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Online Monitoring: A Threat to Employee Privacy in the Wired Workplace: An Annotated Bibliography


Adams’s “Dilbert” cartoons are known for satirizing everyday workplace issues. The cartoon on page 106 illustrates how rampant Internet use in the workplace has become and suggests that both employers and employees are well aware of the practice. The cartoon points out the difficulty employers face in trying to restrict employee Internet use.


According to the survey of workplace Internet use summarized in this article, employers are most concerned about employees visiting inappropriate Web sites. However, employers’ monitoring of employees extends beyond blocking certain Web sites. Many employers who participated in the study also track individual keystrokes and review e-mails. The study suggests that the majority of employers who monitor Internet use are telling their employees that they are being...
monitored. These findings seem to contradict many of my other sources, which claim that employers are not doing enough to explain Internet monitoring to their employees.


Spector Pro is a type of Internet surveillance program. This Web page, sponsored by the manufacturer of the product, explains the functionality of the software and describes its features. It can be installed on a variety of computers and can be installed in “Stealth” mode so that the user cannot detect the software on his or her computer. The program can also monitor all computer use ranging from Word documents to Web sites. This source supports my other sources by illustrating the ease with which this kind of software can be installed as well as the extensive amount of information it can gather for employers.


This excerpt from Flynn’s The ePolicy Handbook offers statistics on employee Internet use and five suggestions for minimizing it. Flynn claims that the majority of employees in the United States are using company time to surf the Internet and that companies are suffering huge financial losses as a result. Her suggestions for minimizing personal Internet use include establishing a company Internet policy and installing monitoring software. This is consistent with the suggestions of many other sources.

The author examines the results of a study of ten thousand employees conducted by America Online and Salary.com, which found that the Internet was the most popular means of wasting time at work. Frauenheim notes that the extra time spent surfing the Internet is costing companies an estimated $759 billion a year but also quotes the senior vice president at Salary.com and a director at America Online, who argue that employee Internet use actually increases productivity and creativity in the workplace. Frauenheim suggests that the increase in personal Internet use at work might result from a longer average workday and that use of the Internet has made employees more efficient, giving them more free time to waste.


In this editorial, Gonsalves considers the implications of several surveys, including one in which 61% of respondents said that their companies had the right to spy on them. The author agrees with this majority, claiming that it’s fine if his company chooses to monitor him as long as the company discloses its monitoring practices. He adds that he would prefer not to know the extent of the monitoring. This article, though not entirely objective, offers an employee’s perspective on Internet surveillance in the workplace.