


The Misuse of Work Computers



Theory, Data, and Policy



Paul M. Mastrangelo, Ph.D.
University of Baltimore

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Theoretical Models of Counterproductivity

- What Is Counterproductive Employee Behavior?
 - Deviance, Delinquency...The Dark Side
 - Theft, "Time Theft", Drug Use, Violence, Sabotage, Interpersonal Conflict
 - When employees either fail to conform to work norms or actively violate these norms

Typology of Deviant Workplace Behavior

- Property Deviance (Serious, Organizational)
 - Theft, Kickbacks, Sabotage
- Production Deviance (Minor, Organizational)
 - Leave Early, Excessive Breaks, Waste Resources
- Personal Aggression (Serious, Interpersonal)
 - Sexual Harassment, Verbal Abuse, Steal from Coworkers
- Political Deviance (Minor, Interpersonal)
 - Favoritism, Gossip, Blaming

Emotion-Centered Model of Voluntary Work Behavior



■ Anger

- Conflict, Violence, Revenge

■ Anxiety

- Alcohol and Other Drug Use

■ Boredom

- Theft, Absence, Violation of Rules

■ Depression

- Absence, Waste, Slow Work

Personality Dimensions & Counterproductivity

- **Conscientiousness** (Ones & Associates, 1993)
 - Unreliable, Irresponsible, Spontaneous
- **Socialization** (Collins & Griffin, 1998)
 - Moody, Undependable, Rebellious, Nonconforming
- **Life Experiences** (Mastrangelo & Associates, 2000)
 - Experience with Cigarettes, Alcohol, & Drug Users; Association with Delinquent Coworkers

The Unique Nature of Computer Misuse

- Fits into All Four Typologies
 - Minor and Serious
 - Organizational and Interpersonal
- ABCD Model of Counterproductive Computer Use
 - Access to Computers & Internet
 - Breaks from Daily Work Routine
 - Psychological Climate
 - Individual Differences

An Online Survey of Computer Misuse at Work

- 169 Employees
 - 72% female, 78% Caucasian, 15% African-American
 - 41% education/government, 21% service industry, 15% health care industry
- Average age = 36 (ranging from 19-64).
- Median salary range = \$35,000 - \$45,000
- 94% required computer use, 85% assigned computer, 95% Internet at work

The 41-Item Online Survey



Games vs. Computer & vs. Others, Chat 1 on 1, Multi-user Chat, Sexual Chat, Misrepresent Self in Chat, Usenet Pornography, Browsing Usenet, Web Pornography, Web Browsing, Money Earning Site, Building Web, Download Applications, Download Music, Documents, Stock Trading, Stock Research, Banking, Drug Sales at Work, Planning Theft, Online Casino, Placing Bets, Researching Odds, Sweepstakes Sites, Online Shopping, Auctions, Email, Internet as Telephone, Date Requests, Forwarding Jokes, Forwarding Pornography, Threats, Hacking, Spreading Viruses, Forwarding Confidential Material, Breaking Confidences

Baselines of Computer Misuse at Work



- In Previous 6 Months
 - 90% used personal email/chat
 - 80% forwarded jokes
 - 65% downloaded documents, shopped, surfed
 - 10% engaged in some form of sexual activity through the Internet
 - 5% used work facilities to make confidential information public, gambled online, attempted to sabotage work

Factor Analysis of Computer Misuse

- Personal Tasks: downloading a program, trading stocks, shopping online...
- Indecent Behavior: viewing pornography, sharing confidential information, researching gambling odds...
- Socially Connecting: emailing, chatting, browsing web sites...

Socially Connecting: Most Common Misuse Factor

- More Common among Younger Employees
- Not Related to...
 - Access Issues, Needing Breaks, Psychological Climate, Employee Sex, Compulsive Computer Use
- A Modern-Day Water Cooler
 - Distracts, Socializes Employees, Especially Those Who Grew Up with Computers as a Form of Entertainment

Personal Tasks: 2nd Most Common Misuse Factor

- More Common among Younger Employees
- Perhaps a Reaction to a Hectic Lifestyle
 - More Concurrent Jobs
- Perhaps a Manifestation of Compulsive Computer Use

Indecent Behavior: Least Common Misuse Factor

- More Prevalent When Internet Access At Work Is New
 - Indecent Misuse of Work Computers May Decline in this Decade
- Somewhat More Common Among Males than Females
- The Only Misuse Factor that Is Not More Common among Younger Employees

Implications: Monitoring



- Acknowledging Being Monitored Did NOT Correlate with Misuse
 - Are Policies Enforced Intermittently?
 - Do Policies Have Minimal Punitive Impact?
 - Can Misuse Be Modified through a Policy?
 - Do Employees Believe that There is Nothing Inherently Wrong with the Behavior?
 - Do Employees Feel Entitled to Use Work Computers for Personal Purposes?

Implications: Job Satisfaction & Computers

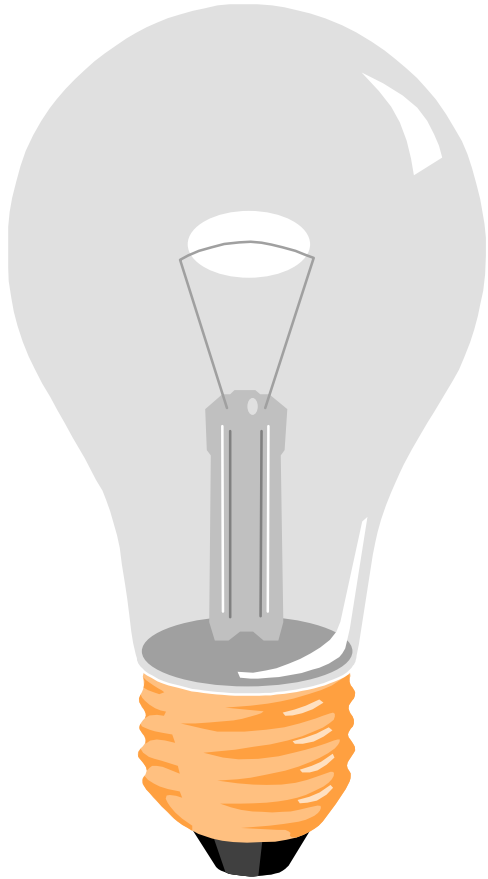
- Higher Job Satisfaction When...
 - Work Computer Is Assigned ($r = +.30, p < .01$)
 - Faster Internet Access at Work ($r = +.21, p < .01$)
- Even After Removing Effects of Age, Sex, Salary, Tenure, and Hours per Week
- Faster Internet Access at One's Workstation Enhances Satisfaction by More than One-Third of a Standard Deviation ($R = .36$)

Implications: Computer Misuse Policies



- Differentiate Indecent Use from Personal Tasks and Social Connectivity
- Perhaps **Encourage** Personal Use of Work Computers to Increase Job Satisfaction, Relieve Work-Family Stress
- As Definitions of Work Evolve With Technology, So Should Expectations

Conclusion



- Inviting Your Agency to Participate in a Similar Study
- Your Questions and Comments
- Thanks for Coming