

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes the conclusions drawn from this research and the recommendations for improvement of the current situation. Further it provides insight to future research directions.

6.1 Conclusion

According to the findings of this research the following conclusions were made. The presence of an Acceptable Use Policy in a Software Organization does not make a significant difference in employee computer use/misuse. However the increased awareness of Acceptable Use Policy does make a positive influence on reducing employee computer misuse at work. Having Internet, email access only at work is a significant factor that influences work computer misuse. Organizations with hierarchical organization, low span of control and high level of formalization enjoy significantly low levels of employee computer misuse.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Providing Clear Guidelines

When studying acceptable use policies of organizations, author felt that some of the policy documents had been compiled in utmost hurry. Most policies had ambiguous statements and could not have been excused even as the initial draft of the policy. The organizational strategic level management should identify the importance of such a policy and should work genuinely to make clear guidelines to the staff. The importance of the guidelines should first be understood by the strategic management before taking the decision to implement such guidelines. Once committed to go ahead with the guidelines the genuine interest of the policy makers play a vital role in compiling a policy. When compiling a policy directive the objective of that statement and the impact

made by the statement needs to be analyzed. It needs to be reminded that the direction of the organization lies on the policy statements and in case the management compromises with the policy it implies that the management compromises the organizational directions.

Further in defining acceptable use it is up to the organization to decide on what is acceptable for them as an organization. For example while one organization may allow the use of organizational Internet connection for personal use with restrictions another organization may want to strictly prohibit personal use. However utmost care should be exercised when defining acceptable use as it could demotivate the employees if they perceive the policy to be too restrictive. If the policy is being introduced for the first time the organization could get representatives from employees involved in formulating the policy. This would provide them the sense of ownership which will definitely be useful in adhering to the policy.

6.2.2 Increasing Awareness

The research revealed that the increased level of awareness reduces the employee misuse. This is very encouraging because increasing employee awareness will assure better utilization of IT resources in the organization. Author recommends that an organization's employee orientation program should include an introduction to organization's AUP and a detailed discussion on acceptable and non acceptable use along with penalties for misuse and methods of enforcement of the policy. Also making sure that each new employee is provided with a copy of the acceptable use at work and assigning them under a mentor who would provide them necessary guidance can be recommended for the organizations. Further organizations can employ formal trainings, email news letters or even informal discussions in building awareness among staff members as a routing.

6.2.3 Policy Making Process

The research revealed that many organizations that had formulated acceptable use policies had not gained the desired results due to some reason. The shortcomings may be in policy, its implementation or evaluation and monitoring. The policy making process is cyclic. Firstly the agenda is setup, secondly the policy formulation and enactment

happens. Next the implementation and enforcement is carried out and finally the monitoring and evaluation happens. This cycle should not stop there but should be started again with an agenda setting for the next version of the policy to rectify the identified issues in the evaluation phase. It was observed that most of the organizations have completely ignored the monitoring and evaluation phase of the policy cycle.

The organizations that opted for an AUP have not identified that their policies were not effective in deterring misuse. This may have been due to the inadequate attention paid to policy enforcement, evaluation and monitoring. Therefore for the organizations that opt for an acceptable use policy it is highly recommended to monitor and evaluate the policy implementation and enforcement.

6.2.4 Organizational Settings

It was revealed that organizations with clear hierarchy enjoy low level of employee computer misuse. Further that narrow span of control is associated with low levels of misuse. Therefore in identifying the correct structure for the organization, strategic level management needs to consider the optimal use of this knowledge. In cases where organizations prefer wider span of control without clear hierarchical setting the proper measures should be taken to assure the optimal use of IT resources of the organization. This is most important in the case of software development organizations as most of them have adopted a flat, wider span of control for their organizations.

6.2.5 Providing Access

Not having access to Internet, email away from work was identified to be one of the influencing factors for employee computer misuse. According to the department of Census and statistics the percentage of households with Internet facility is 0.7% and the percentage of households with email facility is 0.9% (Department of Census and Statistics - Sri Lanka 2004). According to above statistics it is evident that only a smaller portion of workforce has access to Internet, email away from work. It would be advisable to promote Internet, email among the community not only to curb employee computer misuse but also to allow the community to gain the benefits of having access to modern technology and timely information. One aspect the authorities should look into is the

tariff set up for Internet access. The current tariff discourages users to use Internet for long time as the charges are based on local call charges and on per minute basis. Therefore authorities should look in to the possibilities of installing an optimal tariff for the general public in order to popularize Internet usage. Some software development organizations have gone to the extent of providing the initial investment that is required for obtaining a phone connection to allow its employees to have access to Internet away from work (with conditions). Since the down payment is a considerable amount this allows the new users to enjoy connectivity only with the monthly commitment. The organization would not only benefit from both the productive employee hours at work and reduced misuse, but also in case of an emergency (in a mission critical software system) where employees would be able to access the system instantly from home which would otherwise cost huge penalties for the organization.

6.3 Future Research Directions

This study can be considered a starting point for research on Acceptable Use Policies in Sri Lanka. The future research can concentrate on other industries in determining whether the acceptable use policies are effective. Experimental studies on the level of exposure to use policies needed to build awareness can be studied to identify the optimum level of exposure required to give adequate level of awareness to the employees. Further the most influential mode for awareness building can be studied as an experimental research where different methods of exposure to acceptable use policies would be provided for different groups and awareness building would be studied in each of the groups.

Future research can also focus on policy enforcement levels and the effectiveness of the policy. Monitoring levels of policy adherence, penalties for non adherence and how they influence the effectiveness of policy can also be an interesting area of study.

Since ICTA the governing body for Sri Lankan ICT development has identified the need to implement acceptable use policies, the research in this area would be fruitful in many ways to develop more effective policies.