**Ethical Issues in Information Technology**

Institution

Course

Tutor

Due date

**Privacy**

**Ethical Issues**

**Computer Systems.** Employers set company computers to monitor most of the employees’ activities at the workplace. These include retrieving data stored in employees' computer hard disks and terminals, keeping track of terminal idle time, and monitoring keystrokes on the computer. In most cases, this happens without the employees’ knowledge. Some employers inform employees of the computer monitoring equipment through union contracts, employee handbooks, and memos (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019).

**Mobile Devices.** Monitoring apps that are covert in recording internet usage, call logs, text messages are installed in company-owned mobile devices. These devices enable employers to track employees’ daily activities. Other companies allow the use of employees’ personal devices for work purposes in a program known as bring your own device (BYOD), which poses a challenge in protecting employees’ privacy. For quality control purposes, employers also monitor calls between employees and clients (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019).

**Emails and Instant Messaging.** An employer who owns the email or instant messaging system has access to the contents of the messages sent within the company network. Therefore, any employee communicating over such systems should assume it is not private. Encryption is used to deter an individual from intercepting messages between personnel. Despite using encryption to protect the workers from hackers, the employer still has access to the messages (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019).

**Social Media.** Company policies on the use of social media include those that limit employees' posts on such platforms. Work-related posts can potentially damage a company’s reputation and hence the restrictions. Some companies require job applicants to provide both the username and password of their social media accounts (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019).

**Effects of Ethical Issues**

As a professional computing employee within a company, the ethical issues limit my capabilities in providing full support to both the clients and customers. The monitoring means that I don’t get to engage a client or customer to a personal level when trying to understand their cause of frustrations with the new technologies from the company. This makes the solutions to their problems superficial.

The BYOD program offers flexibility since I would not have to always have two mobile devices with me at all times. However, my concern would be my data privacy. The option of using company mobile devices is favorable; however, it would mean that I lose the freedom to express my ideas and, as a result, limit my creativity.

The thought of emails and instant messages within the intranet being visible to the employer means that I become restricted from brainstorming any new ideas via such channels with my coworker. Social media is a platform where I am free to be me, and given that, I access it off-duty. Through such platforms, personality is let loose. Thus the employer may find a reason to stifle my career progress, perhaps due to my review of a product from a competing company, the employer's ideology, or discrimination.

**Actions and Impact**

**Computer Systems.** Through union contracts, I can limit the extent to which my employer can monitor my activities within the system. Taking considerable time reviewing the employment contract with the employer on the use of such systems and agreeing on an amicable compromise (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019). I could also get a personal computer which would be free from such monitoring. The legal implications of these actions would be in the protection of my privacy. Hence an applicable legal issue (Stahl, Timmermans, & Mittelstadt, 2016).

**Mobile Devices.** It is exhaustively reading through all the employment contracts, BYOD agreements, and orientation manuals and asking questions on the use and type of data collected on my phone after installing mobile device management (MDM) software (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019). This helps me in making an informed decision on either to use the company-provided device or BYOD for work-related activities. The impact would be on both applicable legal and social ethical issues. Legal issues would be similar to the computer systems above. The social, ethical issues would include consent for the use of my personal data for the case of BYOD or security of employer data (Stahl, Timmermans, & Mittelstadt, 2016).

**Emails and Instant Messaging.** This would require more of a behavioral solution. Implying that I would choose what to communicate via such platforms. Knowing that the employer still has access to the messages, then any communication with coworkers unrelated to work would preferably be done verbally if no audio recording devices have been set up. A predominant applicable social issue would be behavior, which would require a clear-cut distinction between work and personal life (Stahl, Timmermans, & Mittelstadt, 2016).

**Social Media.** Since anti-discrimination laws prohibit employers from taking disciplinary action on employees based on gender, race, age, religion, national origin, or color (information readily available on social media platforms), I would leverage on legal actions and refuge in case of such violations (Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 2019). Using the state’s legislation procedures to my advantage before providing my username or passwords.

# **References**

Privacy Rights Clearinghouse. (2019, 03 25). *Workplace Privacy and Employee Monitoring*. Retrieved from Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: https://privacyrights.org/consumer-guides/workplace-privacy-and-employee-monitoring#:~:text=Courts%20often%20have%20found%20that,expectation%20of%20privacy%20is%20limited.&text=Employers%20generally%20are%20allowed%20to,use%20them%20to%20monitor%20employe

Stahl, B. C., Timmermans, J., & Mittelstadt, B. D. (2016, February). The ethics of computing: A survey of the computing-oriented literature. *ACM Computing Surveys, 48*(4), 38.