Using Computer Surveillance to Watch Corporate Security and Employee Performance

Computer surveillance systems are changing the way of security monitoring. This White Paper examines the various aspects of using computer surveillance systems in organizations and their influence on corporate security and employee integrity and performance.
Introduction

Computer surveillance systems are quickly changing the way of monitoring activities. Readily available as software-only products, computer surveillance systems are quick and easy to deploy and bear significantly lower one-time and recurring costs than traditional alternatives such as video surveillance systems complete with dedicated cameras and displays.

It is important to realize that the new generation of surveillance systems targets slightly different aims than the traditional systems, and even when achieving similar goals, computer surveillance uses vastly different methods. While traditional surveillance systems such as video monitoring aim at outsiders, modern researches on corporate security report that up to 80% of all threats to corporate security are coming from the inside due to various violations committed by employees.

It is hard to impossible for a video camera to capture any meaningful detail of what’s happening on the computer screen. Modern computer surveillance systems are software programs installed directly to employees’ computers to intercept and monitor their activities, trace and prevent leaks of confidential information, and monitor their performance by analyzing employee activities on the computer.

This white paper analyzes typical goals solved by computer surveillance systems, and discusses the means of achieving these goals.
Computer Surveillance Systems and Corporate Security

Traditional security monitoring systems, when used in offices, aim at continuously monitoring and recording suspicious activities committed by outsiders, and do very little to detect offences committed by companies’ own employees. In a typical office, most offences are committed by employees while sitting in front of their computers.

No typical surveillance camera can capture the computer screen with enough detail to detect, let alone prove, an offence committed by an employee. Even if they could, analyzing hours of records stored on video tapes or as digital video recordings is extremely hard, time-consuming and costly. Today’s computer surveillance systems solve the task graciously. Being software programs installed directly to employees’ computers, these surveillance systems are able to digitally intercept most computer-related activities such as logins and logouts, keystrokes and individual key presses, visited Internet resources, chats and conversations happening in most instant messengers. Intercepting this information and securely storing it locally or on a central security server gives managers or security officers an easy and direct way to analyze employee behavior and stop leaks of confidential information.

Advanced computer surveillance tools such as StaffCop provide means of automatically recognizing certain threats such as typing one of the pre-defined keystrokes or doing one of the pre-defined actions. StaffCop is able to alert managers or security officers about a dangerous situation instantly by email.
Computer Surveillance Systems and Employee Performance

While it's relatively easy to determine whether or not an employee of a traditional business is working or having a leisure time by simply installing a video monitoring system, it is hard to impossible to detect whether or not an employee is doing business in front of their computer. Personal communications, chats and email, news sites and entertainment resources consume significant time of many hi-tech employees. Personal entertainment in front of a business computer is responsible for significant loss of performance by employees, making them less effective and more costly to the company.

Computer surveillance systems help managers determine whether or not their employees are working or having a leisure time. Detecting and recording what applications are running, active or in background, monitoring Web sites and Internet resources visited by employees, and intercepting personal communications carried over chats, instant messengers or by email helps managers discipline employees and improve their effectiveness. In fact, just installing a computer surveillance system and making employees aware of its existence is often enough to significantly improve their performance without making any additional investments.

Modern computer surveillance systems such as StaffCop www.staffcop.com go far beyond simple monitoring. Allowing centralized access and remote management of monitored workstations, StaffCop is one of the most cost and time-effective surveillance solutions on the market. The available hidden mode allows operating the surveillance system without making employees aware, while the advanced chat analysis module formats chats and instant messenger conversations in an easily comprehendible list of addressed messages instead of a plain set of keystrokes.