

Advantages and disadvantages of workplace monitoring essay



For many years, there has been an ongoing fight between employers and employees pertaining to employee rights. The main thing that they have fought about is computer and email monitoring. Employer may be watching and listening. Employee privacy has become a controversial issue in the field of Human Resource management as employers have more technologies available to monitor telephones, computer terminals, and voice mail. This privacy issue has been fueled by the increased use of a variety of electronic monitoring systems. Many employees don't seem to understand exactly employers do this.

How worried should people be about monitoring in workplace and what are the advantages and the disadvantages of it? There are several opinions and people split when it comes to this matter. Recent surveys have found that a majority of employers monitor their employees. They are motivated by concern over litigation and the increasing role that electronic evidence plays in lawsuits and government agency investigations. A 2005 survey by the American Management Association found that three-fourths of employers monitor their employees' web site visits in order to prevent inappropriate surfing.

And 65% use software to block connections to web sites deemed off limits for employees. About a third track keystrokes and time spent at the keyboard. Just over half of employers review and retain electronic mail messages. Over 80% of employers disclose their monitoring practices to employees. And most employers have established policies governing Internet use, including e-mail use (84%) and personal Internet use (81%).

The modern workplace isn't an Orwellian bastion of Big Brother, says Angela
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Georgallis, a SHRM spokeswoman. What they're concerned with," she says of the watchful employers, " is that the workplace is a productive and safe environment. " Lewis Maltby, president of National Work rights Institute, a nonprofit group in Princeton, New Jersey, agrees — but he says he wishes employers would monitor electronic communications more wisely.

President Bush signed a secret order in 2002 authorizing the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on U. S. citizens and foreign nationals in the United States, despite previous legal prohibitions against such domestic spying. It is, I believe, the first time a president has authorized government agencies to violate a specific criminal prohibition and eavesdrop on Americans. " said Martin, who has been sharply critical of the administration's surveillance and detention policies.

The super-secretive NSA, which has generally been barred from domestic spying except in narrow circumstances involving foreign nationals, has monitored the e-mail, telephone calls and other communications of hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of people under the program, the New York Times disclosed.

The aim of the program was to rapidly monitor the phone calls and other communications of people in the United States believed to have contact with suspected associates of al Qaeda and other terrorist groups overseas, according to two former senior administration officials. Authorities, including a former NSA director, Gen. Michael V. Hayden, were worried that vital information could be lost in the time it took to secure a warrant from a special surveillance court, sources said.

The information gained from monitoring and surveillance can be used to discriminate or retaliate against employees. For instance, an employer may keep track of each employee's personal calls during lunchtime to learn that a certain employee has ties to unions. Barbara A. Beck of Springfield, N. J. , reservationist for a major airline for 11 years, was fired for poor performance based on computer monitoring, consisting of " how many bookings I made every thirty minutes, the length of each call, how much time elapsed between each call, and how much time I spent away from the computer.

Beck contends that her poor productivity record was falsified because she was active in unionizing efforts. She said that most employees never get to see the electronic ' evidence. ' Employees might not even realize that they are being monitored. Although at least employees of the Federal Government must be informed that a monitoring program is in effect, there is currently no requirement that any employees know precisely when they are being monitored.

Ironically, though police must get a court order for each wire-tap they use to investigate a serious crime, employers are free to spy routinely on their employees as much as they want without the slightest suspicion of prior wrong doing. Without the workers knowing when, supervisors can plug into any of their staff's phone calls, while company computers keep track of how long employees spend with each customer and how many customers they handle each quarter hour.

Some firms even record the phone dialog. Secret monitoring is quite legal. Industrial espionage and transfer of trade secrets to competing companies

also can be greatly curtailed through use of electronic monitoring. Says Miller, “ Although most employers understand that treating all employees like potential criminals does not build the trust and cooperation needed to run a modern business team, many feel they have no other choice in order to keep up with their competitors.

In the early part of this century, businesses used child labor in order to become more profitable. Today, the human rights comity does not allow child labor and upholds minimum standards of health and safety. As current technology reaches to a point where routine monitoring of employees becomes a cost-efficient procedure, there is also need for a standard by which the privacy of employees will not be compromised.

If monitoring is necessary, then there must be an accompanying standard of privacy to which employers must hold. Monitoring involves issues of exercising control over workers and data about specific workers. Employees should have rights in the sense, at least, that they should not be wholly at the mercy of their employers, as slaves would be. There are laws and some protection from occupational health hazards, on the one hand, but we allow employers to hire and fire ‘ at will,’ on the other hand.