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## SOCIAL NETWORKING AND THE WORKPLACE

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**Wednesday, 27th August 2008 (Seattle, WA):** Gone are the days when people turned up for work purely to work. In today's ever increasing flood of online attractions and enticements, coupled with the social networking phenomenon reaching epidemic proportions, it is no wonder employers and IT personnel are grappling with what to do.

WebSpy's COO, Lagis Zavros states that "There is no denying that the web has improved the way we do business, but recognition of the potential problem the web might bring through misuse is the biggest hurdle to overcome. Organizations failing to implement reliable monitoring and reporting tools will never really know how much it is costing them."

It's hard to obtain accurate figures, but Facebook and Myspace are reported to have over 100 million subscribers each. Alongside these socially disposed networking sites are a number of business user sites; such as LinkedIn and Plaxo. One of the key questions many organizations address is whether to block or restrict the access to all these sites. It is very easy to just outright ban the use of these facilities at work but the implications could be more harmful than good. Attracting and retaining good employees nowadays is a key challenge faced by most employers. Depriving the needs of our emerging professional workforce can cause them to pack their bags and go someplace else. Worse still, they may leave disgruntled, armed with a list of potential "contacts", and go to a competitor.

The benefits of social networking to business are yet to be realized as most participants are currently there for the social aspects - sharing gossip, posting photos, exchanging music, funny clips or just dreaming up the next thing that will enhance the coolness factor amongst their peers. In a recent study by Gartner, it was found that social networking "holds enormous potential for improving the management of large enterprises". This may be true but enormous potential can also come with enormous risk. Smart forward thinking organizations, as Gartner rightly points out, will put in place appropriate usage policies for employees. This and the use of monitoring and reporting on employee usage will help company executives, HR and security managers drive responsible online behavior in a new balanced workplace.

How many companies publicly state that their greatest asset is their employees and yet fail to recognize what really drives them? Gaining knowledge through responsible use of the Internet and networking can ultimately make employees more productive and valuable in the ever increasing complexity of the global

economy. Most employees are wise enough to recognize that their employers have a right to protect the company assets and reputation and the need to keep the bad guys out. Blocking and filtering illegal or offensive material is understood and expected. Giving staff the ability to self manage their behavior through a harmonious, balanced work environment and access to enriching social and professional online sites does have great potential, but leaving it all to trust and good faith is not enough.

### **About WebSpy Ltd**

WebSpy is a global vendor of software solutions that provide a transparent view over organizations' Internet, email and network usage. WebSpy enables organizations to protect and maximize their Internet investment whilst still allowing enjoyment of the benefits of a web-enabled environment. WebSpy's solutions analyze the information (log files) that common network devices, such as web servers, email servers, and security devices produce. WebSpy can report on more than 200 log formats from different vendors. WebSpy provides an independent, consistent, holistic and reliable window into what is happening within an organization's network and security environment.

WebSpy has representation on Microsoft's Worldwide ISV Partner Advisory Council (PAC).

Full versions of the WebSpy products are available to download and trial, free for 30 days, at:

<http://www.webspy.com/products>

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