



Trust & Mutual Responsibility

– The Essential Link When Monitoring Employees

Background

As today's business environment becomes increasingly web-enabled, organizations worldwide continue to display a growing interest in understanding and managing their employees' Internet and email use.

Blocking and filtering solutions are often implemented to eliminate or reduce employee Internet access in order to minimize the risk of malicious virus exposure, network overload and productivity losses. However, limiting or denying employees' Internet access can create employee resentment, hostility and even reduce productivity further by complicating and delaying the accomplishment of Internet related tasks.

A certain amount of online recreation can enhance many workplaces and ultimately make employees more productive. Unfortunately some individuals may not use online recreation in a constructive manner which warrants managerial monitoring and control efforts.

Using Monitoring & Reporting Solutions

Many organizations that recognize blocking and filtering limitations have turned to monitoring and reporting solutions. In essence, an effective monitoring solution will assist in maximizing employee productivity, identifying download issues, improving network management and minimizing litigation risks. However, no matter how innovative the monitoring solution may be, in order to fully leverage the intuitive benefits provided, businesses must establish, and effectively communicate, comprehensive acceptable Internet usage policies.

Employee Consensus & Trust

The effectiveness of employee monitoring directly relates to employees' awareness of the content of the policy and corresponding breach consequences. Thus, organizations must develop appropriate policies, publish and communicate them so employees understand exactly what is expected of them and the conditions of their working environment.

Recent research clearly indicates substantial benefits in obtaining employee consensus regarding the organization's monitoring activities. It is when employees do not fully



comprehend the organizational motives and objectives behind monitoring activities that the relationship can turn sour. Trust between the employee and the employing organization is imperative for employee wellbeing but also because of the potential economic savings derived from increasing trust. Research shows that there is an inverse relationship between cost and trust, thus, as trust increase costs decrease. It has been established that in organizations with high levels of trust, productivity consistently exceeds other businesses where trust is low or latent.

Employee Privacy & Trust

In recent years, organizations' essential monitoring practices have raised increasing concern regarding individual privacy at work and employee trust. Research in the employee monitoring area has correspondingly attempted to understand the policy and monitoring program characteristics that can enhance employee acceptance, trust and thus effectiveness. It has been demonstrated that Internet and email monitoring systems designed to provide workers with performance feedback influences the monitored individual's perception of fairness, satisfaction and task performance.

Research also suggest that when monitoring work related activities, such as Internet usage, and allowing those who are being monitored the opportunity for feedback and input into the process can reduce fear of invasion of privacy and enhances procedural justice. Hence, employees feel affirmed if procedures are adopted to treat them with respect and dignity and the likelihood of acceptance is increased, even for outcomes they do not like.

Moving Towards Mutual Responsibility

Frequently IT Managers and Administrators are given the ultimate responsibility of managing, enforcing and communicating acceptable Internet usage for an entire organization. With regards to the employee acceptance, trust and effectiveness discussed here, this approach can be viewed as rather questionable.

John Stewart, Chief Security Officer at Cisco, is one of many leading ICT professionals that has recognized the importance of mutual responsibility in organizational security. He recently made the following statement:

“What I’d rather never say is that a security team is responsible for security at a company... That means that 99 percent of the company somehow isn’t... I’d rather be helpful to the business, towards it understanding that we’re all responsible”.

The focal question that arises is; how can organizations effectively monitor their acceptable Internet usage policy whilst receiving overall management and employee acceptance and trust?

WEBSPY’S VANTAGE ULTIMATE

WebSpy Ltd is a pioneer in developing a solution that can efficiently resolve the issues identified. WebSpy C.O.O. Lagis Zavros commented that:

“We are seeing a trend in many countries where companies are recognizing that issues relating to inside threats need a two pronged attack – protection of the internal IT resources through reliable security systems and education of the workforce to drive responsible behavior.”

Secure Information Distribution

WebSpy has recently completed the development of their new analysis and monitoring solution; Vantage Ultimate, that ascertains a company’s organizational structure and enables secure, web-based access to reports for any or all members in an organization. Vantage Ultimate enables organizations to securely distribute and share Internet and email monitoring and reporting information at any chosen level, to ensure that the protection of organizational resources is not just the responsibility of the security team but potentially the entire organization.

Driving Responsible Behavior

Vantage Ultimate allows employees on different levels of the organization to conduct their own ad-hoc analysis to view, for example, their productive and non-productive activity thus helping to foster and drive responsible Internet usage behavior. Employees who understand



the organizational costs of their personal unproductive activities are more likely to accept the organization's monitoring activities and modify their own behavior.

Driving Mutual Responsibility

Vantage Ultimate also allows line managers and HR managers to play an active role in the way that Internet and email resources are being utilized and how it affects the performance and security of their own department. For example, HR managers can be allowed access to log file storages that enable them to monitor the activity of employees who have recently resigned but still have an agreed notice period and will have access to confidential information throughout this period.

Privacy

Most competing log analysis solutions, trying to address the same issues, lack any protection of employee privacy. They provide open or shut access, meaning that anyone with access to their solution can view anyone else's activity. Vantage Ultimate is designed to protect an individual's privacy rights by only allowing authorized users to see the employee's identity. For instance, Network Administrators may need to investigate all traffic going to a particular site but should not need to know the user names – in this case user names would be anonymous for them but available for line managers or HR. From another privacy perspective, the Web Module is a straightforward way to provide employees with full disclosure regarding the information recorded about them.

Vantage Ultimate: <http://www.webspy.com/products/vantage/ultimate/vantageultimate.aspx>

Vantage Ultimate Free 30 day trial <http://www.webspy.com/products/vantage/download.aspx>

More WebSpy information: <http://www.webspy.com>



Related Articles & Research

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