

Piracy

Introduction

Assume that you have been appointed to a task force of 5 or 6 computing professionals within your organization. You have been asked to examine the current issue outlined in the article below. Your team has not been asked to make specific recommendations to solve the problem. Rather, you have been asked to make recommendations that will help the Government decide what next steps they should take.

Prompts

1. What is/are the problem/problems here? Is there an underlying fundamental problem?
2. Who are the major stakeholders and what are their perspectives?
3. What are the major ethical, legal, and security aspects associated with the problem?
4. What are the intended and unintended consequences of existing computing solutions?
Consider the consequences on individuals, organizations and society within local and global contexts.
5. What recommendations do you propose that may lead to potential solutions?

It's 11:55 pm and Maryam has just submitted her assignment. She lets out a sigh of relief at having beaten the midnight deadline. Now it's time to relax. She logs on to Torrentz2 and checks out the latest Hollywood blockbusters. She could watch Marvel Endgame, which came out a few months ago. She checks Music-Torrent to see if Taylor Swift's recent album "Lover" has been uploaded. A user from Romania has just uploaded the whole album, only days after its release. Maryam listens to it.

In 2015, digital piracy cost the movie industry worldwide \$160 billion; the music industry lost \$29 billion and software producers incurred losses of \$24 billion. By the year 2022, the US alone will lose US\$11.6 billion in revenue due to pirate channels and websites. The loss of 138 countries worldwide – the UAE among them – is estimated to be US\$52.6 billion. Piracy also has wider economic and social costs. In 2013, 2-2.6 million jobs worldwide were lost due to pirate activities. Certain types of jobs could, in fact, completely disappear in the future. If content producers are not rewarded for their creations, that type of content will simply cease to be produced.

Piracy, a lay term for copyright infringement, refers to the act of illegally reproducing or disseminating copyrighted material. In the 1990s, piracy moved out of the realm of experts or businesses to the ordinary computer user thanks to increased access to and use of the Internet. The idea that media could be stored, saved and shared across computer networks all over the world led to the creation of peer-to-peer (P2P) sharing networks. Napster was one of the earliest P2P computer services for sharing music and was so popular that at the time music sales in the US dropped by 47%. Napster was shut down in 2001 for violating the copyright laws of the Recording Industry Association of America. Having learned from Napster's mistakes, P2P sharing networks realised being decentralised, where all nodes act as a server and a client, is crucial to being undetected by authorities. Today BitTorrent remains the most popular P2P network, with 97% of global upstream traffic carried out on it.

The most recent large-scale incident of piracy occurred during the FIFA World Cup in 2018. A diplomatic dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia led to the banning in Saudi Arabia of the Qatari based TV channel BeIN Sport, which held official rights to broadcast the World

Cup in the MENA region. The matches were broadcast in Saudi Arabia on BeoutQ, which took BeIN's feed and broadcast it with a 10 second delay. FIFA considers BeoutQ to be a pirate channel. Most sports pirates around the world are not TV channels, but young millennials. In the UK, 54% of 18 to 24 year olds admitted to watching illegal broadcasts of sports events, with a third regularly watching them. This contrasted with only 4% of over 35s watching illegal streams. In the GCC, the figure is higher with 62% of millennials admitting to illegally consuming sports and other types of content.

Copyright holders are putting increasing pressure on ISPs to police the web for pirate activities. ISPs can block consumer access to a pirate site, remove content from the web or take judicial action. Content producers are asking for stricter enforcement of copyright laws and heftier fines. US Copyright Law allows fines ranging from \$750 to \$150,000 per illegal download to be imposed. Sweden introduced anti-piracy laws as early as 2009 but overall piracy rates remained the same before and after the law with TV piracy actually increasing after the law. An alternative to punitive and legal action is to create a culture of anti-piracy. The UAE, for instance, has invested heavily in becoming the media hub of the Middle East. In the year 2000, Dubai Media City and in 2008 twofour54 were established as tax-free zones to meet the media industry needs of the GCC and Middle East. Today 1300 media organisations are located in Dubai Media City alone, providing jobs for over 25,000 people. This makes a contribution of Dhs 1.5 billion to local economy.

The entertainment industry treats pirate consumers as criminals and cheapskates. But there is a lot they can learn from pirates. Consumers know it is illegal to infringe copyright; however, they believe it is not morally wrong to do so when copyright holders do not meet market demands and make content accessible. Making content exclusive on a single streaming channel, for example, increases the willingness of consumers to subscribe to one or two legal streaming services and to pirate the rest. In this sense piracy has the potential to create competition, forcing content producers and operators to offer consumers with affordable and innovative streaming services.

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