

Solving The Productivity Dilemma: Boost Productivity Fast with Computer Monitoring

These are the times that try the bottom line. In these days of adversity squeezing more from less will make the difference in who thrives or merely survives – or even fails.

Companies can no longer afford time wasting; coffers aren't flush as they once were. Employees are paid to work. It's that simple. In today's climate each must contribute the fullness of his time and do so intelligently. A *lean operation* is the catch phrase.

Any significant departure into football scores, recipe swapping, Instant Message gossiping (you get the idea) abuses trust between employer and employee. It cannot be tolerated – not unless a company is willing to forego significant profit.

The solution is simple: monitoring employee computer use. That's it! The objective of knowing what employees are doing on their computers is to create a work environment that enables staff to improve its time management, work quality and morale. You will see a change in behavior for the better – guaranteed!

And as a fringe benefit you'll sleep better. Zzzzz...

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How Companies Use Monitoring to Improve Productivity and Save Money

Deterrence is Powerful

Customers tell us that around 80-90% of off-task activity ends after monitoring is announced. Employees discipline themselves – not you. The way it ought to be.

This well known organisation needed to replace its web filtering program because they wanted to monitor more than website activity, but not because they thought productivity to be an issue – they didn't. However, after implementing monitoring they were surprised to find how much time was spent on non-work activity.

The deterrent effect of monitoring can be illustrated by this example of what they found: An employee had spent almost the entire day doing

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anything but work when his manager was out of the office. What a change after monitoring was implemented! 😊

This manufacturer did a baseline before announcing monitoring and then reviewed performance afterwards. He found that after the word went out off-work activity declined 98%. Wow!

A financial company compared monitoring to the law. People often obey the law because there are consequences if they are caught breaking it. Likewise, monitoring let's people know they are accountable – and supplies the evidence to back it up.

I'd say deterrence is the best value monitoring provides: Employees improve themselves; you aren't involved – except for any scofflaws. And that quickly comes to an end because of the evidence. Then, o'employee, it's either shape up or ship out – your choice.

Improve Productivity and its Quality

Employees remain more focused on their work, not having distractions of checking those football stats or searching out a recipe for the weekend dinner party. They do things better.

This provider of business services found the effect on productivity immediate. Staff were more attentive to their work; didn't fool around as much. The company encourages a relaxed atmosphere, freedom to do personal things, but for some liberty became license.

This organization implemented monitoring to ensure the quality of its email, Instant Messaging – all communications. They were most pleasantly surprised to find that "productivity is up; it's easy to see it. We fell over productivity; didn't realize monitoring's effectiveness."

Reducing, Keeping and Promoting Staff

In a difficult economy it is more likely that staff must be released. But how do you measure performance to distinguish the wheat from the chaff and ensure the better employees remain? That's where monitoring shines.

The experience of this company is typical. They needed to cut costs and that included reducing the workforce. Letting people go is one of most unpleasant tasks for a manager, so having an objective basis is a big help. And that's exactly what monitoring provided. The recorded data made it easy to assess the quantity and quality of work.

This example demonstrates how monitoring can keep a good employee from leaving.

This company wanted to know if employees were thinking of leaving the company; it is expensive and time consuming to find and train replacements. An alert trigger was created for popular job sites as well as the word "resume." The alert returned a couple of hits and they discovered that a high value employee was dissatisfied only because of his salary. He did deserve a raise – and gladly received it as you can imagine. A serious problem of losing this key employee was no more. Ahhh!

Human Resources uses monitoring for regular performance reviews.

HR for this private school was doing a performance review. Kyle was shocked to find a Department Head was taking a course (good for him), but spending four hours a day on school time doing it! Kyle decided to check on his assistant: Entirely on task and good quality work. What happened? They fired the one and promoted the other. Sounds like justice to me.

Return On Investment (ROI)

Improving productivity justifies the expense of monitoring. You can actually quantify the Return on Investment. Turns out that it not only pays for itself, but many times over by significantly reducing labour costs.

Here is a typical example. A company has 25 employees.

Let say there is an average of just 30

minutes/day/employee off-task (significantly below what studies show by the way). By reducing that by only half or 15 minutes, an additional 1.25 hours/week/employee is added to productive work hours. That's 31 hours/week for the workforce; for a year it amounts to 1625 hours – wow! The savings based on a £26,000 annual salary with benefits is approximately £20,000/year. Not bad at all.

Turns out that (monitoring) not only pays for itself, but many times over ...

Jessica, owner of this company of 25 employees (the source of the above example), was aware that she had no way to know how productive her employees are. After implementing monitoring she discovered one employee spending four hours a day on personal coursework. The others on average spent an hour each day off-task. She fired the main abuser of privilege and distributed his work to others. Savings were great: one salary plus benefits and an employee that led others astray, gone. Take a bow Jessica!

By contrast, Dan, the head of IT in this company of 100, knew there was substantial time spent on personal activity. So he installed monitoring and for two weeks gathered data for a baseline of activity against which to compare after monitoring was announced. Turns out about 30% of the day was personal activity! He wasn't interested in taking anyone to task, just keeping people on-task. So he not only announced monitoring, but also showed several anonymous examples. The result was spectacular. Immediately productivity skyrocketed. In fact, over the year ten employees left for various reasons and he didn't have to replace them. Around £200,000 saved annually. Brilliant!

Jonathan, the CFO of this company had this to say: Getting employees to spend a few additional hours a week actually working pays for the software – actually several times over. We are paying them to work after all.

Other Benefits of Monitoring

We've dealt with financial benefits so far. There is a bonus.

Secure Sensitive Data

Although outside the scope of this report, monitoring, especially when coupled with Data Loss Prevention (DLP), secures sensitive data and prevents it from leaving the company, whether inadvertent or intentional. ([Click here](#) and request a white paper: *How Insiders Steal From You: The Solution that Finds and Stops Them.*)

A senior level employee, Harry, gave his notice. Part of business; nothing outstanding. Nonetheless, CEO William had a feeling that all might not be well. So he asked his assistant to use the monitoring software to ensure all was okay. Well, that produced a revelation: they discovered drafts of Harry's correspondence intended for a competitor to bring customer information with him. Ouch! They dealt with it and no information was lost.

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Take a Good Employee and Make Him Better

A department manager at a FTSE 100 company recounted this story; it always remained with me.

Samantha told me how she asked one of her employees to prepare a report for presentation that afternoon to senior management. As the time approached she asked Jim when it would be ready and was dismayed to hear that he had been tied up all morning on a pressing project and could not get to it. Argh! Not what she expected at all!

So Samantha reviewed Jim's recorded activity for the morning and discovered he had spent THREE HOURS shopping online! Now this was a good employee; been with her a number of years. So here's what Samantha did: she called Jim to her office and showed him the recorded surfing activity. Boy, was he ashamed! Jim said he knew activity was recorded, but it has been a while and had forgotten. Jim's apologies were as profuse as they were genuine.

Samantha told me the incident caused Jim to straighten up and fly right. His work was always good, but got even better. She had taken a good employee and made him better.

"Take a good employee and make him better." I like that.

In the experience of this manufacturer monitoring around 300, employees became more attentive to how they composed email and who they sent it to. Definite improvement in customer communications. And a very nice added benefit was the ending of profanity and serial joke chains.

Improve Morale

In addition to substantially improving profits, monitoring improves morale. Yes, morale, because industrious workers are dismayed with slackers. It not only increases their workload, but they disrespect management who is either blind or foolish to allow these shenanigans. You lose your best workers; they will leave for another job when opportunity allows.

A rotten apple spoils the barrel. That's the flip side of the coin. Sloth spreads by example. Before you know it, productivity and quality has been taken down a notch or two – or three. Arrgh!

This story is somewhat off topic, but it did protect an important employee from a serious accusation – perhaps even being fired – and a sexual harassment grievance against the company. It improved morale in that it demonstrated the company protects its employees.

Jane came up behind Ian, a longtime and valuable employee, to ask a question. And there on Ian's computer screen was one horrific pornographic picture! Bad news for Ian - and the company could have legal exposure. Ian explained it came into his inbox and it was there for a few seconds when Jane came up. Fortunately, everything being recorded, it was easy to demonstrate that Ian's account was indeed the situation. End of the matter.

Meet Regulatory Compliance

Regulations, such as the Data Protection Act (DPA), need tools to comply with them. The combination of monitoring and Data Loss Prevention (DLP) provides a crucial part of the solution.

This health care company must ensure patient records are not sent out of the company unless they meet compliance standards. Data Loss Prevention both alerts and blocks customer records from leaving the company that do not comply with company policy.

Conclusion

Like most organisations you are no doubt looking to make small spends to accomplish big results. As an example Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems fit this model.

This is exactly how it works with monitoring: small spend, big results. As demonstrated above ([ROI](#)), it's not difficult for a company with only 25 employees to save £20,000 annually. While we obviously can't guarantee you'll see this scale of savings, there's ample user experience to justify its expectation.

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Now for an unabashed promotion

We presented the need for monitoring and the value it brings to an organisation. We noted above the benefit of including Data Loss Prevention along with monitoring. Snapguard 2.0 offers monitoring as a stand-alone module, but it belongs to an integrated platform with five solution modules – easy to add as needed.

- [Data Loss Prevention](#)
- [Computer Monitoring](#)
- [Web Filtering](#)
- [Laptop Tracker](#) (GeoLocation of Laptops & Remote File Retrieval/Deletion)
- [Smartphone Surveillance](#)

There are vendors that integrate some of these solutions. I have not found any that include all five cornerstones of Insider Threat Prevention. This is why Snapguard developed its integrated platform.

In regard to budgeting, you don't have to buy the whole package; choose among the modules. For example:

A company purchased 250 licenses of Snapguard 2.0 Filtering (this is extremely well priced compared with traditional server based solutions) and budgeted for the monitoring module in the following year.

To assist with budgeting, licensing is flexible. You can take a monthly subscription so it becomes an operating expense rather than capital budget item. And begin with a single department and expand from there. And if you begin with monitoring, we'll throw in filtering for free. How's that for an incentive!

Let me point out a feature of unique value to Snapguard 2.0: it is deployed at the end point. This means you can record activity and enforce policy on every computer, even those that never connect to the network.

The other standout feature is its two options for delivery that set it apart: through the Cloud or OnPremise as a configured appliance.

Whether or not our product makes sense to you, I urge you do something. As one company put it:

"It's not a question of if, but when monitoring becomes as important as anti-virus. It's going to become a workstation standard. You need to ask yourself why you aren't monitoring?"

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For Free

Monitoring is not difficult to implement and be embraced by staff. ([Click here](#) and request *Employee Monitoring Made Easy: How to have Staff Embrace Computer Monitoring.*)

And while you are at it, do yourself a favor, ask for a consultation about your situation. No charge. We'll be happy to give you ideas on maximizing productivity – and other areas if useful. Of course, we'd like to have your business. After all, we need to put food on the table. But you can rest assured that the consultation is entirely free.

*Contact Information:
HelpMe@SnapguardCorp.com
UK: +44 (0) 845 643 6881
Ireland: +353 (1)640 182
USA: +1 (407) 926 4139
www.SnapguardCorp.com*