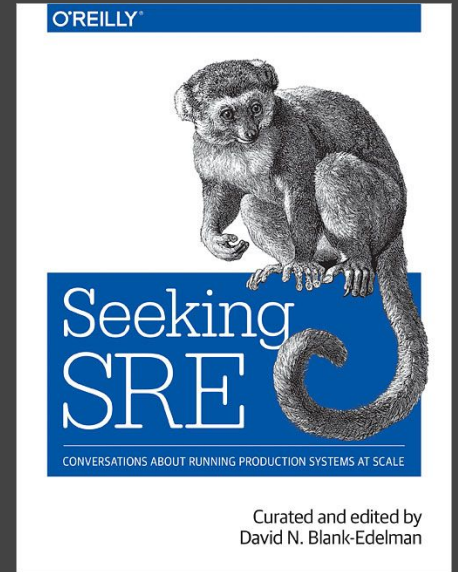# Organizing for Your Ethical Principles

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#PerconaLive

October 20, 2020

Adapted from *Seeking SRE*

Content warning:

Discussions of sexual harassment, racial and disability discrimination, state-sponsored violence, concentration camps, and genocide

Screenshots of hate speech and death threats

1. Tech has an ethics crisis.

Ethics of Product

- Discrimination
  - Poor accessibility
  - Machine learning bias
- Unlawful acts
  - Theranos (fraud)
  - VW (environmental harm)
  - Cambridge Analytica (propaganda)
  - Absher (human rights)
  - La Liga (eavesdropping)

Ethics of Work Conditions

- Pay and leveling
- Unjust treatment
- Excessive hours
- Harassment/discrimination
- Hostile work environment

etc. etc. etc.

Ethics of Tech Ecosystem

- "Independent" contractors & gig economy
- Cafeteria & contingent workers
- Gentrification
- Tech lobbying

etc. etc. etc.

Intersections

Is it okay to ask someone to work on a project that harms or excludes them, or **harms or excludes members of a group they belong to**?

Is it okay to subject external-facing employees to receiving **abuse on the company's products** due to poor product design?

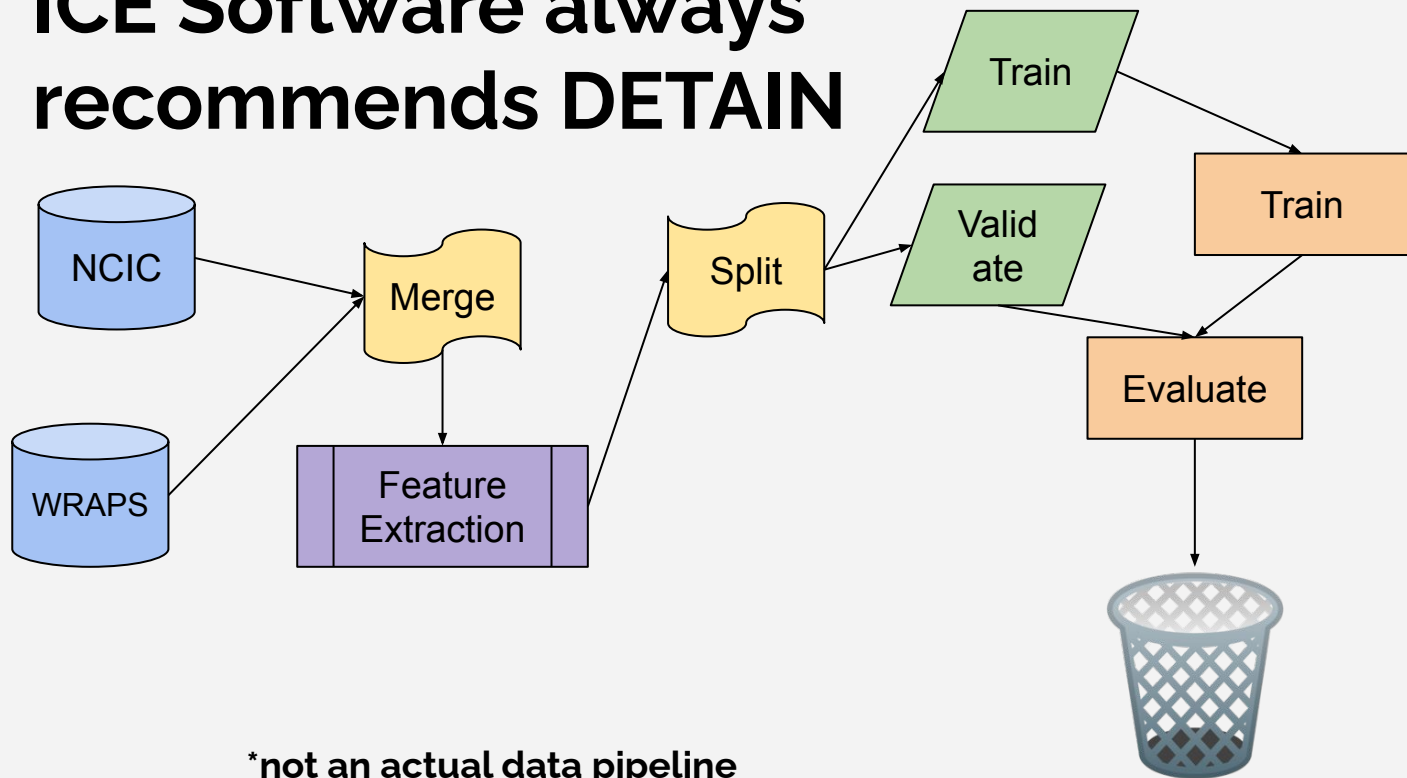# Not our first time discussing this.

Society is paying the price of tech's **ethical debt**.

The best time to act was several years ago.

The second best time to act is now.

ICE Software always recommends DETAIN

*not an actual data pipeline

Facebook, Disinformation, Violence, and COVID-19

Big Tech Finally Attempts to Curb QAnon's Spread

Melissa Ryan Follow
Jul 27 · 4 min read ★

ISSIE LAPOWSKY   BUSINESS   03.15.2019 01:50 PM

Why Tech Didn't Stop the New Zealand Attack From Going Viral

Video from mosque shootings in Christchurch popped ...
Twitter, and YouTube, showing the limits of social media...

WORLD

How Facebook Failed The Rohingya In Myanmar

...nent of the Muslim Rohingya minority a genocide, and says
...ckle hate speech. Analysis by BuzzFeed News sheds new light

Iam Thuy Vo   Aung Naing Soe

The New York Times

On Gab, an Extremist-Friendly Site, Pittsburgh Shooting Suspect Aired His Hatred in Full

By Kevin Roose

White Supremacist Recruiting

https://8ch.net/index.html   Go   JUN **AUG** SEP
2,829 captures   ◄ **01** ►
15 Jan 2015 – 5 Aug 2019   2018 **2019** 2020

Welcome to 8chan, the Darkest Reaches of the Internet.

On 8chan, you can create your own imageboard for free with no experience or programming knowledge needed.

Warning: Some boards on 8chan might have content of an adult or offensive nature. Please cease use of this website if it is illegal for you to view such content. On 8chan, boards and posts are user-created and do not represent the opinions of the 8chan administration. In the interest of free speech, only content that violates the Digital Millennium Copyright Act or other United

White supremacists are trying to recruit American teens through video games

A scholar of gaming culture on what went wrong with "gamer" culture — and why white nationalists see gamers as potential allies.

THE INDUSTRY

White Supremacists Still Have a Safe Space Online

Discord is a hub for 150 million gamers—as well as some of the worst people on the web.

By APRIL GLASER   OCT 09, 2018 • 5:55 AM   gorcenski at #PerconaLive

Your Ethics Matter

Unjust treatment of employees is not okay.

Unjust treatment of users of technology is not okay.

Unjust treatment of our neighbors is not okay.

White supremacy is **not okay.**

We can change tech, together.

How do we fix this?

Emily Gorcenski:

15+ years in tech, Head of Data, Anti-fascist, anti-racist activist and organizer; advisory board member of two extremism-related university-based labs

Survivor of multiple assaults, attempted murder (3x), and terrorist attacks (2x)

Activism work covered by the *New York Times*, *ProPublica*, *PBS Frontline, Washington Post*; published in *The Guardian, Teen Vogue*; research appeared in an Emmy-award winning documentary

Liz Fong-Jones

17 years in tech

2 years as a manager (now no longer)

Queer transgender woman of color

Labor organizer & activist for 10+ years

Activism covered in *The New York Times*, *Wired*, *Gizmodo*, *Bloomberg*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, and other media.

White supremacists work at your company.

MOTHERBOARD

Google Employee's Anti-Diversity Manifesto Goes 'Internally Viral'

"It's not worth thinking about this as an isolated incident and instead a manifestation of what ails all of Silicon Valley."

They are targeting marginalized colleagues.

They went after Liz

>Liz Fong-Jones
Does the hyphenated name mean something married this lunatic or

Someone should head to google HQ armed to the teeth wit

LGBTROFLMAOQXZ ID:0tjspyPG Fr

>>184071555
It will probably lead to another shooting.

gay

die.

and after Emily.

purge them from society

Christopher Cantwell @Cantwell PRO
17 days ago

We're gonna kill you.

Rechtsextreme Gruppierung

US-Neonazis verfolgten Aktivistin bis nach Deutschland

Wegen der Bedrohung durch Rechtsextremisten war eine amerikanische Aktivistin nach Deutschland übergesiedelt. Doch hierzulande wurde sie nach SPIEGEL-Informationen erneut bedroht.

08.11.2019, 13.59 Uhr

—

We're tired and need your help.

2. Your skills matter

Learn from events

Blameless retrospectives.

Collective behavior and systems, not individuals.

Contributing factors

"**What** did you think was happening?", not "**Why** did you do that?". *[h/t @auxesis on Twitter]*

Design to prevent harm

Think of negative, unanticipated cases

e.g. police, intimate partner abuse, blackmail, insider threat

Guard against misuse

Provide appropriate controls

Data minimization

Don't collect unnecessary data.

Encrypt your data at rest.

Encrypt your data in flight.

Protect against insider threats.

Delete data that you no longer need.

or else...

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
SEARCH WARRANT

TO: CHIEF OF POLICE OR ANY OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
(Specific law enforcement officer or Classification of Officer of the Metropolitan Police Department or other Authorized Agency)

AFFIDAVIT, herewith attached, having been made before me by Detective Greggory Pemberton (D2-1645) that he has probable cause to believe that in the premises controlled by DreamHost Inc., there is now being concealed property, namely stored electronic communications including but not limited to digital files, records, messages, and photographs as set forth more fully in Attachments A and B, attached hereto and incor...

COP OUT Police told not to download Covid-19 track and trace app despite visiting homes of isolating Brits under new crackdown

Ben Hill
28 Sep 2020, 20:03 | Updated: 28 Sep 2020, 20:06

3. Risks & Protections

Company Cultures

"Do good" principles.

Companies claim to want vigorous sharing, debate & employees coming forward about issues.

Make use of your company's cultural statements.

Industry Ethics Codes

ACM:

Promote fundamental human rights and each individual's right to autonomy. *Minimize negative consequences*, including threats to health, safety, personal security, and privacy. When the interests of multiple groups conflict, *the needs of those less advantaged should be given priority*.

IEEE:

Hold *paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public*, strive to comply with ethical design and sustainable development practices, and *disclose promptly factors that might endanger the public* or the environment.

Engineers are valuable

Replacing an engineer costs $x00,000

GDPR.

Service Reliability.

Collective action & solidarity

Local laws

NLRA and Title VII in the US

European Works Councils

National rights to labor organizing

Whistleblowing

Generally, whistleblower protections are weak :(

Ethics != law; whistleblowing only covers breaches of law.

Risk of collateral damage.

Be prepared to resign or lose your job.

Be prepared for the worst.

Remedies are retrospective.

Retaliation often happens.
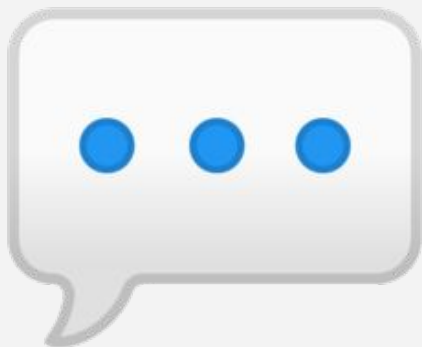
What is your backup plan?

What is **our** collective plan?

To the executives+managers: Is your company prepared to handle ethical escalations?

Change is worth the cost.

4. Successful Organizing

If we weren't already in crisis...

1. Build early awareness
2. Build employee networks
3. Separate venting from problem-solving
4. Identify decision-makers
5. Persuade decision-makers
6. **If all else fails... [you are here]**

Sustainable Ethics

You are not your employer. It's okay to take a step back. Progress will take years.

Ethics is an integral part of our job. Ethics crises are a process failure.

Continuous {integration, deployment, **ethics**}

We need robust, reusable infrastructure.

If all else fails...

Break glass:

- Employee petitions
  - Succinct, clear ask
  - 5% = credible threat
- Media engagement
  - Public pressure entrenches execs/PR
  - Situationally powerful.
- Complaints to regulators, directors, & shareholders
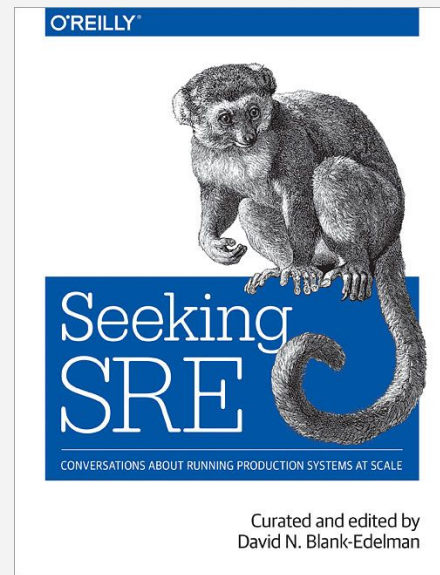 - Less well-trodden territory
- Strike or Quit

"Crises are simply a scarcity of time and attention."
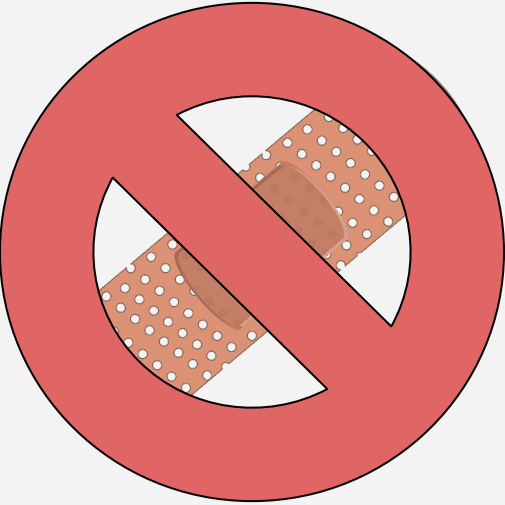
Parallels to Privacy Engineering

1. **Guard**
   - Early detection
2. **Strengthen**
   - Safe defaults
3. **Extinguish**
   - Crisis management

(credit to @LeaKissner & @Aiiane)

Cover image used with permission. This book can be found on shop.oreilly.com.

No Bandaid Solutions

Ethics codes are not enough: too often they are used to excuse bad behavior.

Following the law =/= being moral;
Following a code of ethics =/= being ethical

Look beyond Silicon Valley: questionably-ethical software is being written by companies that aren't household names

Be proactive.
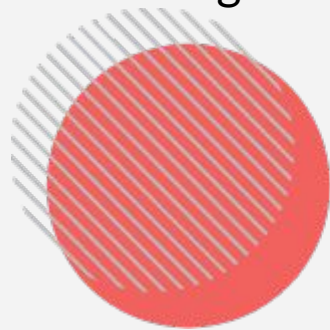# Prevent crises.
Pick fights carefully.
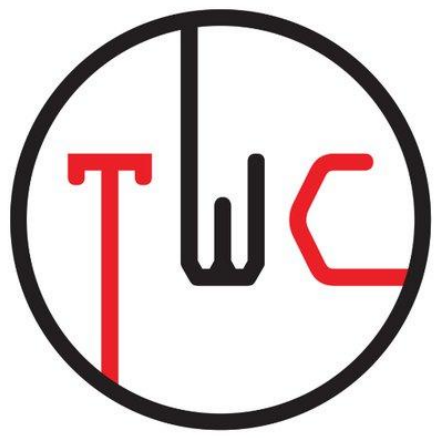
5. Resources

Coworker.org

Helped Google employees develop an organizing and media strategy around workplace safety.

Helped US retail sector employees campaign for better working conditions.
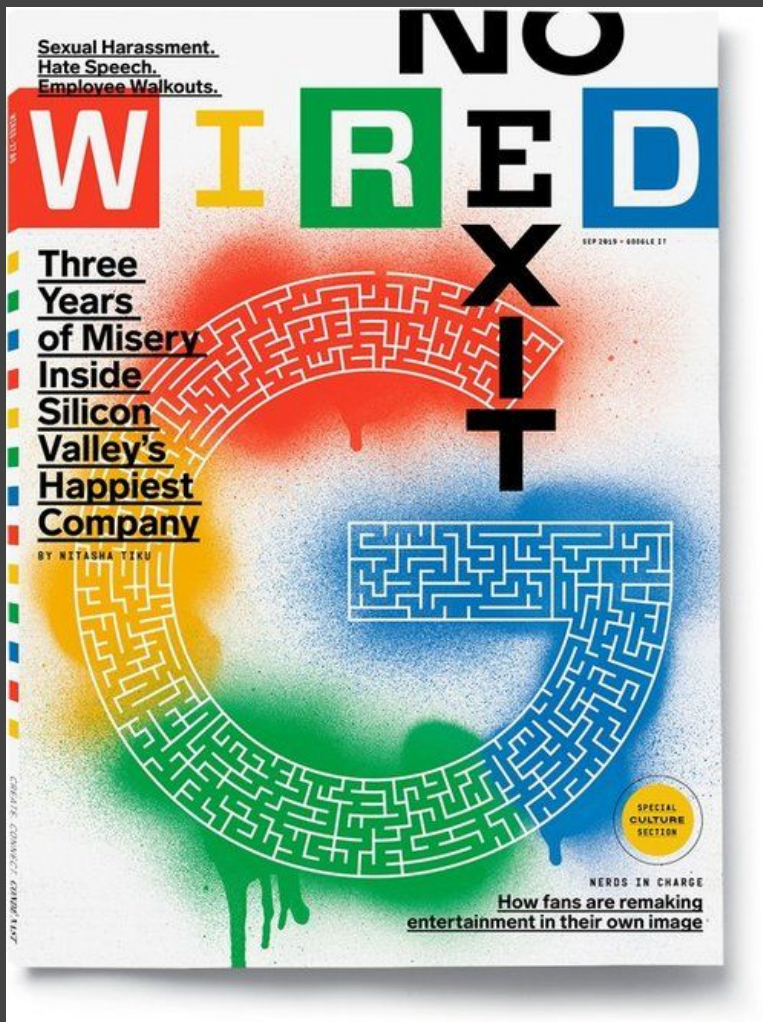
SOLIDARITY FUND by coworker

Tech Workers Coalition

Response to Lanetix employee layoffs.

Solidarity for cafeteria workers at Facebook unionized by Silicon Valley Rising.

Can help you!

@lizthegrey and @emilygorcenski at #PerconaLive

Amazon Employees Will Walk Out Over the Company's Climate Change Inaction

The planned event will mark the first time in Amazon's 25-year history that workers at the company's Seattle headquarters have participated in a strike.

ing secure connection...

& so many more.

Thank you, and rise up! #TechWontBuildIt

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@EmilyGorcenski - emilygorcenski.com