

Ethics can play a role in selecting your career path

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While ethical issues are raised throughout one's career, there are major factors to be considered when first starting out.

Here are some of the ethical issues to contemplate.

Is the focus of the profession to help people? Examples might include the engineering of medical technology or the development of safety devices. Others include facilitating the communication between people and engineering devices designed to improve the quality of life.

Is the career environmentally responsible? That is, is it the type of work that is kind to the environment or one that might potentially threaten it? And, if there are potential problems, are there reasonable safeguards for preventing them?

Generally speaking, would your particular career path make

a positive contribution to society? Performing pro bono work or taking a job at a non-profit company are ways to make a difference. A career in education will certainly serve society.

Does the path allow for the appropriate application of technology and consider its potential consequences? Is the health and welfare of the public paramount?

Finally, when deciding what you want to do, a good rule of thumb is to ask yourself when you reflect back on your career, what would you like to have accomplished? What would you like to tell people you did? Good remuneration, while important, is not the only factor to consider.

The outset of one's career is the time when it is easiest to make these choices, so if you are just starting out, it is worth giving these issues some thought.

The IEEE Code of Ethics does a good job of framing many of the questions one may encounter. It is posted at "<http://www.ieee.org/about/whatis/code.html>".