

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

The use of email and access to the internet is now ubiquitous in the workplace and has been transformational in the way that companies do business. Nonetheless the huge increase in use has taken some organisations by surprise.

It is now commonplace for people at work to use e-mail as easily as using the telephone, and Internet access is often part of the setup of a workstation. Many people now routinely use e-mail and the Internet for personal communication and interest as well as in the workplace.

The growth of email and internet usage within the workplace has been mirrored by a corresponding growth involving employee's misuse of that facility. Recent research has concluded that internet and email abuse is a costly business. According to a survey commissioned by Open Orchard, 'cyberslackers' cost UK small businesses almost £1.5bn per year. Of the companies questioned, 30% estimated that more than one day's work per week was lost due to personal email and web surfing.

But the damage does not end there. Employers can find now themselves vicariously liable for the actions of their employees, whether or not that action is done with the employer's approval. The reality is that internet and email abuse can leave employers exposed to a variety of 'cyberliability' claims including copyright infringement, defamation, misrepresentation, computer hacking and negligent virus transmission.

There are countless examples of employers who are cracking down on email and internet abuse within the workplace. What, though, are the consequences for employers who turn a blind eye?

This seminar will highlight and examine some the risks and pitfalls associated with internet and email use in the workplace and will focus on how to properly and lawfully manage those risks.

Topics of discussion will include:

- Cyber-slacking
- e-Mail Privacy and Monitoring
- Employer Liability for Online Activities by Employees
- Discrimination & Harassment
- Defamation and Copyright Infringement