

ADVISORY NOTE: EMPLOYEE INTERNET USAGE

Should Your Organization Be Concerned?

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Internet Usage Trends

Internet usage is prolific for business and personal use. The Internet offers vast new resources and opportunities. NetApp has observed its customers' Internet usage and access to have grown immensely. In one case, a company's Internet access grew 1,750% in just over 24 months. Recent NetApp research indicates that personal Internet usage at work is also high, with over 75% of interviewed employees indicating this behavior.

Awareness of Internet Usage Risks

For the month of August 2004, NetApp conducted online research on Internet usage with over 300 respondents from various organizations and geographies. Overall the data indicated that a vast majority of workers are unaware of the corporate network security risks imposed through personal Internet usage in the workplace. Over 85% of the respondents indicated that there is "minimal to no security risk at all". Interestingly this lack of awareness translates to home use as well. A recent joint survey of home users by AOL and National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) indicated that over 70% of respondents falsely believed they were safe.

Industry Trends

Respondents to the NetApp survey came from a diverse group of industries. Internet usage for personal use was high for high-tech and financial organizations, with almost 100% of respondents indicating this behavior. In contrast, in manufacturing and retail industries, only 50% indicated using the Internet for personal use during the work day.

Personal Internet Use Behaviors and Potential Risks

Respondents were asked to indicate their top two reasons for using the Internet at work for personal use. The top four activities were communication (75%), entertainment (31%), shopping (26%), and finances (25%) The latter two may bring immediate risk to individuals if spyware is hidden on their PCs collecting confidential information such as credit card numbers or passwords. All users may run the risk of downloading unwanted software or files that may contaminate systems and networks with malicious code.

Most revealing were the facts that 70% of respondents indicated that they download files while accessing the Internet at work for personal use, and 20% indicated frequent downloads—increasing the risk of leaving the organization's network vulnerable and at high risk of becoming infected with malicious code and spyware.

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Network Appliance, a pioneer and industry leader in data storage technology, helps organizations understand and meet complex technical challenges with advanced storage solutions and global data management strategies.

Productivity Issues and Employer Action

Nearly 80% of the respondents stated that they spend almost an hour a day at work on the Internet for personal use, which could correlate to loss of worker productivity. One may argue that this was done during “break” time. This is a judgment call, but it still opens the door to security risks.

Interestingly, 70% agreed that employers should be able to monitor their Internet usage during work. They felt that an employer has the right to monitor employees to understand their Internet usage. It is not clear if these respondents correlate this to their employer’s need to monitor for security risks, given the high percent who see no or minimal risk in Internet access.

Securing the Internet Gateway

NetApp offers this research as further evidence of the need for organizations to secure their Internet gateways. The NetApp Internet access and security solution allows employers to monitor and protect their Internet gateways to reduce the risk of employee Internet usage, whether for business or personal reasons.

NetApp offers a free [Internet traffic assessment](#) to examine your organization’s internet gateway for security risks.