

## The Use and Abuse of Technologies in the workplace

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### Technology as a Bullying Tool

- 'In the Beginning, was the [spoken] Word'
- Communication was by a range of simple methods – drums, smoke signals, scripts, mail including airmail
- *There was little or no urgency to reply*
- *People were less stressed!*



### Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Then there came to pass, Information Technology, the Call Centre
- Fax, Email, Blackberry, Mobile phone and texting . . . . .
- *And there was a great pressure on workers to respond **NOW!***



### Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Even when at home or on holiday
- During rest breaks and when asleep?



### Technology as a Bullying Tool

Different types of technology based abuse

- Texting, Emailing, Nuisance Calling, Interfering with set up, on line abuse and harassment
- Death Threats, Sexual innuendo and harassment
- Remote access, anonymous access
- Facebook and related sites – snooping, abuse of privacy
- Work Control – monitoring of key strokes, speed of responses to calls
- Safety Monitoring and tracking of employees out on road

### Technology as a Bullying Tool

#### ■ Cyber Bullying

- Cyber-bullying can be as simple as sending emails to someone who has said they want no contact with the sender, and it may also include threats, sexual remarks, pejorative labels (i.e., hate speech), ganging up on victims by making them the subject of ridicule in forums, and posting false statements, and gossip as fact aimed at humiliation;
- when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums and postings online intended to harm, damage, humiliate or isolate another person that they don't like;
- when the Internet, cell phones, or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Employee Tracking
  - A range of various software applications designed to ensure the safety and well-being of travelling and isolated/lone and home workers
  - Mobile Phone GPS tracking – to check where people are and when they reach specific locations
- Good positive outcomes as long as used appropriately
- Potential for abuse by managers being over-zealous in controlling employees
- CCTV in the workplace – constant observation of employees, open to abuse by managers and co-workers?

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Computer use and monitoring software
  - Monitoring log-on and log-off, keystroke rates etc
  - Tracing use of software and illicit use by employees of company facilities
  - Internet monitoring
  - Tracking active work sessions
  - Data collection can be used as a tool to seek out and highlight alleged capability issues, possibly leading to disciplinary action

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Call Centres and Controlling behaviours
  - Modern day 'sweat shops and dark satanic mills'
  - Battery hen cultures
  - Extreme monitoring of work
  - Close timing of calls
  - Toilet break timing, and permissions to be sought
  - Inadequate or no breaks
  - Public humiliation in front of co-workers
  - Stress and associated health problems
  - Low pay and long hours

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Industry specific advice and guidance
- Call Centre web based advice
- 24% of UK organisations report workplace bullying
- 1 in 3 do not have anti bullying policies
- 13% do not have a person to whom victims may talk in confidence

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- How Bullies Act:-
  - Constantly making life difficult for their staff
  - Unreasonable demands
  - Shouting at victims in public
  - Humiliation
  - Blocking promotion
  - Exclusion from business activities

## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Responses needed:-
  - IN-house Policy, against workplace bullying, and specifically on use and abuse of IT facilities
  - In ALL cases of bullying, managers should be properly trained, and where necessary disciplined
  - Serious and meaningful action taken from the top of the organisation.
  - <http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=313&p=0> ACAS Guidance leaflet



## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Stress Network Campaigning against workplace stress and including Bullying
- Working through the Hazards Campaign, through Unions and TUC
- Publicising good practice
- Publicising HSE Management Standards – just revised and relaunched



## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Advice to Victims
  - Where you can stand up to the bully
  - Challenge bullying and harassment at all levels
  - Seek help – do not hide away
  - Take action with Union advice and help
  - Gain strength and confidence by saying NO!
  - Be Strong, be Positive and above all behave with Dignity to show up others' appalling behaviour for what it is
  - Union Reps be vigilant with Management



## Technology as a Bullying Tool

- Thank you for listening
- Thanks to the speakers for this morning
- Question & Answer session and then workshops etc
- We hope you find the weekend successful and to your benefit

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