Chapter VIII

Internet Gambling in the Workplace

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According to a recent report carried out by the company SurfControl (Snoddy, 2000), office workers who while away one hour a day at work on various nonwork activities (e.g., trading shares, booking holidays, shopping online, etc.) could be costing businesses as much as $35 million a year. Their survey found that 59% of office Internet use was not work-related and that those who traded in shares, played sport, shopped, and bought holidays cost companies the most. One activity that may play an ever-increasing part of Internet use at work is Internet gambling.

Most gamblers are what might be termed “normal” or “social” gamblers who occasionally bet on a horse race, play bingo or buy a lottery ticket. However, for a small proportion of the population, gambling is an activity that takes over their whole life and can cause major problems. A new area of potential concern is Internet gambling—particularly in the workplace. Many people believe the future lies in the Internet, and the gaming industry—like most other companies with a service to sell—is itself starting to go online. Technology is the future and electronic gambling is where the action is and will continue to be. No one is really sure how the Internet will develop over the next 5 to 10 years but Internet gambling as a commercial activity has the potential for large financial rewards for the operators.

Gambling is undergoing mass expansion all over the world. The global growth of gambling is particularly noteworthy in the area of Internet gambling. In many countries there appears to be a slow shift from gambling being taken out of gambling environments and into the home and the workplace.

(and in the case of Internet gambling it has gone from being site specific to being in cyberspace). What is being witnessed is a shift from destination resorts (e.g., Las Vegas, Atlantic City), to individual gaming establishments (e.g., casinos, amusement arcades, betting shops, etc.), to single-site gambling opportunities (e.g., slot machines in cafes, cinemas, restaurants, etc.), to gambling from home or work (e.g., Internet gambling, telephone betting, etc.). There also appears to be some standardization of the market in that many of the same types of gambling games are appearing all over the world and gambling in itself is becoming more socially acceptable and legitimate. The success of gambling depends on many factors including diversity, accessibility and advertising. Internet gambling is global, accessible, has no geographical borders, and has 24-hour availability. It therefore has the potential to utilize these factors to maximum effect.

Nowadays, employees do not even have to leave their desks as they can set up endless Internet accounts with two or three different bookmakers. Part of the problem stems from the fact that employers are reluctant to acknowledge gambling as a workplace issue and the possible implications that may arise from it. Internet gambling is perhaps one of the fastest growing areas in the gambling world and highlights the ease with which gambling can intrude in the workplace. This chapter therefore outlines a number of important and interrelated areas including overviews of (i) gambling, (ii) problem gambling, (iii) technological addictions, (iv) Internet gambling, (v) types of gambling at work and implications for employers, (vi) workplace gambling issues and implications for Internet gambling, and (vii) identification of gambling problems in the workplace and implications for the identification of Internet gamblers.

**GAMBLING: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

The National Centre for Social Research recently carried out the biggest ever survey of adult gambling behaviour in Britain, which was the first nationally representative survey of its kind (Sproston, Erens & Orford, 2000). Of the almost 8,000 people who participated, it was found that three in four adults in Britain gamble every year. Unsurprisingly, the national lottery was the most popular gambling activity in the country, with 65% of the population buying lottery tickets in the past year. The percentage of the population participating in other types of gambling over the past year included: scratchcards (22%); fruit machines (14%); horse race betting (13%); making private bets with friends or workmates (11%); the football pools (9%); bingo (7%); and casino gambling (3%). New types of gambling, including spread betting and
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