

ResponsibleIT: Integrating Technology with Social Responsibility



“ResponsibleIT is Responsibility”
www.ifpeople.net

Technology can be a powerful tool for change, especially when used responsibly. Responsible Information Technology management should be an important part of any socially responsible enterprise's strategies, policies, and practices. ResponsibleIT[†] is a set of standards that help ifPeople incorporate values into its core practices. With informed decision-making and clear objectives, ifPeople combines the performance and efficiency benefits of technology with socially responsible and environmentally sustainable practices.

ifPeople has built the following Guidelines for ResponsibleIT on best practices, industry research, and the extension of social responsibility to business processes that often fail to incorporate such practices. These are the guidelines that ifPeople adheres to as an internal standard and also promotes as best practice. The benefits from adhering to ResponsibleIT Guidelines come in the form of greater productivity, customer and employee satisfaction, better business and client relations, more valuable products and software throughout their lifecycles, and minimized environmental impact. Further information on each specific area of the guidelines will be detailed in a forthcoming ifPeople White Paper and internal performance report. Check www.ifpeople.net for updates.

Guiding Principles for Technology Choices

- Technology choices can and should reflect organizational values and social responsibility.
- Seek the most favorable and operational solutions available for software and hardware.

Purchasing and Disposal Policies

- Reuse and extend the life of older computer equipment before purchasing replacements. Avoid resource-intensive proprietary software whenever possible. Minor upgrades and less demanding software are effective at extending useful life.
- Promote recycling and recyclability of used computer equipment:
 - Buy used or recycled equipment (preferably with warranty coverage).
 - Properly recycle equipment at the end of its useful life.
 - Educate others about hardware reuse and recycling possibilities
- Purchase equipment designed to minimize negative life cycle impacts (energy consumption, use of toxic materials, recyclability):
 - Include environmental considerations as a part of the purchasing process.
 - Emphasize pollution prevention strategies with purchasing policies.
 - Seek information on multiple environmental and social characteristics from throughout the lifecycle of hardware (production, use, disposal) before deciding.

Responsibility Issues for the User and IT Management

- Ensure proper end-user training as measured by the ability to confidently administer and use an application.
- Stay focused on objectives for the use of technology as a tool; keep information relevant and useful.
- Maintain Secure systems: Create and maintain a security policy.
 - Take adequate measures to protect from viruses.
- Make comprehensive and regular backups of data.
- Safeguard privacy of information through policy, practices, and technology to ensure privacy of internal, business partner, and client information.

ResponsibleIT: Integrating Technology with Social Responsibility

- Empower users by providing control over the technology through access to source code (whenever possible), documentation, clear processes, and support.
- Seek software licensed to guarantee and protect user rights and freedoms.

Intellectual Property

- Be aware of proper legal use of copyrighted material and always check the copyright and/or license.
- Use properly licensed and legally registered software. Respect copyright of material, software, content.
- Wherever practically possible, favor Free and Open Source Software solutions as a means of satisfying technology needs while contributing to a democratic technology movement and usable knowledge.

Support Efforts to Reduce the Digital Divide

- Promote Internet connectivity, access to computers, computer literacy, and professional development opportunities.
- Contribute to the global knowledge commons. Use technology skills to address the needs of Free Software communities and provide for greater sharing of knowledge.

Specific to the Production of ResponsibleIT Solutions:

Usability and Accessibility

- Create applications that guarantee accessibility. Accessibility to information via the Internet should not be inhibited by disability or resource limitations (e.g., lack of access to expensive, state-of-the art hardware and software).
- Design solutions for the user experience. Usability requires attention to the needs of the user.

Labor Issues

- Compensate workers fairly. Fair compensation enables a dignified lifestyle, with adequate resources for basic needs, security, and savings.
- Respect the balance of work with social and family life by creating proper conditions of work (number of hours, times worked, location of work).
- Ensure ergonomic user environments and be proactive in preventing injuries from prolonged or repetitive actions (address work habits, furniture, work environment).
- Try to keep work fulfilling with varied tasks and meaningful projects
- Provide opportunities for professional development through continuous learning, career advancement, and new challenges.

Information management

- Ensure systematic security processes are in place for products.
- Safeguard all sensitive client data during and after a project.
- Minimize cyberspace "pollution":
 - Write quality code that can be maintained and is legible to others
 - Produce relevant tools and clear documentation
 - Do not engage in spam

Intellectual Property

- Ensure the rights of users to maintain, understand, and control the technology solutions produced. When producing software, apply a Free Software license (www.gnu.org) whenever possible and appropriate.
- Understand the negative impact of software patents (swpat.ffii.org/#intro).

Please submit comments on these guidelines to tech@ifpeople.net.

**ResponsibleIT is a service mark of ifPeople.*