

The personal is not so private

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Almost one third of employees use Facebook at work but aren't too worried about being tracked by their employers, according to a study released this week.

The study by Monash University's Associate Professor Peter Holland and Dr Brian Cooper from the Department of Management, as well as Dr Rob Hecker from the University of Tasmania's School of Management, looked at key issues associated with employee perception of and attitudes to electronic monitoring and surveillance at work.

"Most companies see the benefits of a digitally-connected workforce. However, the survey uncovered potential issues in the attitudes of employees regarding social media use, personal data and [privacy](#)," Associate Professor Holland said.

One of the key findings highlighted blurred work and personal boundaries, with 31 per cent of those surveyed using social networking sites, primarily [Facebook](#), at work. Only 14 per cent of these used social media for work-related activities while 42 per cent used it for personal activities.

“Over 35 per cent of respondents indicated their company didn’t have a policy on internet use. If they did have a policy, very few had taken appropriate training around the use and intent of the policy,” Associate Professor Holland said.

“Employers need to develop a policy with full awareness, support, understanding and training of their employees. Otherwise, if issues came up, there may not be sufficient grounds to protect the organisation.”

The research also found employees supported some monitoring of the workplace, especially web sites. However, there were concerns over the monitoring of emails, phone calls and video surveillance.

Another underlying issue was employee privacy, where 62 per cent of respondents indicated they were not concerned about how their employers used personal information gained through electronic monitoring and surveillance of their workplace. A further 20 per cent had only a little concern.

“These results are worrying. There is a lack of concern or awareness of the quantity of information the employer holds, and who can access it and what it is used for,” Associate Professor Holland said.

“Issues associated with developing policies on privacy at work do not appear to be as comprehensive or well-understood as might be expected.

“The results indicate this is a potential conflict area for employers and

employees as the amount of information acquired on an employee increases.”

Provided by Monash University

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