



## Is Monitoring the Best Solution for Managing Remote Productivity?

Many employers have risen to the challenge of remote work by implementing radically new thinking, modern technology and experimentation.

One example of this is productivity tracking software. Managers hope this can help substitute for in-person supervision and increase employee engagement; however, many employees find tracking software intrusive. In this article, we'll discuss how to balance these challenges by incorporating your employees in the policy creation process.



## THE DRIVE FOR NEW, REMOTE-FRIENDLY TECH

In the past two years, companies that facilitate distributed teamwork, like **Zoom** and **Notion**, have seen their fortunes rise. The need is obvious – many of the functions that offices provide (a space for collaboration, **innovation emerging from chance encounters**) are in flux, and **no one is sure** how **hybrid work environments** will generate the same productivity. One experiment that some companies are trying is **remote productivity monitoring software**, which can create snapshots of your browsing history, the documents you are working on, the social media sites you visit – even where you go during the day and when. 60% of companies in a recent survey reported that they had **deployed productivity monitoring software**.

How can **hybrid work environments** generate the same **PRODUCTIVITY?**



# REMOTE PRODUCTIVITY MONITORING SOFTWARE: THE SOLUTION FOR YOU?

## Is your workplace surveillance creating a DYSTOPIA?

Some companies in this space, like **Okay**, which creates transparency in the software engineering process, have proven relatively successful. On the other hand, in 2020, Microsoft received extensive backlash for an Office 365 “productivity score” feature. Some critics accused Microsoft of “**gamifying**” workplace surveillance, while others **called the system “dystopian.”** Microsoft later apologized for how it **rolled this feature out**, and agreed to no longer attach individual names to productivity scores, instead just providing information in the aggregate.

While the appeal of this software to managers and HR officials is clear, Ifeoma Ajunwa, a professor at Cornell University’s ILR School, **says that this software risks employees** “being stressed out about surveillance or paying too much attention to the surveillance rather than getting the work done.” However, a new study from UVA and USC found that **some employees prefer remote tracking to direct tracking by their managers**, because “human-free tracking feels less judgmental and will, therefore, allow for a greater subjective sense of autonomy.” The study’s authors recommend **making tracking data available to employees themselves**, so they can know if and how they should improve their performance.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

First, assess the needs your company is truly trying to address. Is productivity monitoring software the best solution? Given the potential downsides, there might be a less intrusive and controversial alternative. If your organization decides on tracking software, be sure to share with your employees what you’re doing and why. As HR departments move towards a new era of **people-first operations**, transparency will help build trust with your employees and minimize potential backlash. Whenever possible, **default to macro rather than micro data gathering**. This means committing to tracking productivity scores at an aggregate level. This can help you discover, for instance, if meetings that go over schedule lead to a dip in productivity afterwards, without violating your employees’ sense of psychological safety. Ultimately, the best way to find out what your employees feel is to ask them.

This material is for general information only and should not be considered as a substitute for legal, medical, tax and/or actuarial advice. Contact the appropriate professional counsel for such matters. These materials are not exhaustive and are subject to possible changes in applicable laws, rules, and regulations and their interpretations.