

# Monitoring affects motivation 16550



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While employee monitoring by management is nothing new, electronic monitoring (EM), is a relatively new phenomenon. According to Vaught, EM can be described as the use of electronic instruments or devices such as radio, video, and computer systems to collect, store, analyze, and report individual or group actions or performance . EM has grown to be a worldwide feature of organizations. Firms use these systems to monitor employee s actions, and to make sure they are performing to their potential.

Motivation is a process that arouses and directs goal-directed behavior (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). Motivation is an attribute in the workplace that is dealt with everyday. Managers are constantly looking for ways to improve an employee s performance. One of the hardest parts of a manager s job is to find an approach to motivate his/her employees.

Our mission statement, as an organizational team, is to inform management of the implications that an electronic monitoring system has on employee work motivation. Certainly EM raises ethical dilemmas for managers, yet they must continually strive for improvements in productivity to compete in the marketplace (Vaught, 2000). The key to adopting an effective EM system, is the implementation process. If the system is implemented in a fair and equitable manner, then there should not be too many problems. If on the other hand, it is implemented poorly, it will cause many problems within the firm.

The wave of the new century is just evolving, and the importance of E-commerce is strengthening each day. Tying an issue of organizational

behavior in with an issue of E-commerce will give us an understanding of the types of effects E-commerce can have on an organization.

Monitoring means consistently measuring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees and work groups on their progress toward reaching their goals. Ongoing monitoring provides the opportunity to check how employees are doing and to identify and resolve any problems early (<http://www.opm.gov/perform/monitor.htm>). Electronic Monitoring (EM) has been around for many years to keep a watch over its employees. Every organization should have a type of policy to address EM; it should be in an employee handbook, or an employment application. Each employee should sign it to indicate that the employee understands and consents to the policy. Other ways of implementing the policy is to have a message appear each time an employee logs on to a company computer.

A couple of tips about employee monitoring are offered by the business owner s toolkit: monitoring should not extend into highly private areas in the workplace, such as restrooms and lounges; monitoring generally should be limited to the workplace. Only in the most unusual and rare circumstances should surveillance move beyond the workplace; and there should be a clear relationship between monitoring and a business-related reasoning ([www.toolkit.cch.com/](http://www.toolkit.cch.com/)).

New technologies make it possible for employers to monitor many aspects of their employees' jobs, especially on telephones, computer terminals and through electronic and voice mail. The main facet of EM is by reviewing an employee s computer usage. The websites that they log on to during work

are monitored to an extreme. If you have a computer terminal at your job, it may be your employer's window into your workspace. There are several types of computer monitoring: employers can use computer software that enables them to see what is on the screen or stored in the employees' computer terminals and harddisks; people involved in intensive word-processing and data entry jobs may be subject to keystroke monitoring. This system tells the manager how many keystrokes per hour each employee is performing. It also may inform employees if they are above or below the standard number of keystrokes expected. Keystroke monitoring has been linked with health problems including stress disabilities and physical problems like carpal tunnel syndrome; and the technique allows employers to keep track of the amount of time an employee spends away from the computer or idle time at the terminal ([http://www. privacyrights. org](http://www.privacyrights.org)).

Another monitoring technique that many employers are now acquiring is called Little Brother. Like a number of other similar products, it can tell the boss where you've been on the Internet. " It's very specific. It looks at who the users are and where the user goes at what time, says Jen Andersen of Kansmen Corporation, makers of Little Brother. " We can make very extensive reporting about every single issue. You go to Playboy, sports, weather, organizations — anything. It's extremely specific." He's not kidding. Those red bars show where his co-workers are on the Web in real time. The software also generates reports, complete with adjectives describing how a worker is spending his Internet time at the office. " The boss or the employer — whomever's in control of the network — can set the policy and can have

reports generated on a certain individual, or they can monitor all the time,” adds Andersen (<http://www.littlebrother.com/>).

There are many legal issues dealing with EM. Already, employees have brought actions under Title VII claiming racial discrimination in their employment, with racial comments in the e-mails of fellow employees. Likewise, sexually explicit e-mail messages from frequent solicitations for dates with co-workers via voice mail and e-mail referred to by the courts as e-harassment, have been the basis for sexual harassment suits. Internet access may also cause problems. If employees view sexually explicit materials, electronic records may be evidence used by an unhappy employee suing a formal employer for tolerating sexual harassment. All monitoring activity must be conducted within state and federal laws, including for example, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986. The ECPA covers almost all wire or electronic communication ([www.bizjournals.com/](http://www.bizjournals.com/)). The only problem with this is that, if the employer owns all of the equipment, such as, telephones, computers, etc. The employer then has full rights to monitor each piece of equipment, and the person that is using it. Employees have lost numerous cases to the courts claiming invasion of privacy. Since the employer has full access to maintain the server, he/she is not breaching an invasion of privacy. Further as illustrated in several articles, even if an employee had a reasonable expectation of privacy, the employers interest in preventing inappropriate or unprofessional communications over its e-mail system outweighed any privacy interest that the employee may have had in its e-mail (Monitoring Security on the Internet). A possible solution to handle the invasion of privacy situation is to

notify employees in advance that their activities may be monitored. Under any circumstances, the employer should acknowledge them. This is summed up well in the article Monitoring Communications on the Internet . Here it is stated that an employer cannot simply allow employees to communicate on an E-mail system unmonitored. Too many litigants will seek to hold the employer responsible for what is said and done. Employers should monitor, but do it wisely and consistently, and adopt a policy that works for them. They should also find a lawyer who can craft one, just for their business, rather than using one off the shelf . It is smart employee relations, and smart preventive law practice.

Just last week the New York Times fired 20 employees at a Virginia payroll-processing center for violating corporate policy by sending inappropriate and offensive e-mail, and the Navy reported that it disciplined more than 500 employees at a Pennsylvania supply depot for sending sexually explicit e-mail. Xerox fired 40 people in October for violating company computer policies and Boeing has fired a few on similar grounds too. Such cases hardly come as a surprise: 45 percent of major U. S. companies engage in electronic monitoring of communications and performance, according to a survey conducted by the American Management Association (AMA) (Your Boss may be monitoring your E-mail).

The above statement shows why organizations adopt EM systems. Monitoring can improve training and development efforts, increase productivity and service, and reduce costs. Properly designed and implemented, electronic monitoring also can provide benefits to workers. Monitoring can also prevent the theft of trade secrets and monitor the

quality of employee work. Employees, who develop, use or transmit confidential information might use Internet access or e-mail to send trade secrets to competitors. Monitoring employees may discourage employees from breaking this law, and other rules of the company.

Here are some guidelines that an organization takes when adopting a monitoring system:

Solicit employee participation. Employees respond more favorably when they are allowed to provide input into the design of the monitoring system, because they feel greater ownership and control. For example, employees may be allowed to determine the frequency with which they receive monitoring-related feedback. Employees also may provide input concerning what areas to monitor. Monitor for developmental purposes. The most important determinant of a monitoring system's success is the organization's purpose for monitoring. Monitoring used for punitive purposes is generally accompanied by destructive, hostile feedback and discipline. The objective is to drive the pace of work and punish workers who fail to keep up. Used in this way, monitoring becomes the electronic whip that transforms the modern organization into an electronic sweatshop. Such monitoring will meet employee resistance and have dysfunctional consequences for the organization. Companies such as MCI, AT&T and GE have found that employees respond positively when a developmental approach to monitoring is used. Practice disclosure. Disclosure refers to whether employees are informed when they are being monitored and how the information will be used. Results of a survey by Macworld Magazine indicate that 69 percent of companies that conduct computer monitoring or searches of employee

computers, voice mail, electronic mail, or networking communications do so without giving employees advance warning. For many workers, this type of silent or covert monitoring is akin to spying. As a result, it breeds an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion and damages employer-employee relations and diminishes worker morale. In contrast, disclosure may send a message that you intend to use monitoring in a positive developmental fashion (G. Stoney Alder).

Electronic Monitoring systems have become an essential to an organization. They play an important role in the everyday activities of the business.

Monitoring systems receive a lot of negative feedback. When it comes down to it though, if you follow the company's policies and rules, an employee has nothing to worry about. It is only those employees that abuse company policy or try to bend the rules that get burned by the system. Though it is a never ending argument whether the systems violates the employees right, the employees will always play devils advocate against the system, fearing that it one day might catch them acted in an unethical manner. Whatever you take on the subject, Monitoring is a rapidly growing category that cannot be ignored. Sooner or later, its reach will extend worldwide.

The success of an organization is dependent upon the success of its employees. Successful organizations have realized that employees are their most important assets, providing them with a competitive advantage in the marketplace. The manager plays a key role in the development of their employees. Managers must be able to create an atmosphere that will encourage employees to work to the best of their ability to accomplish organizational goals. Since it is part of a manager's job to get their work

done through others, managers need to understand what motivates their employees so that he or she can encourage them to meet these goals.

In our evolving global economy, managers must help their employees adjust to an ever-changing business climate. Work and the workforce are undergoing greater changes today than at any time since the beginning of the industrial revolution (Watts, ). Characteristics of today's business world such as the increased applications of technology, downsizing, mergers, a global workforce and the movement towards team-based organizations are challenging managers and employees. As the business world changes, managers must encourage employees to accept the new environment and grow with it. Work motivation will play a key role in encouraging this acceptance.

Work motivation is defined as the set of internal and external forces that initiate work-related behavior, and determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration (Ambrose and Kulik, 1999). The definition recognizes the influence of both internal and external factors that combine to determine what will motivate each individual. Managers need to be aware of the fact that material rewards are not the only thing that motivates workers. Work provides psychological meaning to many people. People who get satisfaction from their jobs often sustain high-quality performance even when they are disappointed with their compensation, job security, or working conditions (Watts, ). Managers are constantly looking for ways to improve an employee's performance because each employee has a unique personality and is motivated by different factors. It is highly unlikely that a single set of motivational approaches will be successful (Arnold and Krapels, 1996).

Since managers can not actually see work motivation or measure it, they must rely on established theories to guide them in measuring the observable manifestations of work motivation (Ambrose and Kulik, 1999). Theories attempt to explain behavior and provide insight into the factors that motivate people to perform. There are five methods of explaining behavior that underlie the evolution of modern theories of human motivation: needs, reinforcement, cognition, job characteristics, and feelings/emotions (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). These well-established theories have been researched extensively and continue to serve as a framework for modern motivation research.

One theory developed by Abraham Maslow is the hierarchy of needs (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). Five stages make up Maslow's hierarchy. The five stages, starting at the bottom of the hierarchy are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow established that these needs must be fulfilled in sequence, starting with the physiological needs. The ability to satisfy the lower-order need enables a person to focus on the next higher need. The process culminates in the achievement of self-actualization. This desire for self-fulfillment drives an employee to perform to the best of their ability.

Reinforcement theory emphasizes the relationship between behavior and its consequences (Ambrose and Kulik, 1999). According to B. F. Skinner, behavior is not a result of hypothetical internal states such as instincts, drives or needs (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). In other words, people have the tendency to continue with behavior that resulted from a favorable condition and not from a behavior that resulted from an unfavorable condition.

Uncomfortable with the idea that behavior is shaped completely by environmental consequences, cognitive motivation theorists contend that behavior is a function of beliefs, expectations, values, and other mental cognitions (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). People's behavior is recognized with a multiplicity of resourceful choices.

The job characteristics approach is based on the idea that the task itself is the key to employee motivation (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). The underlying meaning suggests that in order to enhance motivation a job must be interesting and challenging. Inclusively a job needs to have variety, autonomy and decision authority. A strategic way of adding variety and challenge to boring and mundane jobs are job enrichment or job reengineering.

The most recent addition to the evolution of motivation theory is feelings/emotions. This theory is based on the idea that workers are whole people who pursue goals outside of becoming a high performer (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). Our feelings and emotions are a function of our work motivation toward a multitude of our interests and goals. We are prone to follow our intuitions rather than our basic workplace routines.

Motivation is composed of complex ideas. Managers are confronted with this complexity of alternative explanations. Not one single theory is appropriate in all situations. A contingency framework is the best approach to tackle each situation individually. They must draw from the fields of economics, psychology, and sociology to develop a thorough understanding of what might motivate an individual employee (Arnold and Krapels, 1996). In order

for performance to increase, the employee needs to be motivated in some way that he/she receives satisfaction from their performance. This is one of the hardest parts of a manager's job and a business-related problem.

Up and until this point we have been skimming the surfaces of monitoring and motivation. Now it's time to recognize the impact that monitoring has on motivation and establish the implications that an electronic monitoring system has on employee work motivation.

There are a multiplicity of factors of how monitoring can affect motivation. We begin with the negative implications of monitoring. A number of issues have been raised with respect to the use of monitoring and the technological advancement used to determine whether or not the net effect is justified given their frequent detrimental effects. Although some authors argue that computerized monitoring may benefit employees through increased objectivity of performance appraisal and improved feedback, critics claim that computerized performance monitoring invades worker privacy, and creates a dehumanizing and unsatisfying work environment (Hawk, 1994).

Electronic monitoring of employee's job performance would almost certainly not be protected by the Fourth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. There is no guarantee of a right to privacy provided within the U. S. Constitution. In 1986 the Electronic Communications Privacy Act was passed to prohibit the interception of telephone or other oral, wire, or electronic communication, though there are exceptions both to prior consent and business use. In 1994 a proposed federal bill, The Privacy for Consumers and Workers Act, cleared the House Education and labor subcommittee, though restrictions found in

the bill would have made it difficult for telemarketing organizations to maintain quality control so this act failed passage.

So how do we motivate our employees if the argument is that use of electronic monitoring creates an atmosphere of distrust (Vaught, 2000)? We first need to clarify the relationship between computerized performance monitoring (CPM) and ethics. According to Stephen Hawk, there is an ethical theory that provides the basis for evaluating the morality of a given CPM. The first is the Utilitarianism approach which suggests that the morality of acts can be judged ethical to the extent that it results in the greatest good for all concerned parties (Hawk, 1994). This way everyone would benefit from CPM. Employees could potentially benefit if such profitability resulted in increased wages and stability; customers could benefit if monitoring brought about improvements in service/product quality, or lower prices; and society could benefit from increased efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce (Hawk, 1994). Utilitarianism suggests that decisions need to evaluate both the benefits and harms and choose the option that results in the greatest net good (Hawk, 1994). The second is the Kantian approach, which suggests that the inherent features of an action make it right or wrong (Hawk, 1994). Furthermore, this perspective places importance on the intrinsic worth of individuals, emphasizing the obligation of business to respect the right of privacy, the dignity and the autonomy of their employees (Hawk, 1994). Monitoring systems would be unethical to the extent that implementing them violated these obligations. The purpose in pursuing this issue was to shed some light on the ethical implications of the CPM system and provide

our intent to inform management of the ethical considerations of using an electronic monitoring system and how their motivation can be inhibited.

Aside from the ethical implications of privacy, critics of EM maintain that many of the more obtrusive systems can lead to increased levels of stress, decreased job satisfaction and quality of work life, decreased levels of customer service and poor quality (Vaught, 2000). Also, by imposing excess control over employee behavior, EM can lead to worker alienation and the perception that they are working in a modern sweatshop (Vaught, 2000).

Current applications of electronic performance monitoring (EPM) are based on job design theories that do not consider worker stress; hence we need an approach to EPM that considers job design and worker stress theories that will conclusively define the critical job elements of stress in an electronic monitoring context. According to Pascale Carayon, a conceptual model is proposed which states that electronic performance monitoring has direct and indirect effects on worker stress. She states that job demands, job control, and social supports are major risk factors of work stress and health effects which we will now examine.

Two categories of job design are examined when we research job demands: the amount of work to be done during a specific period and the amount of work pressure exhibited. According to Carayon, EPM has the potential to increase job demands if it is used to increase workload and work pressure (1993). EPM systems can put additional demands on workers and such a system can induce workers to work longer and harder to prove something to their supervisor. Sometimes EPM systems are equipped with standards to

follow and if these standards are excessive they will produce stress by increasing workload and work pressure (Carayon, 1993).

Incentive pay systems can be stressful also. Computer based incentive systems led to an increase in self-ratings of hurry and tension, an increase in blood pressure, and a decrease in heart rate variability (Carayon, 1993). It forces workers to push themselves to work harder and faster. Inevitably, electronically monitored workers indicated that quantity was overemphasized at the expense of quality (Carayon, 1993). Conclusively the nature of the EPM system sets up a competitive lifestyle among employees and can be an additional source of stress, especially if the poor performers can be directly identified.

EPM systems that provide direct feedback to the employee may reduce work pressure because the employee is able to recognize his or her workload accordingly and this may lead to decreased workload in terms of the time it takes to perform each task.

Job control examines how people strive for control over their environment, and decreased control can result in individual and organizational adverse effects (Carayon, 1993). According to Carayon, there are three levels of control: instrumental, conceptual, and organizational (1993). Instrumental control provides workers with the opportunity to use tools to change their work environment or product. EPM systems that provide feedback and knowledge of performance results can help the employee obtain instrumental control over the task (Carayon, 1993). Another facet is work pace. Workers who are able to decide at what pace to work experience less

stress (Carayon, 1993). If organizations use performance standards and incentive pay systems, workers may lose control over work pace because the pace will be defined for them (Carayon, 1993).

Conceptual control concerns the control over how tasks are carried out and how work is scheduled. This type of control may be reduced if employees do not know exactly when monitoring is taking place and have a hard time deciding in what order to do things in (Carayon, 1993). Also in many situations overemphasizing on quantity at the expense of quality may not allow workers to change working methods or try to do tasks in a different order (Carayon, 1993). Organizational control is employee involvement and participation. Under high organizational control, negative characteristics of EPM will be less stressful than under low organizational control (Carayon, 1993). Workers will be less stressed if they have a say in decisions that affect their job.

Social support has been defined in terms of the functional content of relationships. In a monitoring system that is highly intensive, frequent, continuous, and irregular, social support from one's supervisor and coworkers can be critical in reducing stress (Carayon, 1993). The effects of negative characteristics of EMP on worker stress will be reduced when workers have high levels of social support or coworkers (Carayon, 1993).

The conceptual model just described can now be used to understand the work organization and management implications of an EMP system. This model has indicated that the stress effects of EMP could be reduced if the

EPM system is designed and used well. This means a system should be relevant to the purpose it intends to achieve, complete, and not intensive.

The above discussion analyzed the negative implications of monitoring systems and how these various issues can reduce employee work motivation. Though with every negative implication there is a beneficial implication. The most intrinsic factor that will encompass and support the others is this idea of a fair and equitable system of EM. According to Vaught, with proper design it should be possible to gain the benefits of increased productivity, increased satisfaction and reduced stress all at the same time; if not far all at least for the majority (Vaught, 2000).

Management has always monitored their employee s behavior in one form or another. Supervision is an important factor in improving the quality and productivity of their employee s operations. According to research done by Vaught, there are several reported case examples of companies that have successfully used EM to improve employee productivity and customer service (Vaught, 2000). The key to doing so is how computer monitoring is practiced. One component is job enrichment, modifying a job such that an employee has the opportunity to experience achievement, recognition, stimulating work, responsibility, and advancement through electronic monitoring systems. Herzberg labeled these factors as motivators because each was associated with strong effort and good performance. On the flip side, hygiene factors specially company policy and administration, technical supervision, salary, interpersonal relations with one s supervisor, and poor working conditions were related with dissatisfaction by employees. Rather than giving employees additional tasks of similar difficulty, give workers

more responsibility. In table () there are seven principles managers are advised to follow to motivate individuals by incorporating motivators into an individual s job.

A direct outgrowth of job enrichment that relates to supervisors can monitor their employees and still maintain their motivation is the job characteristic model. This contingency approach attempts to pinpoint those situations and those individuals for which job design is most effective (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). Two researchers Richard Hackman and Greg Oldman worked with this job characteristics approach for the sole purpose to determine how work can be structured so that employees are internally motivated. As shown in Figure (), internal work motivation is determined by three psychological states. In turn, these psychological states are fostered by the presence of five core job dimensions. The overall method of this approach is to promote high internal motivation by designing jobs that posses the five core job characteristics. Going back to what we said earlier, job design is the specific component that if designed correctly will significantly effect workers general attitudes and reduce the negative affects of monitoring.

Conclusively according to Vaught, research has found that perceived procedural fairness of EM positively related to satisfaction with the system (Vaught, 2000). The best recommendation would be to have a monitoring system that is consistent, flexible, accurate, and compatible with employee moral and ethical values (Vaught, 2000). It all comes down to making a fair and equitable system of EM. How computer monitoring is used in practice has the most significant effect on workers attitude and behaviors, and even managerial attention to recognize standards for performance appraisal,

feedback, and good supervision (Vaught, 2000). In turn, managers will significantly reduce the otherwise negative effects of monitoring.

How employees are monitored is very important, though we must also consider how our employees are motivated. That is why we must consider Adam's equity theory of motivation along with distributive and procedural justice. Adam's model recognizes how people strive for fairness and justice in social exchanges or give-and-take relationships (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). There are three major categories of relevant others that people use when making equity comparisons: others inside or outside the organization in similar jobs; self-comparisons over time and against one's ideal ratio; and based on exchanges between individual and the organization (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). There are three different equity relationships that people can perceive comparing ratios of outcomes to inputs: equity, negative inequity, and positive inequity. The crucial component that managers need to be concerned with is inequity. If an electronic monitoring system is used and the comparison person enjoys greater outcomes for similar inputs as a result of the EM system, negative inequity will be perceived. Eventually their motivation will also decrease significantly. Table () lists eight possible ways to reduce inequity. It is important to note that equity can be restored by altering one's equity ratios behaviorally and/or cognitively (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998).

Equity definition has recently been expanded to include two separate components. The first, distributive justice, reflects the perceived fairness of how resources and rewards are distributed or allocated (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). The second is called procedural justice and is defined as the

perceived fairness of the process and procedures used to make allocation decisions (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1998). In other words, if employees believe the system from which they are judged is procedurally fair, then they are more likely to view the system as positive (Vaught, 2000). It is imperative that managers know the importance of perceived fairness in regard to the implementation of EM. Table () lists some considerations that managers need to take into account.

The question that is left to be understood is not whether or not management should monitor their employees; rather the question is how? It is apparent that EM systems must be designed and implemented with the concept of fairness in mind (Vaught, 2000). According to Vaught, an EM system must be consistent, free from bias, relevant, provide feedback, be job-related, and above all perceived as fair if both the employee and employer are to receive the benefits of EM (Vaught, 2000).

Conclusively our paper has shown the intent to provide management with the implications of an EM system and how it affects employee work motivation. It is estimated that from 6 to 20 million employees are effected by one type or another of electronic monitoring (Vaught, 2000). It is a controversial topic such that we have shown. Managers believe strongly in them, but they need to understand the implications involved. EM systems must be designed and implemented with consistency, fairness, and keeping in mind employee s moral and ethical values. Until this happens, employee motivation will continue to decrease and with that productivity and customer service will suffer. The organizations and the employees will be restrained

from their full potential unless sufficient knowledge can be gained from these merging issues