

Bulletin Board: Office time-wasters beware

by Amy_Winter

Computers with online access can be an easy distraction; however, employees may want to concentrate more on work instead of surfing the Internet at the office. You never know who or what may be watching. BeAware Corporate Edition, which has a "workplace activity management" application, allows companies to keep track of employees' computer history in order to eliminate excessive time-wasting and increase productivity in the office.

At least 13 percent of employees spend more than two hours a day doing non-work-related activities on the computer. Adam Schran, president of Ascentive LLC, says many managers are frustrated with employees' wasting work time. The U.S. economy lost \$788 billion in 2006 due to employees' messing around at the office.

BeAware is easy to install and takes up less than 1 percent of network broadband usage. Schran says the program does comprehensive monitoring of both PC and Internet, including usage of e-mails, web-surfing and chat programs. Many different companies purchase BeAware in order to benefit their working environment.

"Our clients have told us that they see unwanted Internet usage by their employees drop as much as 90 percent almost immediately after BeAware is installed," says Schran.

Managers can keep a watchful eye on the work history of those questionable employees. Once installed in all computers, it generates alerts to managers when employees access specific Web sites or words. Detailed reports enable managers to find the problems easily and efficiently. These reports could indicate the top employees are the biggest time-wasters, according to Schran.

The program isn't only used to punish employees; it can also be a rewarding tool by identifying good behavior and beneficial working skills.

"It's now easier, almost effortless, for bosses to help make their companies more efficient and effective," says Schran.

Schran admits the software is controversial with regard to issues of trust and privacy, but overall he feels it is beneficial to companies. To give the employees a little privacy, the software offers a private-time option. A manager can set an allotted amount of time for employees to have computer time without being watched.

"BeAware increases the whole morale of the team when there aren't people wasting time," says Schran.

BeAware is available for \$89 per computer. Visit www.beawarecorporate.com for more information.

WATER TALK

It seems that workers need to pay more attention to the entertainment news when it comes to participating in workplace conversation. Twenty-seven percent of respondents thought the celebrity trio of Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears created the most heated discussions near the office water cooler, according to a July survey by Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc. in which 100 human resource executives were surveyed.

The second topic that created the most water cooler babble was the new Apple iPhone. Twenty-three percent of the respondents thought this was the hot topic to discuss at work. Conversation about "The Sopranos" season finale came in third with 18 percent.

Fewer than 10 percent of employees want to talk about the political ideas and ongoing dispute between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. The release of the Harry Potter book was equally as unpopular.

The least likely issue to be brought up is the war in Iraq; it came in at 0 percent by surveyors.

"It is probably wise to avoid hot-button issues around the water cooler," said John A. Challenger, chief executive officer. "The workday is already stressful enough with deadlines, performance reviews and typical office politics. It is best to keep things light during break time. The policy of not discussing politics or religion certainly applies to the workplace."

"This, of course, is not to say that workers are not interested in politics and the situation in Iraq. However, when it comes to sharing their views with co-workers, most people tend to stay reserved."

For more information, visit www.challengergray.com.

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