

Chapter 7 - You at work

Most people's work life relies on computers and on the digital world. Dilbert can provide a useful insight into avoiding the perils of this bit-wise environment.

The rules of the game

Most companies' management are pretty clueless about setting down in writing the rules of the game. Even if you work for a progressive good company often the only guidance you receive on security and usage of the company computers are lame posters announcing that "Securing data is everybody's responsibility" - this may be true but it is far from helpful.

According to my MBA textbook, the management should write down what they expect of you when you are playing with their computers at work – at least that way you'd know. But the truth is the management are more baffled by the stuff than you are. There may be something about computer usage in your contract of employment – You should always read this carefully.



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This contract often just refers you to some HR policy. If they are sensible it will be called the "Acceptable Usage Policy" or "Computer usage policy" or something similarly catchie and memorable. If you like working there, try and follow these rules.



If no such guidance exists, here is Dilbert's advice.

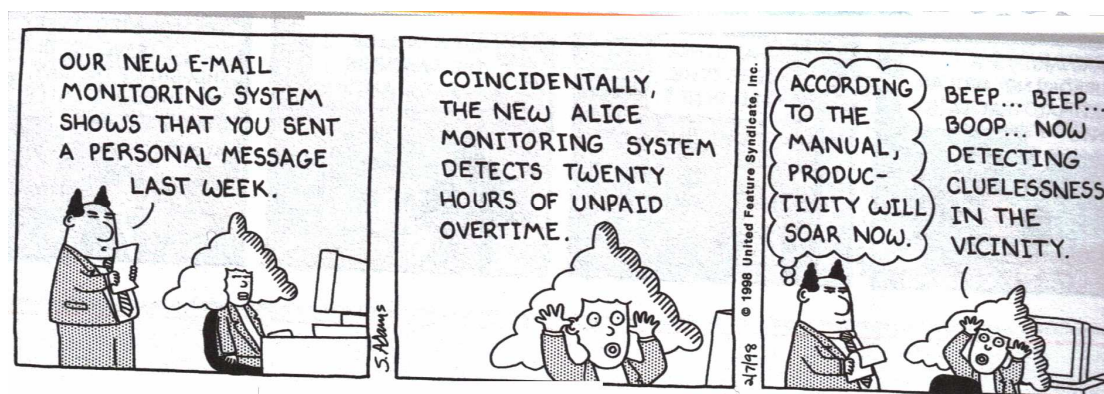
Personal use of equipment

Most companies tolerate some personal usage of their facilities for personal communication. In fact, in Europe the human rights directives have prescribed it as an individual's right to have private communications. However, common sense dictates that this personal use has to be reasonable.

So if your HR director demands a massage because he has caught you sending personal emails, you know that you're not the one in the wrong!!



Furthermore There are very specific rules in Europe and the U.S. that govern the monitoring of communication. Typically if you have not previously been informed that your communication will be monitored and the content of the communication has become known by third-party (ie. Your version of the pointy haired manager) your company could have acted unlawfully-breached data protection legislation and human rights legislation.



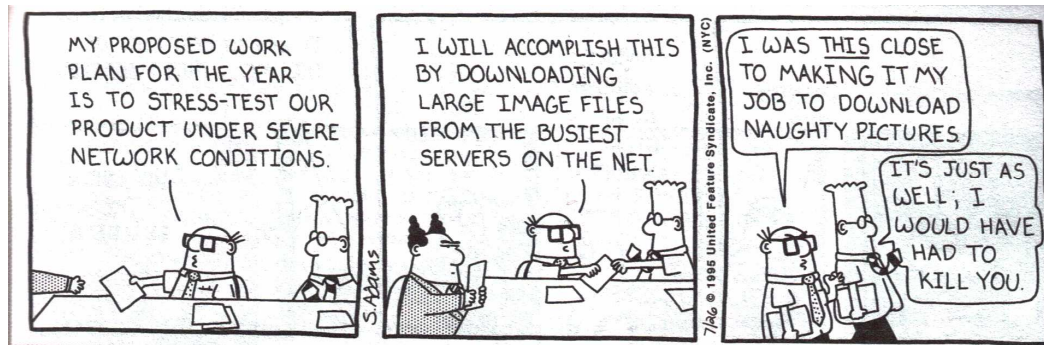
Recently, because of legislation like the Financial Services act or Sarbanes-Oxley bill in the U.S., some firms have started logging external communications as they could be the basis for a business transaction or contract. However these logs should only be used for business purposes-not to get easy dates from those on the rebound, BAD CATBERT



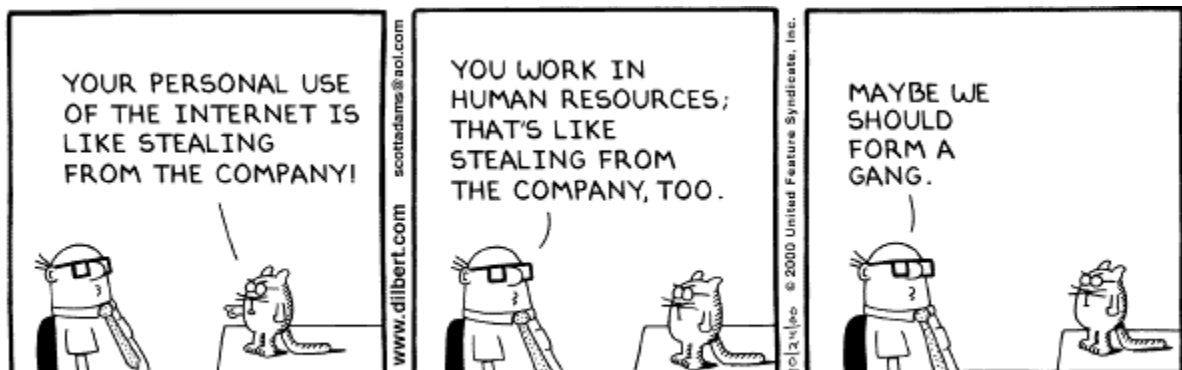
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Browsing

There is some restriction in most countries over what monitoring can be done of your browser usage. Employers have a duty of care to provide a suitable, inoffensive place of work for all employees-so if you have developed a porno habit conduct those activities in the safety of your own home, YOU DIRTY SWINE, where you cant offend anyone else



However, it is clearly reasonable that any employer gets productive work out of their staff (blood out of a stone in the case of many of my coworkers). There's no way HR should be the judge of productivity.



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So you may find that your IT department have blocked certain websites, these often include

- Gambling websites
- Adult websites
- Dating websites

They can also produce pretty graphs of top ten users of the Internet during core hours-being On this list will almost certainly jeopardise your next pay review.

Misuse

Computer misuse can be a criminal offence in Europe and the USA. It is almost certainly grounds for dismissal.

Never Use Anyone Else's User Id And Password. And never let anyone else know your password-you will be held responsible for any activity that was initiated by that user ID. This may be just a silly email but even silly emails can get you fired!!!



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If you have been dumb enough to give out your user ID and password to another, how do you know that they are not raising purchase orders and signing off bonus expenses using your id - that activity could lead to jail, not just losing your job.

Never form and run a business on the company's computers and networks. I have known a couple of employees who have made real money diverting the company's computers and phones for their own purposes.



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The worst punishment was not being fired but in one of the cases, the draconian organization sent the budding entrepreneurs a vastly inflated bill. Imagine giving more to your boss than *the everything* you already give!!! A fate worse than death.

Personal Data

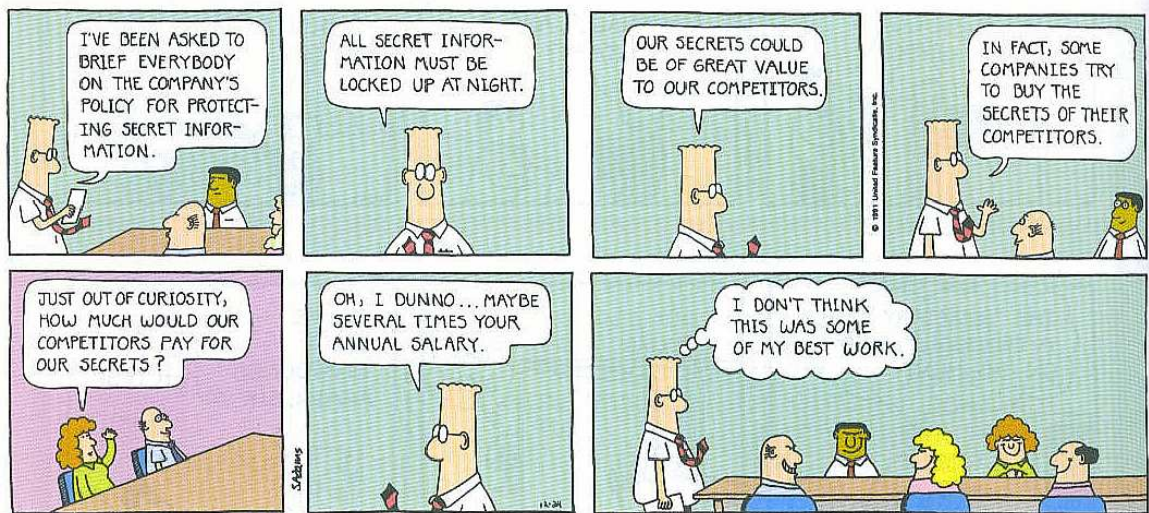
We have covered data protection and protection of your personal data in a previous chapter, but you should never use your access rights to discover personal data about other employees-even if you're really annoyed by that the office idiot that is bragging that he earns more than you.

If you have some critical information that must never be known - like you are a spy for the CIA or KGB, like you slept with the board to get a promotion, or you have a tangerine growing out of your armpit, you should never record it in a spreadsheet and keep it on your hard drive in a file called "big secret.xls". Your IT department or security team have a genuine business need to access this when you have problems – and they often look at your disk,



Company secrets

Most management teams can't grasp the fact that all sorts of information has value – Don't get the wrong idea like this bunch Dilbert has just briefed.



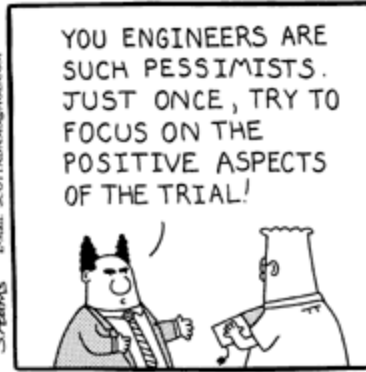
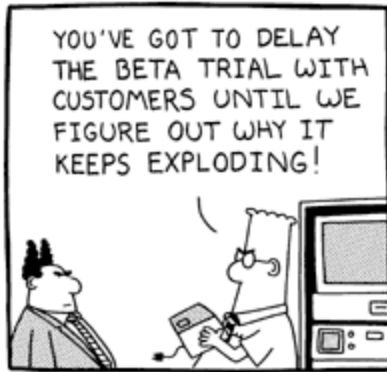
All sorts of information can have a value: Knowledge of your companies' Price list and discounts could provide your competitors an unfavor advantage to them. As could advance knowledge of New Products or your customer list. Details of potential partnerships or acquisitions obviously have a value to anyone who can buy shares.

Be particularly careful of sending such information out via Email – It is so easy to be duped into sending it out by mistake. The number of times I have received emails that have just been forwarded to me with no consideration what documents it might contain or what some of the previous emails in the chain my contain.

Ask your manager if you have concerns

<<ALL THINGS THAT COULD IMPACT THE FIRM>>

- Use NDAs
 - When discussing New Products or Acquisitions with partners



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- Clear Desk Policy



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- lock away your PC
- Don't leave commercial information in plain sight

Clear White Boards after

- meetings
- Managers remind "leavers" that they are under NDA
- Use personal data with care
- Use classification policy when creating a document