

## Electronic Surveillance in the Workplace

### Background Info

According to [an article published by The New York Times](#), "Eight of the 10 largest private U.S. employers track the productivity metrics of individual workers, many in real time". For instance, [J.P. Morgan tracks their employees' activities](#), from making phone calls to composing emails, and [UPS](#) and [Amazon](#) track their employees at all times. This tracking may include taking photographs of workers' faces and screens, and measuring idle time, clicks, and keystrokes. It has been used to determine hours worked for employee compensation. [Monitask](#) is one example of this type of program.

### Advantages

- Companies save money by only paying employees for time worked.
- Employers are more likely to allow workers to work from home (ex. MTA allows WFH 1 day/week only if employees agree to use tracking software).
- Employers can make more objective promotion decisions rather than relying on "networking"/gut feeling about who has "leadership potential"/other more biased factors.
- Ensures that all team members contribute their fair share.
- Creates solidarity between high- and low-paid workers.
- Leads to increased interest in unionization.

### Disadvantages

- Employee's privacy is violated. They lose their right to keep private facts about themselves confidential: keylogger programs track sensitive information, such as passwords. Other software records private conversations or health data about employees.
- Employees are paid based only on the time monitoring software detects "active work." However, employees also have other tasks that cannot be recorded by the software, like reading printouts and discussing work-related topics with colleagues or thinking. It is unfair that employees do not get paid for performing these tasks that are part of a job. Prolonged pauses or "idle time" periods can have penalties from lost pay to lost jobs.
- It generates a false idea about employees' work performance. The quality of work should be measured, not how much time employees spend working. Electronic trackers cannot judge the work of the employees. Only humans can do that.
- Employees could cheat. For instance, they could use a mouse jigglers to pretend they are working and be rewarded for the work they did not do.
- Decreases productivity because employees feel pressure and get stressed, making them uncomfortable in the workplace, resulting in poor work performance.

Employers should trust their employees, which would create a good relationship between them and increase employees' productivity. We are humans (social beings), not robots. Often, a pause from work is needed to clear our minds and make our work more efficient.