

Surveillance system by an employee of a software house

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



For task 1 of the Professional Software Practise module we have been asked to write a report on a given case study. The subject of the case study is the development and installation of a surveillance system by an employee of a software house. Alfred's company needs to secure this contract but faces dilemma in satisfying the formalities. The proposed system must have; computer data storage features, data indexing and retrieving feature, and also retrieving video footage recorded through the system to be consulted when required by the client. The purpose of the assignment is to discuss the professional codes, ethical issues and the data protection act with which software practitioner must comply. We must present the balanced arguments Alfred and his Company should consider before accepting the contract.

Assumptions I have created from the scenario: - 1. Are the employees aware of the new surveillance system? I assume that the employees have not been informed of the new surveillance system. This is because the contract was rushed. If the employees were not consulted then this could raise numerous problems. For example, is it ethically wrong that someone is monitoring employees' activity via monitors in real time. 2. How long will they hold the data? There is also no mention of how long the data will be held on the system.

3. If audio or videotapes will be made, how long will they be kept and who will have access to them? 4. What will the data be used for? If this data is used incorrectly it can serve as a catalyst for discrimination, unfair dismissal and other abuses. 5. Where will the surveillance camera be placed? 6. It does

not state whether they as part of a professional body possibly not otherwise they would not have rushed into the contract without fully discussing the issues or policies. The ethical software practitioner

We need to try and understand what the reasons are behind implementing the surveillance system in the factory. In the case study it states that the factory manager needs the system installed for " safety problems" and to watch out for the " theft of materials by the workers". There are many different types of surveillance equipment available. For example Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), face recognition software, infrared imaging and microphones. I think that the most suitable technology in this case would be the CCTV cameras. I will therefore making the assumption that the client is to use CCTV to implement the system.

What are the client's reasons behind installing the surveillance system in terms of looking out for safety of the workers? Are the cameras being put in to place to make sure that the factory workers are carrying out their duties effectively or is to ensure employee peace of mind for example to see if the employees are using the machinery correctly and working safely etc. the peace of mind approach might have a positive impact on the workers and their overall motivation as they may feel that the manager is looking out for their safety and protecting them from coming to any danger and this could even save lives. However Covert surveillance involves an extremely serious breach of employee privacy. Employees have the right to privacy, which includes a degree of privacy in the workplace. As I stated in my assumption the employees are not aware of the surveillance system being implemented

this is breaching the provisions of the Human Rights Act and also ties in with the data protection Act.

On the other hand, employers have a legitimate interest in taking measures to protect their assets. The case study mentions there have been a number of thefts of materials. Covert surveillance is often the most effective means of detecting unlawful activity. The case study explains that Alfred and software house are "currently in a bit of a slump" I am assuming that this means that the business is not doing too well at this point in time and may also be having some financial problems. Therefore they need all the business they can get to get through this bad patch. Alfred's company feels that if they make a success of this project they could gain more business in the future and prevent the company from going bankrupt.

Moving on from these issues and concerns there are a number of possible actions Alfred can take. One possible action Alfred could take would be to not act at all and nothing or go along with whatever decision the company makes. After all I am assuming that Alfred is not part of management department in his company and therefore is not required to make the final decisions. It seems more likely that he is a systems developer, or possibly even a contractor or even a student. Alfred may be under pressure from the company and may feel it is not his place to say anything about the lack of policies in the contract. By going along with his company blindly, this may be his way of showing loyalty towards the company and the project. This could work in favour of Alfred. This could mean that he is recommended first for

future projects with the company and given more opportunities to carry out other projects. This would be an advantage to Alfred.

In my opinion Alfred should not accept the contract on these grounds as the contract was rushed and no formalities have been drawn up. Also in the long term if the employees suspect they are under surveillance they may take industrial action which will lose business. On the other hand if this one of the options that Alfred decides to take the consequences of his actions could be quite severe for all parties concerned.

It is the duty of every Software practitioner to do their job with due consideration for all the people involved. They have obligations to all parties concerned; this meaning users, clients, the clients employees and of course their own organization for which they work (Gotterbarn, 1991). Therefore Alfred and his company must act responsibly for all legal, ethical and efficiently in acting in their profession.

Professional Codes of Practice A professional body enforces codes of conduct on its members as it is an effective way to regulate the profession. In the information profession there are a lot of bodies. In my report I will focus on the following professional bodies: - The British Computer Society (BCS) and the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE). However when applying the codes of conduct I will follow the codes of the BCS as I am making the assumption that Alfred and his software house are part of this professional body since he is a software engineer he and the software house would be

part of the British Computer Society. The BCS Code of Conduct details are in the Appendix of the reference 6. 1. 2 (pp 352-354).