

# Monitoring in the *Digital Age*



*An in-depth study regarding the  
benefits, drawbacks, and stigmas  
surrounding digital monitoring.*

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Salermo

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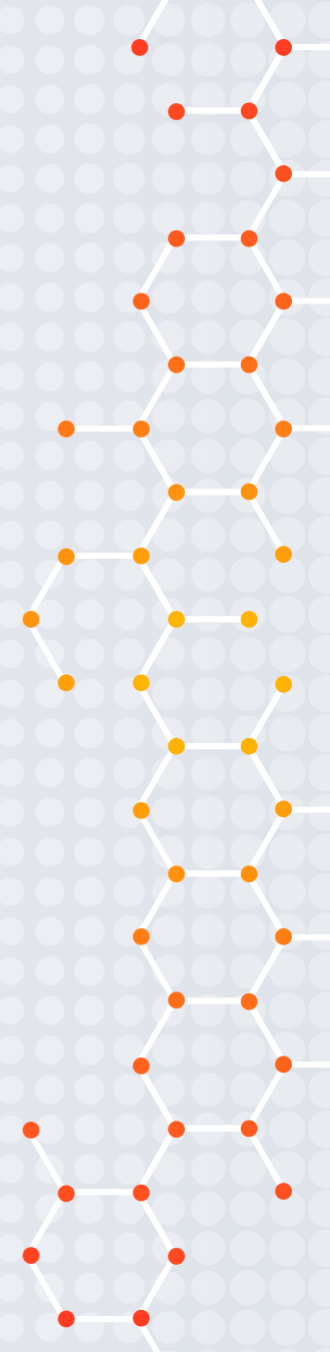
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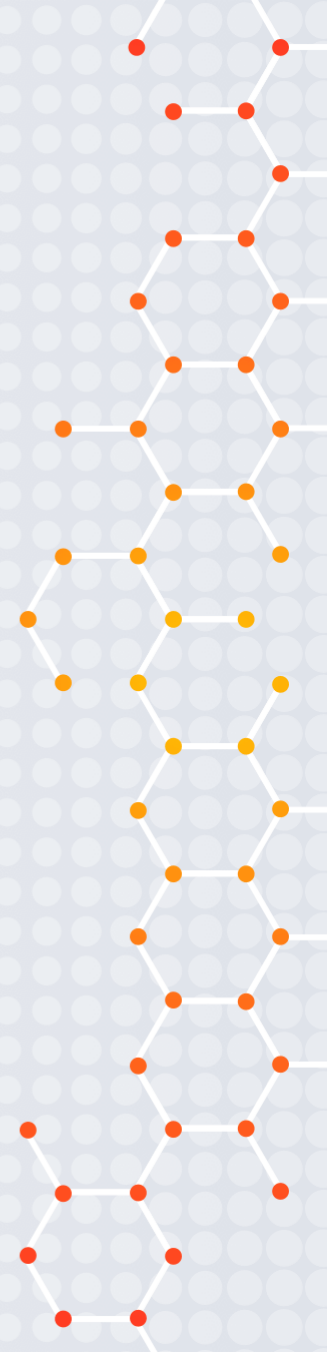
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# Overview

The goal of this novel is to inform readers about the presence of monitoring within the workplace in the Digital Age, as well as any potential effects it has on workers and working environments. The primary goal of this book is to illustrate the benefits and drawbacks of monitoring through researched-backed statements, personal experiences, and other crucial information in order to truly educate those who wish to further understand the role digital monitoring plays in the day-to-day functioning of virtual teams within the modern era.

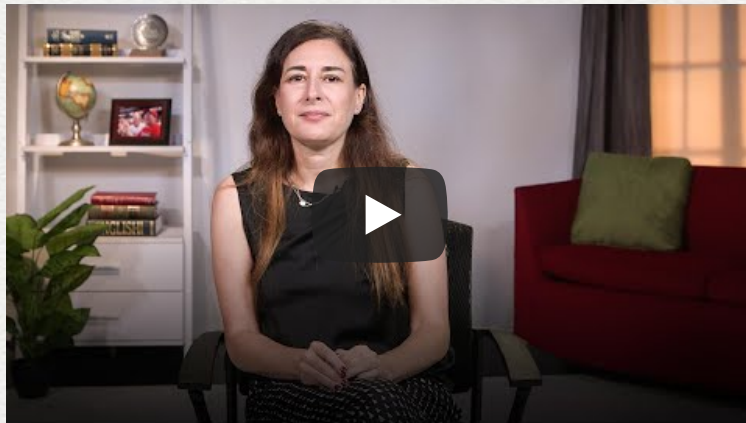




# Chapter 01: History Of Monitoring



Monitoring has grown exponentially along with the growth of technology, but there have been specific events where monitoring has spiked...



3:00 - 3:18



Just recently, the COVID-19 pandemic increased monitoring as well...

Advances in digital technology, along with the increasing miniaturization of components, have changed the landscape of available consumer technology (Vandewater).

The COVID-19 crisis has expanded the market for surveillance technologies and accelerated their uptake. Employee monitoring software companies such as Sneek and Teramind reportedly increased their sales during the pandemic (Riso).

"Ever since COVID, I have been working at home every single day... to work together with my team members all of us use Zoom for meetings" - Interviewee



## Positives and Negatives of Monitoring

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When it comes to being monitored some find it uncomfortable and intrusive but some are not bothered by it. With more and more companies opting in for remote working, the ability to monitor and be monitored have gone up. Being able to work from home is a blessing but it comes with a price because now the comfort of your own home all of sudden became less comfortable.



Monitoring can be seen as restrictive and even a violation, but there are benefits not only for the workers but for the superiors as well. The safety of the employers are the utmost priority of the company and "Digital real-time monitoring can ensure workers' safety, especially in hazardous or emergency situations." (Eurofound 4). Having someone there to prevent any mistakes allows the workers to stay on track and complete their goals on time.

## Positives

Study shows that an increase of monitoring in the work place shows positive results as "IT veillance of employees leads to their increased performance (Grant and Higgins 1991, Pierce et al. 2015) and responsible behavior (Gozman and Currie 2014)." Completing more work leads to less stressful days and feeling more accomplished. Especially since Covid-19 more companies offer remote working, being at home can be less motivating to do work compared to goin into the office.



(E. Ly, personal communication, December 6th, 2023). NAVSEA employee since 2015

Question: "How do you feel about being monitored even though you are working from home?"

According to Mr. Ly, "In all honesty, I really do not mind it at all because It makes me stay focused and gets my work done on time."

During this interview revolving around his experience and take on being monitored while working from home, he had very little to complain about. At first he was skeptical but as time went on he realized that it was not that big of a deal. At the end of the day they both want one thing and its to finish their job and to make sure no work is left undone.

## Negatives



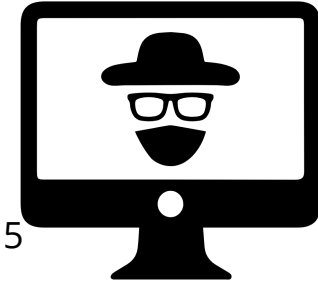
Everything always has its pros and cons and the cons will occur when being monitored is brought up. Team projects with new people is a great example. Groups like to divide the work evenly and when working with people who have different work ethics can prove challenging. "Common problems for teams are poor attendance, failure to complete assignments on time, dominating team discussions, or interpersonal conflicts among team members." (Levi, Askay, 2020). People who like to get work done ahead of time would tend to monitor other people's work especially those who do everything last minute. This pressure from the early bird can hinder the performance of the last minute person because they feel pressured from being monitored on their progress. This can lead to interpersonal conflicts and poorly affect the team's performance and future projects.



Like I said previously, as more and more companies are keeping remote working. The need for monitoring became more important in this fast pace environment. But employees feel that this is an invasion of privacy and can be a violation to their rights.



0.40-1.15



Being monitored in the workplace means that the people who are watching can see your emails, what you search and other important and private information. "For example, when an employee searches the Web for data about an illness that may eventually result in disability, there may be a concern that the EWMS will extract this information and pass it on to HR as a warning of the employee's future illness." (Conry-Murray, 2001). Your web data can be collected and sold to other companies and it is especially dangerous since some of the most important searches are done in the comfort and safety of our own homes.



# How Can Monitoring Affect Team Dynamics

It is no surprise that monitoring, to some degree, may happen and be necessary in certain team settings. Depending on the level of invasiveness of the surveillance and reason for monitoring, it could cause mixed emotions in how team members feel about it. A video from the TODAY news show, introduces firsthand accounts of people who respond to what they think about being at a job that monitors them. One person would not tolerate the idea of monitoring and would just choose to leave a job that does so. Another person thought that if it was a company they admired and worked for, they wouldn't be bothered by the monitoring. The end of clip also introduces an additional discussion where the hosts come to the same idea that monitoring is necessary but that it also should be disclosed what is being monitored to keep its employees informed.

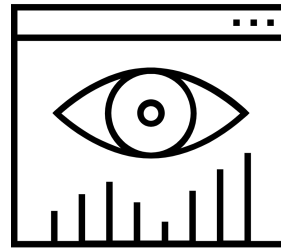


Given these discussions, a question that arises is how monitoring can affect levels of trust in a team setting? We can connect this to a supporting study done Lionel P. Robert Jr. called "Monitoring and Trust in Virtual Teams". This study dives deeper into the effects that monitoring has on virtual team dynamics, specifically the effects it has on trust. The results of the study indicated that it isn't a simple yes or not answer but that , "both internal and external monitoring moderated the impacts of cognitive and affective trust on the performance of virtual teams." (Robert, 2016) They were able to use the results of the study to show that both types of monitoring negatively affected cognitive and affective trust, as well as performance when the use of both types of monitoring was high but the opposite was shown when it was low. This shows too much monitoring can cause more harm than good to virtual teams and performance but that a base level of monitoring can instead help promote and improve trust and teamwork





Additionally, in most virtual team settings, an employee or team is monitored mainly through their work computer since allows the company to incorporate different monitoring technologies to track activity and performance.



This type of monitoring is also known as electronic performance monitoring (EPM) where managers are able to access performance data, such as working pace, log-in and log-off times, and break duration.



The use of EPM in virtual teams has the possible advantages of higher productivity, better resource planning, or increased staff safety but also the possible disadvantages such as lower employee morale, lower satisfaction, and increased stress (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). These advantages are mainly seen when the level monitoring and level of privacy invasion of EPM is low and the disadvantages is shown when its high. These findings of EPM can be related to the previous data since both are affected by the level of monitoring and type of monitoring taking place.



## Chapter 4: How Do Some Workers Feel About Monitorization?

### First Interview: Angela M. - NFA Fraud Examiner

Question: "How is digital monitoring practiced in your workplace?"

*"In the past, especially during the first year of COVID-19, we had many instances of employees being away from their workstations too frequently, which led to severe slowdowns in work output. Over the years, my organization has been adding keyloggers, DeskTime, and other monitoring software to company laptops and desktops in order to maintain work output and security."*

Question: "How has workplace monitoring affected your or other people's performance?"

*I personally don't worry too much about monitoring, since I only use the laptop my work gave me for... well.. work purposes. I'm also never away from my station for extended periods of time, unless its an emergency, so I'm not too worried about who or what is tracking me. However, there are some who are good workers, but feel uneasy about the increased levels of monitoring. Some describe it as, "feeling like a teacher is standing over you when you're doing a test, but you can never turn around to see if someone's actually standing over you." Some people feel uncomfortable about it, and some say it affects their ability to perform, but I generally think it's not as bad as some people make it out to be. At least, in this moment of time.*

Question: "How do you feel about workplace monitorization?"

*In general, I see both the benefits and disadvantages of having workplace monitorization. On one hand, you ensure a consistent level of productivity and efficiency by making sure everyone is doing what they're supposed to do. It can help identify consistent problems within the workplace and it can help make our jobs be steadier and more efficient. However, I do also think that some organizations can go overboard with their monitoring. I've heard of other financial firms using programs that track what you do even on your phone through internet traffic, which goes far beyond what I think is appropriate monitoring. In addition, you never really know who's keeping an eye on you and how they'll use this sensitive data against you or how they'll give it to other people. In general, as long as the company is clear and transparent on their monitoring practices and ensures that employees have a voice on how they're being watched, I don't think it's entirely a bad thing like most people make it out to be.*

## **Second Interview: Jessie**

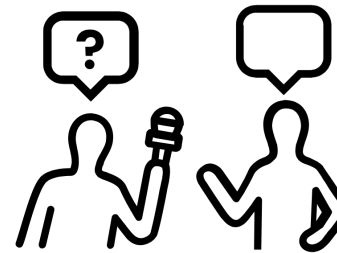
(Jessie is a virtual worker whose position is an Authorizations Representative for a long-term care pharmacy. Her job revolves around working with administrators, directors of nurses, and their management team to approve high-cost medication.)



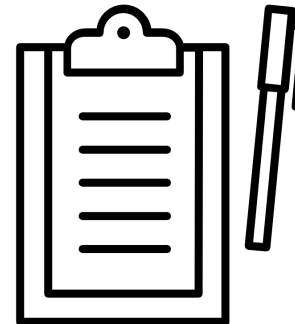
Question: "How do you feel about certain types of monitoring such as in chatrooms or idle reports?"

*"To me it's fine, I don't have a problem, the only thing that would be a problem for me is a camera right on my face watching me."*

Question: "In a very general scenario, is monitoring to some a degree a necessity in a workplace."



*"It has to be necessary in order to have good performance and to tell how much productivity can be accomplished so you have to be monitoring. No one is ever perfect, there is not perfect employee so you have to know. I think with me it's a little different since I have been in the job for so long so they already know but in general If you are having all new employees you need to have some sort of control. Lets say you are set to work for 8 hours however you are getting your job completed in 4 hours, and then what is happening to the other four hours? Does it mean that you are an efficient employee and you are getting it done quickly or is it something else?"*



## **Chapter 5: Should Workers be Worried About Monitoring?**

As the world continues to digitize, many still wonder about, or fear, the ramifications of workplace monitorization. It's important for workers to understand how workplace monitoring affects our day-to-day work functions before conclusions are reached regarding if it's beneficial or harmful to workers and the workplace.

On one hand, digital monitoring can improve and enhance workplace productivity and help provide employers with more insightful information regarding employee working habits and capabilities. Digital monitoring can also help optimize workflows and can also help identify key weaknesses within virtual teams and how to improve these deficiencies. In addition to potentially improving worker life, monitoring can also ensure that regulations and safety procedures are followed, allowing for a safer, more flexible work environment.

On the other hand, there exists valid criticisms and concerns regarding how organizations monitor their employees' activities as well as how this information is used. For instance, lack of transparency regarding employee monitoring and over-monitoring can lead to decreased productivity, heightened stress, as well as a greater level of distrust between employees and their managers. In addition, the potential over-monitoring and the perceived invasion of personal privacy of workers can also lead to further downturn within a digitized work-environment.

In general, questions and concerns regarding monitoring in the workplace are extremely crucial feelings and thoughts that many employees hold. It is important to maintain a standard of balance when discussing workplace monitoring. As long as open communication is maintained, policies and procedures are thoroughly explained, and the use of monitoring technology is kept within ethical standards and expectations, employees shouldn't be worried about monitoring. Instead, employees should be more inclined to understand how these technologies and policies are used within the workplace, as well as understanding how to work with management to help these technologies produce a more safe and efficient work environment.



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