



Should you monitor your employees online?



To monitor your employees, or not to monitor. If you've ever considered monitoring your staff's online activities, you may've been lost as to whether or not it's the right decision. So we've listed the pros and cons of doing it, and some tips to make it a success if you go through with it. Here's what you need to know.

The Case for Monitoring

There are a number of reasons why monitoring your employees is a good idea. Doing so can help you:

- **Protect your organization from data theft or harm** - because some disgruntled employees may try to steal from you or corrupt your data.
- **Ensure you have a harassment free workplace** - because cyber harassment (sexual or otherwise) happens among employees.
- **Ensure staff are complying with policies** - not downloading illegal programs or spending time on websites with illegal or hostile content.
- **Provide evidence in case of a lawsuit** - heaven forbid this happens, but if an employee participates in illegal activities on your business's computers, monitoring can provide evidence of it.

The sad fact of the matter is that many businesses who monitor end up discovering that employees are doing things they're not happy about. Research by Nancy Flynn, the executive director of the ePolicy Institute in Columbus, Ohio, revealed that two thirds of companies monitor their employees, and half of them have fired employees due to their behavior on email and the web.

Cons

Of course there are some potential downsides to monitoring that you should be aware of as well. These include:

- **Productivity loss** - monitoring can kill employee morale, and therefore you may see a hit in their productivity if they feel you distrust them.
- **TMI and lawsuits** - you'll likely learn about the personal lives of your employees that you would've never known about had you not monitored. You may discover their political or religious views, sexual orientation or medical problems. This could potentially open up your business to privacy or discrimination issues if you or your management team act negatively on this information.



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3 Ways to Monitor Your Employees

1. Create written policies

When you decide to monitor, ask yourself, are you doing it for security purposes? Is it to ensure your employees are not wasting large amounts of time on Social media? Whatever the reasons, it's smart to balance your policies with the expectations of your employees. If you're too strict with your monitoring, you could create that atmosphere of distrust we mentioned above. So set guidelines for acceptable use of email, social media, web surfing, instant messaging, and downloading software and apps. Also, in your policy, include how monitoring will be carried out and how data will be secured or destroyed.

2. Tell your employees

It's important to inform your employees about your monitoring. If they find out you're doing it without their knowledge, you could create resentment among them or even face legal issues. And just by letting staff know, you may actually see a boost in productivity as it could deter them from wasting time on the web.

When you tell your employees, explain why you're doing it and the risks your business faces from misuse of digital assets. Reassure them you're not doing it to spy on their personal life, but only attempting to create a compliant and law abiding workplace. Because their activities will now be less private, encourage your staff to keep their personal communication to their smartphones. Also, provide a copy of your written policy to employees to read over and sign.

3. Get the right technology tools

While there are many technology tools to monitor your employees, bear in mind, you don't need to follow their every move. In fact, you shouldn't as it will not only waste your time, but also cause you to find out more information than necessary. So look for technology that will alert you to potential problems, so you can focus on more important things. Lastly, you may also want to consider technology that can block certain content, like porn or hate websites, as employee access to this content could create larger problems.

Whether or not to monitor your employees can be a tricky decision but, if implemented correctly, could benefit your business in making it more secure and even more productive. For more information about security and other IT support tools, get in touch. We'll make our best effort to help however we can.

If your business needs any help implementing these tricks, give Networking Solutions a call at **916-696-7200**

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