

# Week 12 Homework

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October 20, 2005

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## 1 Ethics or the lack thereof

### 1.1 Original question

I am in favour of her behaviour in this situation. The commercialisation of software products is to be commended, although the decision to release spreadsheet software in a saturated market is commercially questionable (although not unethical). The use of other websites images, if without permission, is generally reprehensible due to copyright issues, but she may have permission from the copyright holders, or she may have found them from public domain websites; so it is not clear from the facts whether she did anything wrong here. The use of HTML meta tags to improve search engine rankings is acceptable practice, provided that they are written accurately. The inclusion of ratings and comments from the auction site are useful to potential buyers, as they can ascertain her reliability; however, she should seek the permission of those who wrote the comments, due to issues with copyright, as well as the fact that they may only wish their comments to be published on that auction site, but not on any other site.

### 1.2 Additional scenario 1

Although her product may contain much of the same functionality as a competitor's product, when users go to a search engine and search for the competitor's product, they clearly indicate their wish to find that particular product (otherwise they would have searched for a more generic term). Causing the search engine to suggest her site would be an affront to the users' expectations, causing them to lose time and become frustrated; she should pay more consideration to these people. Furthermore, even though the feature set might be similar, there must be some differences, so pretending that she is on par with a competitor's product would be potentially misleading. In addition, the affect of her actions goes beyond this; it is because of behaviour such as her's that causes search engines (generally) to give less weight to HTML meta tags, which would otherwise be a useful indexing tool.

I oppose such behaviour.

### **1.3 Additional scenario 2**

The issue here is one of copyright; it is likely that either the authors of the comments or eBay owns the copyright to the comments, and it is most unlikely that they are her's. The fact that eBay has such a policy would suggest this. Hence, she should not publish such comments on her site.

eBay's policy, while to her may appear unfair, is reasonable in all respects - it is out of concern for its users. When eBay users write comments, they have an expectation that their privacy will be respected, and that their comments are used in accordance with the rules; having comments reproduced is contrary to the users' specified wishes, even more so if personally identifiable material is reproduced as well.

I strongly oppose such behaviour.

### **1.4 Additional scenario 3**

If the university she went to has a policy like the University of Sydney, where students (generally) own the intellectual property they create, then I see nothing wrong with her commercialising her product, provided that she did indeed write it all on her own (not in group work, or using a common code base provided by the lecturers). However, she should acknowledge the fact that it was created as an assignment, because presumably, lecture material and the advice of tutors contributed to the success of the program; help should always be acknowledged. The fact that she intends to use the money to further her education is to be commended, and this does not pose a problem at all.

I strongly support such behaviour, provided that the qualifications are met.

### **1.5 Additional scenario 4**

She should not use copyrighted images or other content on her website without prior permission of the copyright holders; doing so would be illegal, and an affront to the rights of those copyright holders. The fact that the website is successful and she is making a lot of money worsens the situation, as she is gaining at other people's expense. She should create her own images, or contact the copyright holders for permission (and pay royalties if required). If not, despite her success, she may be doing harm to herself as well, by exposing herself to legal action, both for the damage to the interests of the copyright holders, but also for the profit that she is making at their expense. Furthermore, the use of the images has the potential to mislead visitors to her website, as it may lead them to believe that she is more skilled than she actually is, and is affiliated with the websites from where she obtained the material.

I strongly oppose her behaviour.

### **1.6 Additional scenario 5**

This is identical to scenario 4.

### **1.7 Additional scenario 6**

This is identical to scenario 1.

### **1.8 Additional scenario 7**

This is identical to scenario 2.

### **1.9 Additional scenario 8**

This is identical to scenario 3.

## **2 Quiz Preparation and Homework Programming Task**

See the attached pages.