisations and their employees data ethics are a matter of social responsibility

Core concepts:

- Impact on People
- Potential for misuse
- Economic Value of Data

Unethical data handling can result in reputational damage and loss of customers.

There is an ethical imperative to not only protect data, but also to manage its quality. We have an ethical responsibility to manage data in a way that reduces the risk that it may mis represent, be missed or be mis understood.

Relationship to Regulation

Unethical practices can be illegal – for example, in relation to Personal Data (PII/SPI), which is covered by multiple regulations around the world.

The UK GDPR sets out seven key principles:

1. Lawfulness, fairness and transparency
2. Purpose limitation
3. Data minimisation
4. Accuracy
5. Storage limitation
6. Integrity and confidentiality (security)
7. Accountability

While laws codify some ethical principles, legislation cannot keep up with the risk associated with the evolution of the data environment.

Data can be perfectly secure and processes compliant with the law, but not handled ethically.

Facebook

Facebook has been fined £500,000 by the UK's data protection watchdog for its role in the Cambridge Analytica data scandal.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said Facebook had let a "serious breach" of the law take place. The fine was the maximum allowed under the old data protection rules that applied before GDPR took effect in May 2018.

The ICO said Facebook had given app developers access to people's data "without clear consent".

Confirming the fine, it said in a statement: "Between 2007 and 2014, Facebook processed the personal information of users unfairly by allowing application developers access to their information without sufficiently clear and informed consent, and allowing access even if users had not downloaded the app, but were simply 'friends' with people who had."

What was the Cambridge Analytica data scandal?

Researcher Dr Aleksandr Kogan and his company GSR used a personality quiz to harvest the Facebook data of up to 87 million people. Some of this data was shared with Cambridge Analytica, which used it to target political advertising in the US.

"Even after the misuse of the data was discovered in December 2015, Facebook did not do enough to ensure those who continued to hold it had taken adequate and timely remedial action, including deletion," the ICO said.

Google

- France's data privacy watchdog fined Google 50 million euros (\$57 million) in January 2019.
- The National Data Protection Commission fined the U.S. internet giant for “lack of transparency, inadequate information and lack of valid consent” regarding ad personalization for users.
- The commission said users were “not sufficiently informed” about what they were agreeing to.

Amazon

Amazon's Artificial Intelligence team had been building computer programs since 2014 to review job applicants' resumes with the aim of mechanizing the search for top talent.

Automation has been key to Amazon's e-commerce dominance, be it inside warehouses or driving pricing decisions. **The company's experimental hiring tool used artificial intelligence to give job candidates scores ranging from one to five stars** - much like shoppers rate products on Amazon.

But by 2015, the company realized its new system was not rating candidates for software developer jobs and other technical posts in a gender-neutral way.

That is because Amazon's computer models were trained to vet applicants by observing patterns in resumes submitted to the company over a 10-year period. Most came from men, a reflection of male dominance across the tech industry.

In effect, **Amazon's system taught itself that male candidates were preferable**. It penalized resumes that included the word "women's," as in "women's chess club captain." And it downgraded graduates of two all-women's colleges.

Amazon edited the programs to make them neutral to these particular terms. But that was **no guarantee that the machines would not devise other ways of sorting candidates that could prove discriminatory**. The solution was later abandoned.

DAMA UK Resources

Data Ethics

Members Only and Public Resources

- [ODI Data Ethics Webinar \(slides\)](#) from 22nd August 2022
- Equity by Design [reading list](#) from the webinar on 13 May 2022
- Blog: [Trust in data is about more than ethics](#)
- Blog: [How Data Ethics Supports Governance & Monetisation](#)
- DAMA DEBATE: [Pros and Cons of the NHS Digital Database](#)
- Public Webinar: [Data Monetisation and Governance: Navigating the Value and Ethics see-saw.](#)
- Public Webinar: [Information Ethics: Understanding & Implementing Ethical Approaches](#)

Industry Resources

Frameworks:

- [Data Ethics Canvas from the Open Data Institute](#)
- [UK Government Data Ethics Framework](#)
- [ODI Data Ethics Maturity Model](#)

Training / accreditation courses (but not free):

- Kubicle: [Essentials of Ethics and Risk](#)

Articles:

- Data Leadership Collaborative - [Making Data Ethics a Leadership Priority](#)

Podcasts:

- Driven by Data. Ep 44: [Data Ethics or Just Ethics with Caroline Carruthers](#)