Chapter XIII

Impact of Personal Internet Usage on Employee’s Well-Being

Pruthikrai Mahatanankoon
Illinois State University, USA

Magid Igbaria
Claremont Graduate University, USA

ABSTRACT

The Internet has become one of most technological necessity tools in today’s workplace. With the broad scope of its usefulness and its ease of use, employees find the technology most beneficial to their daily work activities as well as their personal activities. Using the established behavioral theory with data collected from Internet users in the workplace, the chapter investigates the impact of personal Internet usage on employees’ job satisfaction and performance. This chapter also recommends several strategies that management can implement to increase employees’ well-
being — such as Workplace Internet Usage Decision Grid, and Adaptive Internet Monitoring and Filtering Policy — while enhancing their work performance through personal Internet usage in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

Modern organizations recognize the benefits of the Internet through its ability to communicate, research, and share essential information between employees. The Internet is the intercommunication linkage between organizations and customers, thereby creating new virtual organizational arrangements. Its usability and functionality are endless, providing future analysis of market trends, as well as competitors’ moves and products, and investigating other factors that may be affecting the company’s competitive position.

Since the Internet has proven to be a useful tool for businesses, many companies provide employees with access to the Internet and e-mail accounts. Despite being a productive tool, however, many employees are spending time on the Internet that is not job related during work hours. The issues of employees spending work time on personal activities are not new to management. In some ways, spending time on a personal telephone conversation, taking longer break times, or chatting with colleagues in the office is similar to personal Internet surfing. However, personal Internet usage enhances and expands the scope of personal activities beyond organizational communication norms and boundaries, which may eventually lead to the extension of non-work activities during office hours.

The research in the organizational impact of personal Internet usage in the workplace has not been investigated fully. Many managers suggest that personal web usage leads to a non-productive workforce and recommend various remedies to limit or block personal Internet usage, such as installing Internet monitoring and filtering software to filter out some unwanted websites, restricting website access, or restricting hours of access. Besides limiting personal Internet usage through technological means, some organizations also publicize an Internet Usage Policy (IUP) throughout the workplace and anticipate the policy to be one of their deterrent strategies to enhance organizational productivity. Do these actions facilitate employees’ performance and job satisfaction, or do they lead to unsatisfactory and unhappy workers?

While managers and researchers are beginning to understand how the Internet can be utilized for business purposes, their understanding of the
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