

Life is Unpredictable, Your Data Shouldn't Be!

With the arrival of various internet based applications which allow people to express themselves, the web has definitely become democratic. But using the same for carrying out personal or malicious activities, and that too using your office computer can land you in deep trouble.

A senior executive at a marketing firm was accused by his boss of passing on vital company data to a competing firm, he denied it. "But we have the proof", his boss told him and showed it to him, as clear as daylight. The executive resigned immediately. It's a fact of life in the 21st century workplace; the boss may well be watching you, especially if you use a office computer. Improper computer use can also spell legal trouble. Downloading pirated music or movies onto a work computer can prompt a copyright-infringement suit. Viewing pornography or sending sexually suggestive emails can lead to sexual harassment claims. Thus, an employer can use special software to monitor everything - it's as if a camera is watching your computer.

Companies are using two types of spying software: network-based programs that monitor all traffic passing through a system, and programs that sit directly on an employee's desktop. What can such software do? They can track and block the websites a user tries to visit and log his or her every keystroke. The boss can see screen shots of what the employees do on Yahoo! He can see what they're typing, whether it's resumes or business-related stuff. Such program even keeps track of songs that employees download to their iPod. In the American and European countries, one in four companies reports firing someone for improper email use. Such software works without being identified, even by an anti-virus program.

There are plenty of valid reasons for companies to monitor their worker's computer use.

1. **Productivity:** A recent survey found that employees on average wasted at least two hours a day-much of it online-doing things other than work.
2. **Security:** Porn, gambling and gaming sites, for example, can harbor viruses and other malicious programs that load onto a computer secretly and allow outsiders to damage a network or make off with sensitive information.
3. **Competitive reasons:** Companies also have competitive reasons to keep tabs on workers.
4. **Employee attrition:** With young employees who may have quickly changing loyalties, more and more companies see the need to spy.
5. **Reputation Management:** Companies want to be sure that there employee's defamatory work does not harm the company's global reputation.

Implementing all these policies may be beneficial for the companies, but the employees always feel pressurized. They feel paralyzed, if their every activity from composing the weekly report to emails is tracked. And who hasn't opened his email to find a message from a friend passing along a goofy YouTube clip or an off-color joke. If it does get a laugh, it's probably passed along to a few more people. And this can seriously land the employee who first circulated such content within the company.

It seems that technology will continue to creep unabashedly into the workplace. So, if you blog, forward naughty email, flirt, chat or search for a new job, just remember that it's safest to use your own computer for any of that in the comfort of your home.

For more information on Data security, visit us at www.agapeinc.in or www.agapeforensic.com.