“Intelligent Collaboration” the Paradox of “Ethical Agency” and “Corporate Governance”

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ABSTRACT

The complexities associated with the growing deployment of network technologies and wide area shared processing have increased the importance of “information ethics” and appreciating their impacts on global transactions. The measures used to approach the resulting or potential “ethical dilemma” continued to be oriented towards the minimization of threats and improving privacy through technological and legal measures. However, the use of advanced intelligent technologies such as software agents’ technology brings the issue of “ethical agency” to the surface and calls for a “redefinition” and paradigm shift with regard to the way “information ethics” are being conceptualized.

Keywords: agent technology; data capture; decision strategies; distributed decision-making systems; information ethics; information in organizations; information utilization

INTRODUCTION

The recent technological advancements have significantly redefined the context of data acquisition, processing, and sharing. While new patterns, platforms and architectures are being developed for the maximization of benefits from data, the growing emphasis on “collaborative work”, “responsiveness” and “building of alliances” is reshaping the way global enterprises do business. Coupled with their process-oriented “enabling” features, the use of global networks and web based systems has turned enterprises into an archipelago of “integrated” islands of performance, interacting across global networks of “capital”, “information” and “power” and driven by institutional concepts of “deregulation”, “liberalization”, and “re-engineering” (Tagelsir, 2006). Within this context, enterprises continued to focus on:

a. Maintaining an operationally-feasible, process-technology matrix as a base for
justifying business process reengineering and continuous improvement activities.
b. Developing data repositories and adopting alternative forms of database creation, tuning and sharing through alternative architectures, and platform and software engineering methodologies.
c. Mobilizing resources to improve their capacity to provide and integrate e-services.
d. Managing information-intensive applications by incorporating “security” and “ethical” dimensions into their core processes.

The main focus of this article will be on understanding the dimensions of corporate governance and ethical promotion for global enterprises with emphasis on copyright mechanisms and “ethical agency”.

INFORMATION ETHICS

The field of Information ethics investigates the ethical and moral issues associated with the development and application of information technologies in different domains. It addresses issues related to information privacy and confidentiality, data and application misuse, content management and web based interactions, online information authorization and verification, confidence building, resource sharing, and the life cycle of information especially ownership, copyright and digital divide.

However, the continuous organizational, institutional and operational transformations associated with the use of global networks are challenging enterprises to strike a balance between information-sharing and information protection and to effectively manage the ethical dimensions associated with the dynamics of “confidence” and “control” to improve their capacity to develop and use alternative methods of information distribution and encryption. Building confidence as an ethical virtue, also demands enterprises create balanced and flexible institutional measures and procedures that appropriately make this virtue the responsibility of all.

The issue of content management and regulation are also becoming intensively ethics-related considerations. This is because the dynamics of global access urge global enterprises to maintain long reach interfaces and promote corporate governance and conviviality. The ethical dimension of universal access originates from the interplay of different technological and situational change agents that may result in disorder and unethical practices if not applied properly. The growing amount of data and the multiplicity of data types, diversity of data structures, heterogeneity of information representation architectures, and the growing capacity of web based systems and portals to manipulate, in one way or another, the way information is accessed and used, are generating fundamental information ethics and moral considerations. Some content-management issues like multilingualism, semantic, and ontological considerations are introducing additional ethical dimensions and are simultaneously acting as determinants for striking a balance between access and sustainability.

The concern for information ethics, especially for global enterprises, originates from a set of reasons:

1. Competition in the global market is becoming increasingly resource oriented, interface-based, and knowledge-intensive. Due to the resulting axioms associated with the diffusion of technology, the question of information ethics emerges because the mechanisms of information use and protection significantly affect the capacity of enterprises to build international alliances.

2. Globalization processes increase the importance of information ethics because they lead to fundamental structural changes offered by the opportunities and threats available in the operating environment of enterprises and the increasing use of advanced integrated applications.