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Psychosocial Aspects of Employee Control with the Use of Modern Technologies

ABSTRACT

When functioning in an organisation, conflicting interests of parties to the employment relationship collide: the employee's right to privacy and the employer's right to control the quality and manner of performing work. Traditional forms of employee monitoring, such as a breathalyser test or personal search, raise a lot of controversy. With the development of modern technologies, new forms of control emerge, such as monitoring, Internet access control, or even checking private employee accounts on social networking platforms. The problem of using them improperly arises. Such practices are controversial not only for ethical and legal reasons. Attempts to limit the freedom of employees and their strict control with the use of modern techniques may result in serious psychological consequences for the employees, such as low efficiency, mental discomfort, or reduced job satisfaction. That is why wisely-managed organisations restrain limiting freedom of employees by implementing excessive control in favour of appealing to their internal self-control.

KEYWORDS: control in the organisation; modern methods of employee monitoring.

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MANAGEMENT BASICS

In the modern globalised world, organisational management is constantly changing as a result of widely available new technologies. Employees are also changing. As a result of natural generational change, representatives of the oldest generations leave the labour market and are replaced by representatives of millennials fascinated with the state-of-the-art technologies (Kot, 2017). We have come to live and work in the times of enormous and ultrafast development of technology and computer science which serve humans in all spheres of life. However, the dynamic development of global digitalisation entails numerous risks associated with the use of contemporary blessings for own purposes, which are not necessarily in line with the law (Lim, 2002; Pałka & Stecuła, 2018).

The problem of management emerged together with the birth of the organised human activity (Cyfert & Stańda, 2016). Throughout the centuries, both the fundamental principles and nature of managerial activity as well as conditions in which leaders operated were changing (Gurvis, 2017). Contemporary organisations try to introduce the most optimal management conditions (Kot, 2017), taking into account the achievements of classic and contemporary management schools (Taylor, 1912; Fayol, 1947; Urwick, 1956; Weber, 2002; Krafcik, 1988; Waterman, Peters, & Phillips, 1980). One of the contemporary models that seek to optimise the theory of management is the approach to management initiated by Fayol (Amstrong, 2011). The classification of management functions proposed by Fayol (1947) comprises the following areas:

- Planning—which means determining directions of the organisation's operation for the purpose of achieving future goals (in forms such as the mission, policy, budget) with reference to various time horizons (from short-term to long-term) and with the use of existing resources.

- Organising—which consists in activities aimed at mobilising human and material resources of the organisation in order to implement the organisation's plans. This function is implemented by creating organisational structures which define team functioning and division of work in terms of managerial and implementing measures.
- Commanding—which means assertive setting of tasks and goals for the directions of employees' activities and ensuring that appointed employees perform their tasks in the most efficient way.
- Coordinating—which means organising cooperation and ensuring harmonious functioning of organisational resources and operations for the purpose of achieving desired goals. It synchronises the activities of individual organisational systems in time and space, aimed at satisfying the client's needs in terms of supply and sale of products and services.
- Controlling—which is about checking the differences between the established standard, i.e. the assumed state of the subject of control and its actual state for the process of implementing plans and for ensuring their proper implementation. Controlling consists in comparing the course or result of certain activities, i.e. the state achieved with the planned goal.

In this paper, special attention has been devoted to controlling. Many theoreticians dealing with organisation and management (Amstrong, 2011, Koźmiński & Piotrowski, 2010) closely associate control with implementing plans, treating it as a single activity ending one cycle of work and starting another. However, mere definition of goals and organisational structure, plus clear formulation of tasks and responsibilities for each manager does not ensure that these goals will be achieved. Only systematic control can ensure achievement of intended short- and long-term goals, however we need to be careful so as not to go overboard with the implemented level of control (Lachiewicz & Matejun, 2012).

Practical control may relate to one of the three phases of the work process: prospective control, ongoing control, retrospective control (Buk, 2006). Prospective control precedes execution of implementation processes in the organisation. It consists in establishing norms and operational models, determining the necessary elements of the organisational structure and the structure of the implementation process. If the organisation's goals are to be achieved, they must be precisely defined in advance in the form of observed and measured standards, which should be clearly defined and accepted by employees. The information used during control must be reliable, accurate, uniform and, above all, comparable (Gurvis, 2017). Ongoing control, performed in the course of implementation processes, consists in tracking the progress of the work process from the point of view of its compliance with assumed models and performance procedures in terms of quantity, quality and time. This is when abnormalities detected in the manner of work can be corrected in order to meet the assumptions formulated at the beginning of the work process. During a retrospective control, effectiveness of the work performed is verified for compliance with the norms and whether the results achieved correspond with the originally assumed goals. When there are significant deviations from the plan or norm, corrective measures need to be introduced in future organisational activities, thus improving the processes of planning, organising and ongoing monitoring in the future (Buk, 2006). Employees experience control of their work in various ways, however, it is difficult to imagine performing any work without absolutely any control (Krzakiewicz & Cyfert, 2015), ongoing control in particular. Therefore, the employer's obligation is to create such working conditions where the personal rights of employees are respected and the methods and forms of control do not pose a threat to such rights and the principles of social coexistence.

Control is the key to achieving effectiveness of each and every activity in the organisation (Koźmiński & Piotrowski, 2010). Con-

control enables measuring the progress of achieving goals, allowing for early detection of deviations from the expected performance standards (Fayol, 1947). The main purpose of control is to obtain and provide to the interested parties the information about the level of task performance and result achievement plus abnormalities. This makes it possible to take corrective measures with regard to the abnormalities, which ensure restoring the desired state (Buk, 2006). A further effect is indicating ways of eliminating deviations from the required state and suggesting solutions plus encouraging to achieve better results (Armstrong, 2011). In extreme cases, control protects the organisation against employee activities that may expose the company to civil or criminal liability (Lach, 2004).

Employees perform their work under the direction of the employer. This means that the employer has the right to check the ongoing performance of employee duties and the manner and quality of work of their subordinate at any time, either personally or through authorised representatives. Depending on the nature of the workplace, the forms of control used by employers will differ (Gurvis, 2017). However, the form of control used by the employer should be adequate to the situation (its pertinence is justified by the employer's interest) and may not violate the dignity and personal rights of employees (Lim, 2002). The employer may control an employee on the border of the labour and civil law. Most types of controls introduced by the employer (time sheets, video monitoring, monitoring of computers and electronic mail) do not require employee consent, however employees should be familiar with the control-related issues before such a control takes place. Preferably, types of control should be clearly described in the employment contract or work regulations or other internal organisational regulations binding for a given employer (Lach, 2004).

TRADITIONAL FORMS OF EMPLOYEE CONTROL

The basic form of employee control is a timesheet i.e. recording the times when the employees arrive at and leave work. This provides information about presence at work and the working time of employees; more recent solutions enable measuring the time of effective work on the device which an employee should use to perform their duties. It is not allowed to scan employees' fingerprints, iris image or DNA code in order to record times of arriving at and leaving work (Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014).

In justified cases, personal search or checking bags or employee lockers are allowed to prevent stealing the company property. A prerequisite for the employer who intends to perform employee searches is prior notification of such an option contained in the work regulations, collective agreement, annex to the employment contract or otherwise adopted by a given employer. The search is allowed only to protect the important interest of the employer and cannot be abused, and the manner of performing such a control should be adapted to the risk which has occurred for the company assets. The control process cannot go beyond the scope determined by the principles of social coexistence or violate the dignity and subjectivity of an employee (Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014).

Another form of monitoring is employee sobriety control. An employee has no legal obligation to undergo a breathalyser test for the presence of alcohol in the body, which would be carried out by the employer. If it is reasonably suspected that an employee is under the influence of alcohol, the employer is obliged to remove such a person from performing work. The employer cannot perform a sobriety test using a breathalyser without the employee's consent, and even if they do it, it may be undermined. However, if the employer wants to test an employee's sobriety, he/she should call a body appointed to protect public order, which is authorised to check sobriety of an employee even without their consent for

such a test (Góral, 2013). In addition, the employer may order an employee to go to a police station to have a blood alcohol content tested.

MODERN METHODS OF CONTROLLING EMPLOYEE ACTIVITY

The development of modern technologies enables employers to control employees not only through their personal presence, but it is also possible to observe and record the way they perform their work (video monitoring, timesheets, tracking Internet use) or the place of work (geolocation). The observed development of ICT has made people's lives easier in many spheres (Pałka & Stecuła, 2018). Unfortunately, the use of the latest technologies does not always translate into a significant increase in employee productivity (Mateescu & Nguyen, 2019).

The control carried out by the employer may be related to the employees' use of both landline and mobile business phones. The telephone given to an employee should be used only for the purpose of performing professional duties assigned to an employee. An employee is only a business phone user, and the owner who covers the costs of using the phone is the employer. Therefore, the employer has the right to control the use of the business phone by an employee (Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014). The employer has a legitimate interest in verifying the purpose for which an employee uses the business phone. Being the owner, the employer has the right to check the outgoing phone calls, e.g. by checking detailed phone records sent by telephone network operators. However, such verification should take place with prior notice given to a telephone user. Failure to notify an employee about checking phone records for a business phone may be considered a violation of their right to privacy (Bojańczyk, 2003). It is also unacceptable to record or eavesdrop on telephone calls made by employees as a violation of the constitutional right to

confidentiality of communication and the right to privacy (Góral, 2013); the exception is the control of teleworkers whose main duty is to talk to customers on the phone. From the point of view of employees it is important that using a business phone against its intended purpose (e.g. paid participation in parlour games), which resulted in damage to the employer, may be classified as gross violation of basic employee duties and result in termination of the employment contract without notice (Lach, 2004).

Improvement of means of communication and the increasing mobility of employees performing duties for the employer outside the organisation's premises requires information about the current location of an employee (Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014). In the case of mobile employees, e.g. drivers or sales representatives, geolocation, which enables precise indication of an employee's location, not only controls the manner of work and using the company property (e.g. car), but can also contribute to improving work organisation. The employer may install such a system following a notice given to an employee about such type of control. The scope of monitoring should meet the justified purpose and be adequate to the type of duties performed by an employee, e.g. in a place defined in the contract or within a larger area. The use of geolocation outside employees' working hours is unacceptable (Rowińska, 2012).

Cameras are increasingly used in various public and private facilities (Wróbel & Podsiedlik, 2017). A common reason for installing a video monitoring system is the attempt to protect a place against external threats, e.g. security reasons at gas stations or to prevent shoplifting. A more controversial reason is installing cameras to supervise the personnel (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). An advanced monitoring system can play an important role in the work process, helping employees to observe their obligation to care for the company property and interest (Góral, 2013; Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014).

The use of monitoring is defined in relevant regulations (Wróbel & Podsiedlik, 2017). It is prohibited to install cameras in places where employees or visitors have the right to expect privacy (e.g. toilets, changing rooms). Installation and activation of the monitoring system should be preceded with a notice addressed to employees and including relevant information in the work regulations. When deciding to monitor a workplace with the use of cameras, the employer is obliged to properly secure the media containing monitoring recordings against unauthorised access (Maciejewska & Figurski, 2014). This results from the need to ensure personal data protection, including the right to publicity (Kuba, 2014).

Nowadays, the basic work tool for numerous employees is a computer with the Internet access. Permanent logging in is often necessary from the point of view of performing the duties arising from the employment relationship. Free access of employees to computers with a fixed Internet connection creates the risk of their misuse by employees. In practice, access to the Internet can boil down to using its resources for private purposes during working hours (Wolski, 2010). Using the Internet at work for non-professional purposes is referred to as “cyberslacking” (Greenfield & Davis, 2002). The most common forms of using the Internet for purposes other than intended at work include: browsing websites not related to work, using company e-mail against its intended purpose, e-shopping, illegal downloading or sharing of data, using pornographic content (Siau, Nah, & Teng, 2002).

For companies, using computers connected to the Internet in such a way means mainly financial loss resulting directly from the loss of time that employees should spend on fulfilling their tasks. In addition, such activities may overload the corporate network and pose a threat to the security of the employer’s data (Greenfield & Davis, 2002). As a result of using computers connected to the Internet for private purposes, the employer’s IT infrastructure may be ‘infected’ with computer viruses and spyware, thanks to

which unauthorised persons outside of the employer's structures may gain access to the data being at the employer's sole disposal (Wolski, 2010).

It is good practice to determine the possibility of using a computer network, including Internet resources, at the corporate level. This will allow for avoiding future disputes between the parties to the employment relationship. In order to limit the issue of using computers for non-business purposes, the employer may monitor an employee's computer. There are many computer programs available on the market that offer the employers virtually unlimited possibilities to control computers of employees (Manpower, 2010). A common solution is blocking some of the Internet websites that are helpful in performing business duties.

If e-mail is an employee's work tool, the employer has the right to check whether this tool is used for its intended purpose. If the employer decides to monitor e-mail programs, they should remember that, in principle, monitoring should only include the so-called company electronic mail. The employer does not have the right to control an employee's private electronic mail (sent or received via a non-company mailing program, e.g. during a work break), which is protected under secrecy of correspondence (Kuba, 2014), although an employee should not do this during work if this is prohibited by the corporate internal regulations concerning Internet use. Unlike private correspondence, business correspondence can be controlled by the employer in any way. This is due to the fact that by using it an employee acts on behalf and for the benefit of the employer. Therefore, electronic mail is a specific work tool necessary to fulfil the employer's goals (Siau, Nah, & Teng, 2002).

As in the case of using the Internet, if the employer wants to monitor electronic mail they should clearly define the rules for using such programs. The employer may allow for using company mail for private purposes. In this case, however, an employee must be aware of the fact that when controlling the company

correspondence the employer will also check employees' private mail (Wolski, 2010). When opening correspondence addressed by name to an employee and sent to the company address (or company e-mail address assigned to a given person), in the first place the employer must consider the nature of the correspondence. If letters or e-mails are addressed to the company, then even if they include an employee's name they may be opened by the employer or another authorised person. However, if the correspondence is addressed to a specific employee (sent to the company address but without its name), then it is protected under secrecy of communication guaranteed to every citizen in the Constitution. An acceptable form of control for exchanged information for employers is to limit the control of checking it with the view to eliminating items containing spam and viruses. Such control should be fully automated, i.e. checking the security of message content should be done by a computer program and not by a person who would have the opportunity to read the content. As a result, security of the company network will be ensured and confidentiality of correspondence maintained (Lach, 2004).

A special form of activity on the Internet is using social networking platforms by employees, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or Snapchat. They are used to establish contacts, communicate, exchange information, and all this can take place at the expense of the tasks to be done (Korotusz & Kuś, 2018). Unjustified use of this type of Internet sites can be prevented by prohibiting their use during working hours or by using special programs blocking the use of such functions (Greenfield & Davis, 2012). In the case of some employees, their work duties include editing and monitoring corporate social media; then they also need to remember to keep the high quality of the content posted, because this has impact on the company image. The infamous examples of violating such rules include people who expressed their own controversial views on the Internet using company ac-

counts, which could have affected the company reputation and image (Łoboda & Markowska, 2011).

Social networking sites, such as Facebook or GoldenLine, are more and more often becoming a source of knowledge for the employer not only about the activity of their current subordinates but also about potential candidates for available vacancies (Domardzki, 2013). At the same time, by careless managing of one's own account, for example on Facebook, it is equally easy to lose one's dream job; it is enough to post an unfortunate status, comment, photo, as the employer is attentive to their image and such indecent content may act to its detriment (Manpower, 2010). Broadly understood control of current or future employees by searching for and using the information found on the Internet on various portals, often regarding the private life of an employee, should not affect their employment. The private life zone as a personal right should be protected, and any interference in the employee's life outside their working time can be treated as a breach of privacy (Litwiński, 2008). On the other hand, at the time of concluding an employment contract, the employed person takes on the responsibility to care for the reputation of the organisation, which is why working people, i.e. in fact mature and responsible, should be expected to have a certain level of personal culture that will not depreciate themselves or their workplace in virtual reality (Domardzki, 2013). No matter if an employee is during or outside their working hours, they should remember that they are obliged to remain loyal to their employer, which means to refrain from publishing various information on social networking portals concerning the employer, manner of working or the atmosphere in the organisation, e.g. an employee anticipating the fall of Poczta Polska (Polish Post) (Wszektorowska, 2019).

Ridout, Campbell, and Ellis (2011) draw attention to the fact that many young users present themselves in the social media as people intensely enjoying life (e.g. parties, abuse of psychoactive substances), but this does not get positive reactions from employ-

ers and/or contractors. In some cases, this constitutes the basis for punishing such employees. The specificity of the Internet is such that published content can stay there forever; even if the user decides to delete it, its copy can still circulate on the Internet and come to light at the least appropriate time. Among others, Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, knows it, whose photos as a young man revealed during the election campaign in his Arab costume provoked accusations of racism (Mazzini, 2019).

EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CONTROL

The specificity of the employer-employee relationship means that the employer is obliged to respect the employee's personal rights, including the right to privacy, and on the other hand they are also entitled to enforce their interests and needs, which may justify the need to control the employee's way of performing work. The available control measures are aimed at detecting faulty ways of performing work (Krzakiewicz & Cyfert, 2015). The employer's interest related to the business pursued requires that they control whether an employee fulfils their duties at the place and time intended for it (Kuba, 2014). Too frequent controls distract employees, stress them and can be time and cost-consuming. On the other hand, too rare controls may prevent the employer from timely detection of mistakes made by employees (Sikorski, 2013). Progress in the latest technologies used to control employees reduces the workload and cost of controlling operations by intensifying control methods and increasing the level of its reliability, reducing the number of controlling operations, greater discretion and its adaptation to the automatic information processing system (Schultz & Schultz, 2002).

Regardless of control methods (traditional or modern) adopted by a given employer, each control more or less interferes with an employee's privacy, which is the most important personal right

among human rights (Lach, 2004). In particular, modern technologies used to control an employee by the employer, due to the discretion with which they can be used (e.g. an employee may not know that the website browsing history is checked) raise numerous doubts because they involve high psychosocial costs (Kotarski, 2015). Employers equipped with the state-of-the-art control measures delude themselves that owing to such tools they will achieve extremely high employee efficiency, minimising various deviations from the applicable work standard (Lach, 2004). Usually, excessive work control increases employee productivity only temporarily; most often, after some time employees experience work overload which consequently leads to decreased efficiency (Amstrong, 2011). Control by the supervisor or the organisation makes an employee feel uncomfortable. Introducing various types of control tools with regard to manner of performing work or functioning within a given organisation can be perceived by employees as undermining their competences, a threat and may reduce their sense of security, sometimes even giving the sense of intimidation or even deprivation of dignity. Excessive control suggests a lack of trust from the organisation, which may lead to a decrease in the employees' self-esteem and competence, and a growing fear of making a mistake (Bugdol, 2006). Excessive control taking forms that violate the sense of human integrity is an introduction to organisational violence and mobbing (Mateescu & Nguyen, 2019). Functioning under conditions of prolonged stress caused by control may lead to somatisation (e.g. pains, skin changes), which results in frequent absenteeism (Bugdol, 2006). Sometimes, modern forms of employee control are a source of discrimination, because employees of a different ethnic origin, women or junior workers are subject to more frequent controls (Rogelberg, 2017).

Excessive control carried out in the form of suspicions and surveillance with the use of the latest technologies, combined with focusing on errors rather than success introduces a negative

atmosphere at work (Gurvis, 2017). This reduces job satisfaction and may be the source of conflicts within the organisation (employees and line managers responsible for controls) plus it may intensify work-family conflicts (more difficult contacts with family at work). A tense atmosphere due to controls leads to increased turnover of employees seeking a more friendly workplace (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Employees not only leave such organisations, but negative PR is created, which leads to the difficulty recruiting new staff.

CONCLUSIONS

Correct performance of the planning, organising, coordinating and commanding functions by the organisation will not ensure achievement of organisational goals without a control function (Fayol, 1947). The importance of the issue of employee control certainly increases in times of the information society where, thanks to the dynamic development of modern devices, the possibilities of surveillance at work are practically limitless (Mateescu & Nguyen, 2019). This entails the risk of using modern technologies to the extent that excessively interferes with the privacy of employees (Kuba, 2014), the more so as the control results may provide the employer with arguments for dismissing an employee (theft, disclosure of company secret, alcohol consumption) and constitute the basis for terminating the employment contract without notice due to the employee's fault (Lach, 2014). In extreme cases of abuse, in addition to disciplinary action, the employer may pursue their rights in court and the collected materials will serve as evidence of the crime (Bojańczyk, 2003).

The analysis of the specificity of controls using individual modern technologies, their impact on the functioning of employees and applicable legal regulations allows us to name the basic principles of acceptable employee control. Unfortunately, provisions

of the Polish labour law do not directly regulate the admissibility and scope of application of such control tools, however, certain restrictions can be found in the provisions concerning protection of personal rights and personal data (Góral, 2013). Employee control must comply with the law. The form of control used by the employer may not violate the dignity and personal rights of employees or take a form prohibited by law, e.g. secret installation of cameras in rooms where an employee may expect privacy or illegal tapping (Lach, 2004).

Another factor taken into account when allowing for the use of specific control tools should be its adequacy to the situation (Rowińska, 2012). Pertinence of using a particular form of employee control should be justified by the work content (e.g. recording telephone conversations of support services), care for employees (e.g. monitoring of the gas station to protect against attacks on employees) and the employer's interest (e.g. protection of the IT system and important data against viruses). The control measures used must be proportionate to the purpose and interfere with the lives of employees as little as possible (e.g. if it is sufficient to specify the websites which an employee is allowed to visit to stop excessive Internet use by an employee, the employer should not additionally carefully check the websites they visit) (Lach, 2004; Rowińska, 2012).

In the case of employee control with the use of the latest technologies, transparency seems to be the key. Every employee should know what form of control can be used and the extent to which they can use the company equipment for private purposes (Rowińska, 2012). It is recommended that when concluding an employment contract or if the binding rules are changed, every employee is always informed about the organisational rules in force and has the possibility of their informed acceptance (Kozmiński & Piotrowski, 2010). If these basic principles of acceptable employee control are violated, there is a risk of excessive control, which leads to many negative consequences, both in

terms of the organisation's functioning and the mental comfort of employees (Schultz & Schultz, 2002).

Employers may also try to increase work effectiveness and eliminate abuses using other methods which less interfere with employee's privacy, such as proper work organisation (Rutkowska, 2013). Control of employee's work and observation of their way of performing work allows the employer to collect information about the way such an employee organises their work time, their working standards and whether they achieve their goals effectively and efficiently (Golonko, 2019). By that they do not only show which specific behaviours are desired and should be continued, and which should not, but also allows them to address the effects of such a control, explain, justify and inspire to modify followed procedures. Viewed in this light and carried out in a friendly atmosphere, with the aim to achieve results and improve the quality and effectiveness of work, a control has a chance to become motivating for an employee. It is because an employee sees that I am interested in their work, that I strive for them to achieve the best and most satisfying results (Góral, 2013; Rutkowska, 2013).

Owing to precisely defined criteria for work assessment and evaluation, employees will not be able to afford ineffectiveness and waste of organisational resources (Góral, 2013). Reducing waste of resources can also be achieved by teamwork and creating situations where co-workers exert pressure which stimulates to better work (Litwiński, 2008). The most effective method is referring to internal self-control of employees and internalised norms (Cyfert & Stańda, 2016). Although creating the employer-employee relationship by means of appropriate socialisation practices is a long-lasting process and requires the proper impact of organisational culture, it guarantees that norms are respected also in the absence of direct supervision from the employer (Sikorski, 2013). This no longer requires such an intensive use of this type of control instruments or it will discreetly complement

employee self-control while respecting the right to privacy of the persons concerned.

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