

Business use of the Internet has experienced extraordinary growth in the last 15 years. It is now common place for employees to have access to the Internet to do their jobs effectively. Although the business uses of the Internet are many, much of the information available to employees on the internet is not related to the performance of the worker's job. As a result, many employers have recognized that unrestricted use of the Internet by employees had the potential to drain rather than enhance employee productivity. Monitoring employees' Internet activity is possible through key loggers and other hardware solutions and is one way to enforce the employer's policy outlining the permissible use of the Internet through the internet acceptable use policy [IAUP].

An IAUP is a written agreement, signed by employees, that sets out the permissible workplace uses of the Internet and the employer's computer. In addition to describing permissible uses, an IAUP should specifically set out prohibited uses, rules of online behavior, and access privileges. Penalties for violations of the policy, including security violations and vandalism of the system, should also be covered. Anyone using a company's Internet connection should be required to sign an IAUP, and know that it will be kept in their employee file as a legal and binding contract.

There are many reasons an employer may want to institute an IAUP. The Internet can be a magnificent source of detailed, current information that can enhance employee productivity. The Internet also allows access to a vast amount of entertainment. Thus, in a very real sense, providing access to the Internet has the same potential for productivity drains as placing a television set on every employee's desk. It is not surprising then, that loss of productivity is the number one reason for drafting an IAUP.

Additionally, there are technological reasons to implement an IAUP. Employee use of the employer internet service connection for personal use, computer equipments and storage devices will drain not only employee time, but can limit or slow network speed and data storage for other employees performing work- related tasks. The IAUP can restrict the downloading of computer games and other non-work related files.

Employers who have sensitive data on their computer systems like company plans, customer demographic data, customer databases, or product designs may need a clause in their IAUP concerning trade secrets. It should be made clear to employees that proprietary company information is a valuable asset that should not be transmitted through the Internet unless it is essential to do so and the information is encrypted.

Employees should institute guidelines that prohibit the illegal use of the Internet in general. A directive instructing employees not to violate copyright laws should be included in every IAUP as well as a prohibition against gambling and viewing pornographic sites via the internet.

Please [contact me](#) if you would like assistance with developing an IAUP for your business.