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## FIG Commission 1 - Professional Standards and Practice



"FIG Commission 1 focuses on establishing a set of ethical principles that fits the surveying profession for reference by professional institutions. It also focuses on promoting greater understanding and improving community perceptions about the surveying profession, which is underlined by the foundation's vision to improve gender equality and maintaining global peace and justice, in line with Goal No. 5 and 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals respectively."

# Ethics, Morals, and Principles for the Surveyor

8 April 2025

Timothy W. Burch - Chair, FIG Commission 1



Presented at the FIG Working Week 2025  
8-10 April 2025 in Brisbane, Australia

# TIMOTHY W. BURCH, PLS

## CURRENT ROLES

Chair, FIG Commission 1 (Professional Standards)  
Chair, FIG Working Group 1.1 (Professional Ethics)  
NSPS Executive Director

Creator, Co-host, and Producer • "Surveyor Says!" The NSPS Podcast  
Content Editor • NSPS Social Media Accounts  
"Get Kids Into Survey" • Brand Ambassador  
Contributing Writer • NSPS News & Views  
Contributing Writer • Various state association publications  
Contributing Writer • xyHt Magazine  
Editorial Advisory Board • xyHt Magazine  
Presenter for Continuing Education and CST seminars/ webinars



**PRIMERA JORNADA INTERNACIONAL**  
**"Ética Profesional y Deontología para la**  
**Comunidad Geomática y Topográfica**  
**Mundial"**

Evento Virtual  
Inscripción previa

Sábado 01 de febrero de 2025

San José 09:00  
Ciudad de México 09:00  
Bogotá D.C. 10:00  
La Habana 10:00  
Washington D.C. 10:00  
Buenos Aires 12:00

Madrid 16:00  
Roma 16:00  
Berlín 16:00  
Lisboa 15:00  
Londres 15:00  
Los Angeles 07:00

Logos of participating organizations: FIG, COIGT, APPAT, CPNT, and FIG.

**NSPS**

**NSPS**  
**CST**  
CERTIFIED SURVEY TECHNICIAN

**TRIG-STAR**

# TIMOTHY W. BURCH, PLS

*Commission 1 Chair (Professional Standards) -*

**FIG**



International Federation of Surveyors  
Fédération Internationale des Géomètres  
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## FIG Commission 1 - Professional Standards and Practice



"FIG Commission 1 focuses on establishing a set of ethical principles that fits the surveying profession for reference by professional institutions. It also focuses on promoting greater understanding and improving community perceptions about the surveying profession, which is underlined by the foundation's vision to improve gender equality and maintaining global peace and justice, in line with Goal No. 5 and 16 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals respectively."



Ethics, morals, and principles are all closely related concepts that play a vital role in professional occupations.

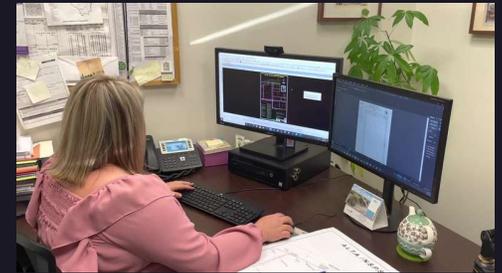
While there may be some subtle distinctions between the terms, they all ultimately guide individuals toward making sound judgments and acting in a responsible manner.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**



## What responsibilities do surveyors have?



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## Ethics, Morals, and Principles for the Surveyor

# ***BUT WHO HOLDS US ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR ACTIONS?***



Licensing Boards?

Our clients?



The general public?



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**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**



## Ethics, Morals, and Principles for the Surveyor



## ETHICS:

a set of rules or principles that govern the conduct of individuals or groups. These rules are often based on societal norms and values, and they provide a framework for making decisions that are considered right or wrong. In a professional context, ethics are typically codified in professional codes of conduct, which outline the expected behaviors and standards for members of a particular profession.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## MORALS:

an individual's own internal sense of right and wrong. They are often shaped by personal experiences, upbringing, and cultural influences. Morals can be more subjective than ethics, as they may vary from person to person. However, they still play an important role in professional decision-making, as they guide individuals to act in accordance with their own conscience.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**



Ethics, morals, and principles all overlap in their aim to promote ethical behavior in professional settings. They work together to guide individuals toward making sound judgments, acting with integrity, and fulfilling their professional obligations. While there may be subtle distinctions between them, they collectively guide individuals and organizations towards making sound decisions and upholding responsible behavior in the workplace.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## NSPS CREED & CANONS



As a professional surveyor, I dedicate my professional knowledge and skills to the advancement and betterment of human welfare. I pledge to give the utmost performance, to participate in none but honest enterprise; to live and work according to the laws of humankind and to the highest standards of professional conduct; to place service before profit, honor and standing of the profession before personal advantage, and the public welfare above all other considerations.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## BACKGROUND

1. The surveying profession is recognized globally as one that adheres to fundamental ethical principles.
2. The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) recognizes that, due to international differences of culture, language, and legal and social systems, the task of preparing a detailed code of professional conduct must rest with each member association, which also has the responsibility to implement and enforce such a code.
3. FIG also recognizes that, given the global mobility of surveyors, it is important to establish common ethical principles and codes of professional conduct. As part of its role in providing guidance and encouraging the harmonization of standards, FIG offers this model code.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## BACKGROUND

4. A professional is distinguished by certain characteristics including:
- mastery of a particular intellectual skill, acquired by education and training;
  - acceptance of duties to society in addition to duties to clients and employers;
  - an outlook that is essentially objective; and
  - the rendering of personal service to a high standard of conduct and performance.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### BACKGROUND

5. Professional surveyors recognize that their ethical responsibilities extend to the public, to their clients and employers, to their peers and to their employees. Accordingly they acknowledge the need for integrity, independence, care and competence, and a sense of duty. They uphold and advance these values by:
- supporting and participating in the continuing development of the surveying profession;
  - serving with honesty and forthrightness and within areas of their competence; and
  - using their expertise for the enhancement of society and the stewardship of resources.
6. FIG recommends that surveyors and associations of surveyors adopt the following ethical principles and model codes of professional conduct or, where appropriate, adapt them to local values and customs.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### INTEGRITY

Surveyors

- maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity towards those with whom they come into contact, either directly or indirectly; and
- accurately and conscientiously measure, record and interpret all data and offer impartial advice based thereon.

### INDEPENDENCE

Surveyors

- diligently and faithfully execute their role according to the law; and
- maintain their objectivity and give their clients and employers unbiased advice, without prejudice or favor either towards or against other organisations or persons.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### CARE AND COMPETENCE

#### Surveyors

- maintain their knowledge and skills, keep abreast of developments in their fields of practice and apply their expertise for the benefit of society;
- only take on work that they reasonably believe they will be able to carry out in a professional manner;  
and
- exercise care in the performance of their duties.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### DUTY

#### Surveyors

- maintain confidentiality about the affairs of their current and former clients and employers unless required by law to make disclosures;
- avoid conflicts of interest;
- take environmental concerns into account in their operations and activities;
- recognise the interests of the public when providing services to their clients or employers; and
- conduct their work to the best of their ability, giving due consideration to the rights of all parties.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### THE PUBLIC INTEREST

1. The first duty of surveyors is normally to their clients or employers but as professionals they also have a duty to the public. Surveyors are fact finders and providers of opinions and advice. It is important that they are diligent, competent, impartial and of unquestionable integrity in ensuring that the information they provide is true and complete and that the opinions and advice that they give are of the highest quality.
2. The work of surveyors has cumulative and long term effects on future generations. Many of the functions of surveyors, even those performed for private clients, are by their nature functions that have a lasting impact on society. Most information becomes public information at some point in time and may be used for purposes other than those for which it was initially intended. The information recorded by early surveyors and explorers has, for example, subsequently been used for the expansion of geographical knowledge and for land development. Similarly, land management systems designed for today create an environment in which future generations will live, work and play. The principles of sustainable development require surveyors to work as much for the future as for the present.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

### THE PUBLIC INTEREST (CONT.)

3. Clients, employers and the public must be confident that surveyors have exercised objectivity in arriving at their professional opinions. These obligations may sometimes appear to be in conflict with the obligations that surveyors owe to their clients, their employers and their peers. Surveyors have a duty to the truth, even when it may not be in the best interest of their clients or employers.
4. All surveyors, whether they be private practitioners, employees in the private sector, public servants or educators, should discharge their professional duties and adhere to ethical principles in accordance with the following model code of professional conduct.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

1. In general, surveyors
  - exercise unbiased independent professional judgement;
  - act competently and do not accept assignments that are outside the scope of their professional competence;
  - advance their knowledge and skills by participating in relevant programmes of continuing professional development;
  - ensure that they understand the fundamental principles involved when working in new areas of expertise, conducting thorough research and consulting with other experts as appropriate; and
  - do not accept assignments that are beyond their resources to complete in a reasonable time and in a professional manner.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

2. As employers, surveyors:
  - assume responsibility for all work carried out by their professional and non-professional staff;
  - assist their employees to achieve their optimum levels of technical or professional advancement;
  - ensure that their employees have proper working conditions and equitable remuneration; and
  - cultivate in their employees integrity and an understanding of the professional obligations of surveyors to society.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

3. When dealing with clients, surveyors:
  - avoid any appearance of professional impropriety;
  - disclose any potential conflicts of interest, affiliations or prior involvement that could affect the quality of service to be provided;
  - avoid associating with any persons or enterprises of doubtful character;
  - do not receive remuneration for one project from multiple sources without the knowledge of the parties involved;
  - preserve the confidences and regard as privileged all information about their clients' affairs; and
  - maintain confidentiality during as well as after the completion of their service.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be  
expected of all professional surveyors.

4. When providing professional services, surveyors:
  - seek remuneration commensurate with the technical complexity, level of responsibility and liability for the services rendered;
  - make no fraudulent charges for services rendered;
  - provide details on the determination of remuneration at the request of their clients; and
  - do not sign certificates, reports or plans unless these were prepared and completed under their personal supervision.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be  
expected of all professional surveyors.

5. As members of a professional association, surveyors:
  - do not enter into arrangements that would enable unqualified persons to practise as if they were professionally qualified;
  - report any unauthorised practice to the governing body of the profession;
  - refuse to advance the application for professional status of any person known to be unqualified by education, experience or character; and
  - promote the surveying profession to clients and the public.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

6. As business practitioners, surveyors:
- do not make false or misleading statements in advertising or other marketing media;
  - do not, either directly or indirectly, act to undermine the reputation or business prospects of other surveyors;
  - do not supplant other surveyors under agreement with their clients; and
  - do not establish branch offices that purport to be under the direction and management of a responsible professional surveyor unless this is actually the case.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

## Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

7. As resource managers, surveyors:
  - approach environmental concerns with perception, diligence and integrity;
  - develop and maintain a reasonable level of understanding of environmental issues and the principles of sustainable development;
  - bring any matter of concern relating to the physical environment and sustainable development to the attention of their clients or employers;
  - employ the expertise of others when their knowledge and ability are inadequate for addressing specific environmental issues;



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FIG PUBLICATION NO. 17

Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of  
Professional Conduct

### Model Code of Professional Conduct

FIG recommends the following code of conduct as the minimum to be expected of all professional surveyors.

7. As resource managers, surveyors:
  - include the costs of environmental protection and remediation among the essential factors used for project evaluation;
  - ensure that environmental assessment, planning and management are integrated into projects that are likely to impact on the environment; and
  - encourage additional environmental protection when the benefits to society justify the costs.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## KEY DEFINITIONS

### Client

A person or group using the services of a practitioner working under the professional requirements of organizations within the IESC.

### Practitioner

A person qualified and practicing in the land, property, construction, infrastructure or related professions.

### Stakeholder

A person or group directly or indirectly affected by a service performed by a practitioner for a client.

### Third Party

An involved person or group directly affected by a service performed by a practitioner for a client.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The ethical principles below are listed in alphabetical order and are considered to be of equal importance. If two or more principles come into conflict during an assignment, the practitioner should give precedence to the principle that best serves the public interest in the context of the particular circumstances. The public interest embraces but is not limited to:

- the maintenance of reliable services for clients,
- sustaining proper standards of conduct and behavior, and
- upholding the reputation of the profession.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Accountability:** Practitioners shall take full responsibility for the services they provide; shall maintain knowledge of current professional technologies, models and data relevant to their practice; shall recognize and respect client, third party and stakeholder rights and interests; and shall give due attention to social and environmental considerations throughout.

**Confidentiality:** Practitioners shall not disclose any confidential or proprietary information without prior permission, unless such disclosure is required by applicable laws or regulations.

**Conflict of Interest:** Practitioners shall make any and all appropriate disclosures in a timely manner before and during the performance of a service. If, after disclosure, a conflict cannot be removed or mitigated, the practitioner shall withdraw from the matter unless the parties affected mutually agree that the practitioner should properly continue.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Diversity:** Practitioners shall promote an environment that is inclusive and open to enable people of varied abilities and identities to enter and thrive in their workplaces and respective professions.

**Financial Responsibility:** Practitioners shall be truthful, transparent and trustworthy in all their financial dealings.

**Integrity:** Practitioners shall act with honesty, propriety and fairness. They shall base their professional advice on relevant, reliable and supportable evidence.

**Lawfulness:** Practitioners shall observe the legal requirements applicable to their discipline for the jurisdictions in which they practice and any extra-territorial or international laws relevant to an assignment.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Reflection:** Practitioners shall regularly reflect on the standards and best practice for their discipline and shall take steps to ensure that their practice is consistent with evolving ethical principles and professional standards.

**Respect:** Practitioners shall treat others with consideration; shall avoid diminishing any person's capacity for freedom, privacy and independence; and shall recognize the importance of both engaging with others without discrimination or prejudice and sustaining their wellbeing and personal safety.

**Standard of Service:** Practitioners shall provide services for which they are competent and qualified; shall ensure that any employees or associates assisting in the provision of services have the necessary competence to do so; and shall encourage employees and associates to maintain and advance their professional skills through continuing professional development and other resources.

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Transparency:** Practitioners shall be open and accessible; shall provide relevant documentary or other material including terms of engagement in plain and intelligible language; and shall present the results of data and analysis clearly and without improper manipulation.

**Trust:** Practitioners shall uphold their responsibility to promote the reputation of their profession and shall recognize that their practice and conduct bears upon the maintenance of public trust and confidence in the IESC professional organizations and the professions they represent

**THESE STANDARDS  
VARY DEPENDING  
ON WHO YOU ARE  
AND WHERE YOU  
ARE LOCATED**



**INTERNATIONAL VIEW - FOR ALL PROFESSIONS**



**INTERNATIONAL VIEW - FOR SURVEYING**

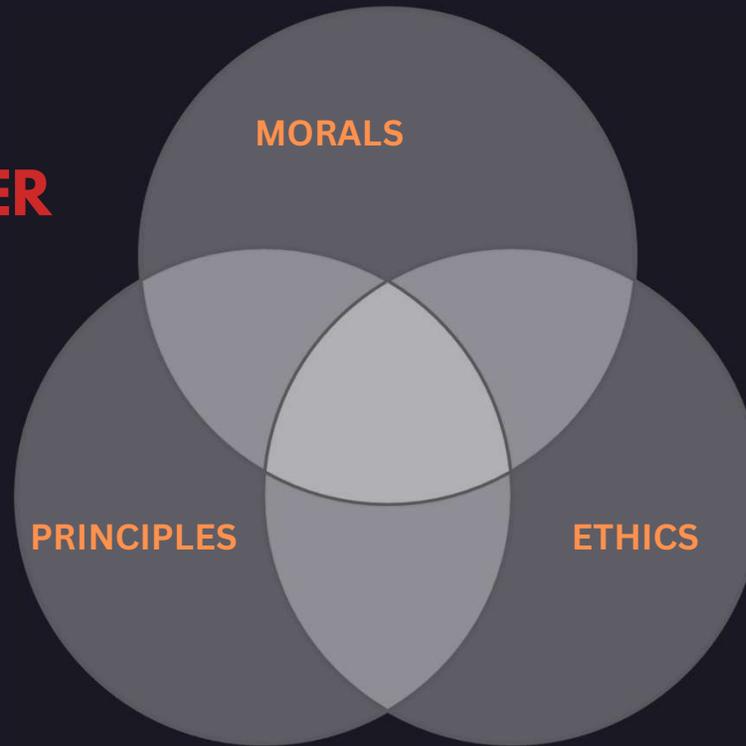


**NATIONAL VIEW - FOR SURVEYING**



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

**PUT ALL THESE  
FACTORS TOGETHER  
AND WE GET...**



**INTEGRITY**



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

Surveyors pride themselves in having high integrity, but what does that consist of?



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Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor



Ethics, morals, and principles are essential foundations for integrity.

They provide a framework for understanding what is right and wrong, making decisions, and taking actions that are consistent with one's values. When individuals have strong ethics, morals, and principles, they are more likely to act with integrity and make a positive impact on the world.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**



1. They provide a framework for ethical decision-making.

Ethics, morals, and principles help us identify and evaluate the ethical implications of our choices. They provide a lens through which to assess potential consequences and ensure that our decisions align with our values.

2. They encourage consistent behavior.

Ethics, morals, and principles promote consistency in our actions. They help us avoid hypocrisy and ensure that our behavior is congruent with our beliefs, regardless of the situation or the people involved.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**



### 3. They build trust and credibility.

When we act with integrity, we earn the trust and respect of others. People know that we can be counted on to do what we say we will do and that we will behave ethically, even when it is difficult or inconvenient.

### 4. They promote personal growth and well-being.

Living with integrity fosters a sense of self-respect and inner peace. When we align our actions with our values, we experience a sense of congruence that contributes to our overall well-being.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## EXAMPLES OF HOW ETHICS, MORALS, AND PRINCIPLES OVERLAP IN PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS:

### Honesty

Both ethics and morals emphasize the importance of honesty in professional interactions. A principle of honesty might state that professionals should always be truthful and accurate in their communications.

### Confidentiality

Ethics codes often mandate confidentiality, and professionals have a moral obligation to protect the privacy of their clients or patients. A principle of confidentiality might state that professionals should never disclose sensitive information without the client's consent.

### Respect

Ethics, morals, and principles all emphasize the importance of treating others with respect. Professionals should treat their colleagues, clients, and patients with dignity and courtesy.

### Accountability

Ethics codes often require professionals to be accountable for their actions, and they have a moral obligation to take responsibility for their decisions. A principle of accountability might state that professionals should be prepared to accept the consequences of their actions.



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

- **How does ethics relate to one's morals? To one's principles?**
- **Can a person be ethical but not moral?**
- **Can a person be moral but not ethical?**
- **How does one's social class affect these factors?**
- **Can a person have separate factors for business versus personal?**
- **Has technology helped or hurt our factors for integrity?**
- **Has our litigious environment effected your decision making?**



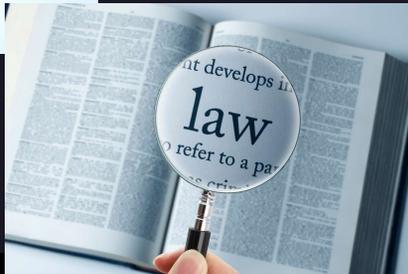
**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## OTHER CHARACTERISTICS THAT FACTOR IN OUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES



Duty of care

Accountability



Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor

# How does culture effect your factor(s)?



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Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor

# FUTURE ISSUES

What surveying aspects will be  
effected by current and future  
technology?



Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor

# FUTURE ISSUES



## AUGMENTED REALITY

Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor



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# VIRTUAL REALITY



**FIG**

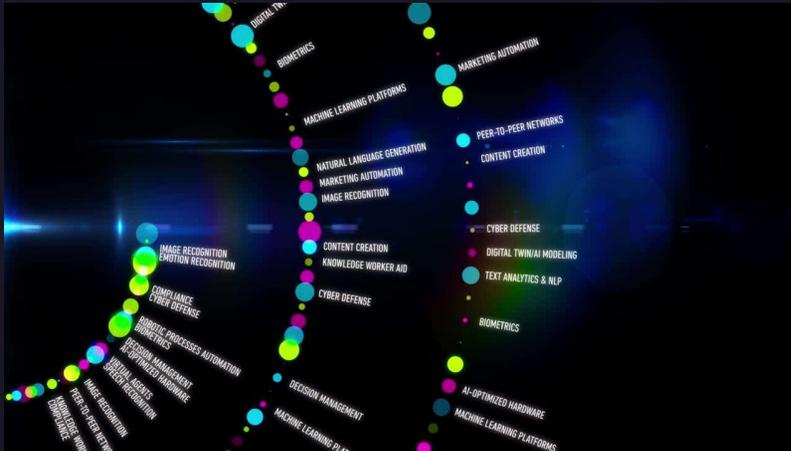
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# FUTURE ISSUES



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
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# FUTURE ISSUES



## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

### Ethics, Morals, and Principles for the Surveyor



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# FUTURE ISSUES

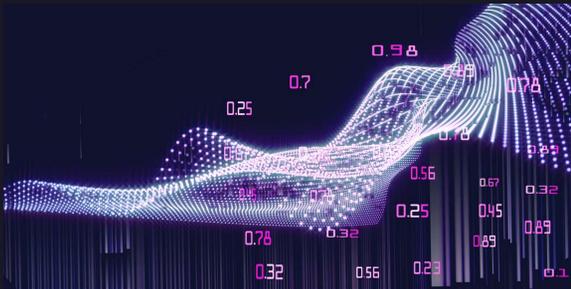
Will using AI become  
the norm for making  
business decisions?



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**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# FUTURE ISSUES



How will future technologies influence our ethics, morals, and principles?



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FUTURE ISSUES - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

How will technologies  
influence our decision  
making process?



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

## FUTURE ISSUES - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Does the land surveyor's  
role need to adapt with  
emerging technology?

**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

# TO SUMMARIZE...



- Ethics, morals, and principles are subjective and unique to each of us
- Societal norms vary by gender, generation, and by location
- Technology will enhance our decision making but the final output should be from the practitioner, not a machine



Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor



**Ethics, Morals, and Principles  
for the Surveyor**

**PLEASE LET US KNOW  
IF YOU HAVE ANY  
QUESTIONS!**

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