



INFORMATION GOVERNANCE 51

Auditing Staff Internet Usage

1. Introduction. A query we occasionally receive goes along the lines of “can you provide evidence from an audit of a particular member of staffs computer as we think they are spending too much time on the internet”.
2. The Technical Problem. The simple answer is that for a variety of reasons we cannot do this. The most obvious one is that such an audit would not actually prove anything. Whilst in the past it may have been possible to provide some level of audit, many users on modern computers will be working and monitoring a range of systems on one device which makes any log of a single application unsuitable as proof of activity. As an example right now, I have 4 different applications open on my laptop, one of which is Internet Explorer where I have 6 separate tabs open. A report generated on any of these would show they are being accessed but wouldn't show the exact times and duration of the access, ie when they were being actively looked at rather than just open in the background.
3. The Solution. The way to deal with this issue is to go back to the actual problem. In most cases a manager has a view that a person is not performing their work tasks very well due to distractions on the internet and is seeking proof of this from their computer. Actually, rather than a technical solution, the answer is more likely to be a management one.
4. Internet History. To see the history of a user on the internet, click on the 3 dots to the right of the user's profile in top right of the screen then scroll down to the History option. Most organisations have a policy of “limited personal use” for internet use. Some may be stricter. So long as the organisations policy on internet use is clear, (potentially including a statement saying that users are not permitted to delete their history and that checks may be carried out at any time), you could then take action against the user if the use that you can see appears to be excessive. Remember that the History is not clear evidence but only gives details of web sites visited and an indication of the time the page was opened.
It may be a better option to talk to the user, explain the History folder option and set out your expectations around internet use for non-work purposes.

