

Preface

Few will deny that the increasingly omnipresent nature of the World Wide Web in the workplace is dramatically revolutionizing the manner in which we work. The advantages of the World Wide Web are the ability to gather, communicate, distribute, share, and store information publicly in real time (Davis & Naumann, 1999). The reach and range of the World Wide Web is phenomenal (Evans & Wurster, 2000) and employees have increasingly been given access to it in the workplace.

Employees also view the World Wide Web as an indispensable tool, using it to communicate with colleagues, managers, and subordinates, and to maintain relationships with valued customers. According to the UCLA Internet Report, *Surveying the Digital Future, Year 3* (2003, p. 72), of those who had Internet access at work, 90% visited work-related sites in 2002, up from 89% in 2001 and 83% in 2000. There is some evidence that the Internet is perceived as a catalyst for productivity, while those who report that the Internet makes them neither more nor less productive continue to decline (UCLA Center for Communication Policy, 2003, p. 75).

In addition to being an organizational tool, the Web provides employees access to the world's biggest playground and information repository. This aspect has prompted growing concerns about personal World Wide Web usage in the workplace. According to IDC Research, 30% to 40% of employee World Wide Web activity is non-business-related. The UCLA Internet Report, *Surveying the Digital Future, Year 3* reports that of those who had Internet access at work, about 60% visited websites for personal use in 2002, about the same as in 2001.

Since the World Wide Web is an integral component of our workplaces, then management of personal use is a timely topic. There seems to be two

major perspectives framing the management of personal Web usage (PWU) in the workplace. The first is that PWU is dysfunctional. It is negative, with no place in the workplace, as it can cost organizations billions of dollars in terms of lost productivity, increased security costs, and network overload, as well as the risk of civil and criminal liabilities. Personal usage at work is depicted as a variation of other dysfunctional work behaviors such as stealing, wasting time, and making personal long distance phone calls (Block, 2001). In this perspective PWU is often called cyber slacking, or Web abuse, or cyber deviance. This perspective fosters the characterization of employees as “variable costs” that are to be monitored, controlled, and where possible, minimized; it is more of an adversarial view of the employment relationship. To monitor and control personal Web usage, organizations often use information technology control mechanisms such as firewalls, content management software, log files, and blocking (Sunoo, 1996).

A second viewpoint is that PWU has the potential for constructive effects; roots of this viewpoint are in a human resource perspective. A human resource perspective views employees as valuable assets that are to be nurtured and invested in. This perspective considers employees as partners where collaboration and trust are the drivers of organizational and personal interfaces. When employees are viewed as investments, there are incentives to invest in such things as training, development, prevention of skill obsolescence, retention programs, wellness, and work life balance because the returns to these investments, less immediate and tangible, are real. The human resource perspective is of increasing importance in the 21st century workplace because it provides a stronger foundation for competitive advantage than products and facilities, which are easily imitated. A human resource-based view of the firm suggests that sustainable advantage derives primarily from human skills, knowledge bases, and service strengths that are not easily reproduced (Quinn, Doorley, & Paquette, 1990), and there is recognition that having superior people in your organization is critical. Personal Web usage then can have learning and well-being components from a human resource view.

Personal Web usage can contribute to the continuous learning so important for 21st century “knowledge workers.” The Web can be used to keep current on world events and business news, and to support educational efforts through formal classes and professional associations. As examples of the well-being component, PWU can be a way to manage an increasingly blended work and personal life. PWU permits the accomplishment of personal tasks that have been displaced as work demands spread out beyond the traditional eight-hour day, five-day-a-week work schedule. Surprisingly, in a recent sur-

vey it was discovered that Americans spend more time at home on the Internet for work purposes than they spend on the Internet at work for personal reasons (Kaplan, 2003). Allowing PWU in the workplace then would seem to be equitable repayment for work done at home. Additionally, PWU might foster subconscious problem solving or provide a necessary break from drudgery or intense endeavor..." (Friedman, 2000, p. 1563).

The paradox then is how to blend the control perspective with reliance on hard controls through impersonal information technologies with the human resource perspective with reliance on interpersonal communication, and a shared understanding of acceptable Internet behaviors. This volume presents work that focuses on understanding and resolving this paradox.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Information Systems has become a wide and diverse discipline as information technology has moved from back-office, closed systems to end-user-controlled open systems. To fully appreciate the role of information technology in the 21st century workplace requires a range of approaches. However, in this volume, we have chosen to explore one aspect of information technology — personal Web use in the workplace through the lens of the human resource view. We feel that successful organizations in the 21st century will be those that attract, retain, develop, and reward individuals who have skills and knowledge to creatively approach customers, stakeholders, and take advantage of the opportunities that the World Wide Web offers in a global marketplace.

In the first section, "*Exploring the Paradox of Personal Web Usage*," the positive and negative aspects of PWU are examined. In Chapter 1, Murugan Anandarajan and Claire Simmers present the results of a qualitative study in which two dimensions of personal Web usage (constructive and dysfunctional) are identified. They find that organizational position is an important factor influencing judgments on the appropriateness of PWU. Chapter 2, by Zoonky Lee, Younghwa Lee, and Yongbeom Kim, examines why employees use the Internet for personal purposes during work hours. Employees use the Web for personal use because they do not think it is harmful or unethical, because of strong social influence, and because PWU may be beneficial to the organization. The main deterrents to PWU are lack of time and lack of privacy. Jo Ann Oravec in Chapter 3 proposes that constructive uses of online recreation and play can enhance many workplaces (especially high-tech and information-saturated ones), helping individuals gain fresh perspectives. She suggests

that workgroups and human resource professionals participate in discussions as to what constitutes “constructive recreation” and in the development of fair organizational policies. In the last chapter of this section, Murugan Anandarajan, Patrick Devine, and Claire Simmers use multidimensional scaling techniques to develop a typology of workplace personal Web usage, with PWU behaviors falling into four distinct categories: disruptive, recreational, personal learning, and ambiguous.

In the chapters in the second section, “*Managing Personal Web Usage from a Human Resource Perspective,*” the range of options available to manage PWU is explored. Susan Lippert addresses the concept and importance of interpersonal trust and the use of the Internet in an organizational setting. Generalized guidelines for organizational practice and recommendations to support a culture of trust within the work environment are presented. In Chapter 6, Dinesh Mirchandani draws from the field of criminology using deterrence theory to investigate PWU. Deterrence theory suggests that sanctions and disincentive measures can reduce systems abuse by making potential abusers aware that their unethical behavior will be detrimental to their own good. Mirchandani recommends that a human resource manager, rather than an information technology person, spearhead organizational efforts handling PWU in the organization.

Chapter 7 by Paulette Alexander takes a different view by looking at how employees are subjected to unsolicited Web intrusions that may be interpreted as dysfunctional PWU. Alexander recommends policies and practices in addition to the deployment of protective technologies to shield both employees and the organization. Andrew Urbaczewski in Chapter 8 provides a classification and description of various control mechanisms, both technical and social. The social solutions rely on interpersonal skills rather than the “hammer of the log file” to curb dysfunctional personal Web usage. In Chapter 9, Claire Simmers and Murugan Anandarajan examine whether employee web usage patterns, attitudes toward web usage in the workplace, and organizational policies are more similar (convergence thesis) or less similar (divergence thesis) in three countries. The section concludes with Chapter 10, where Grania Connors and Michael Aikenhead examine the legal implications of PWU in the workplace for both employees and employers. In the United States, the significant risks to which employers are exposed outweigh an individual’s right to privacy.

The final section is entitled “*Toward the Well-Being of the Employee.*” In Chapter 11, Feng-Yang Kuo discusses Internet abuse from a psychoanalytic perspective. While past research has treated abuse as deriving from conscious decision, the unconscious mind may influence one’s abusive conduct.

Thus social responsibilities and sanctions, and individual psychological well-being should be part of the training process in organizations as much as technical training. In Chapter 12, Mark Griffiths continues to examine the issue of employee well-being from a different lens by introducing the concept of Internet addiction, specifically looking at online pornography, sexually related Internet crime, and online gambling in the workplace. He offers guidelines for employers and human resource departments such as raising awareness, partnering with employees so everyone is vigilant, and giving support and help to problem users. The final chapter is written by Pruthikrai Mahatanankoon and Magid Igbaria who found that personal e-commerce enhanced job satisfaction and productivity, while personal information seeking decreased productivity. They suggest that attitudinal changes and enforced behavioral norms developed through education and training, rather than relying on filtering, and monitoring tools show the most promise for managing personal Web usage in the workplace.

This book continues to add to our body of knowledge on personal Web usage in the workplace and supports viewing the issue from a human resource perspective. As organizations look to employees as the competitive key, then how PWU is managed is one indicator of how seriously an organization takes the mission of the human resource perspective to heart and to practice.

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