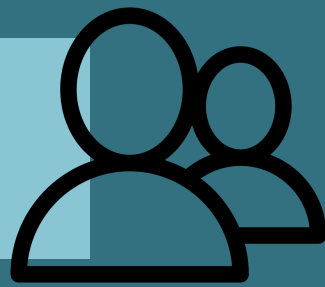




POWER,
SURVEILLANCE,
AND
MONITORING
in Virtual Teams

by Elizabeth Morel, Emily Adawi, Emma
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Power, Surveillance, and Monitoring

in a Virtual World



1

What is Power?

2

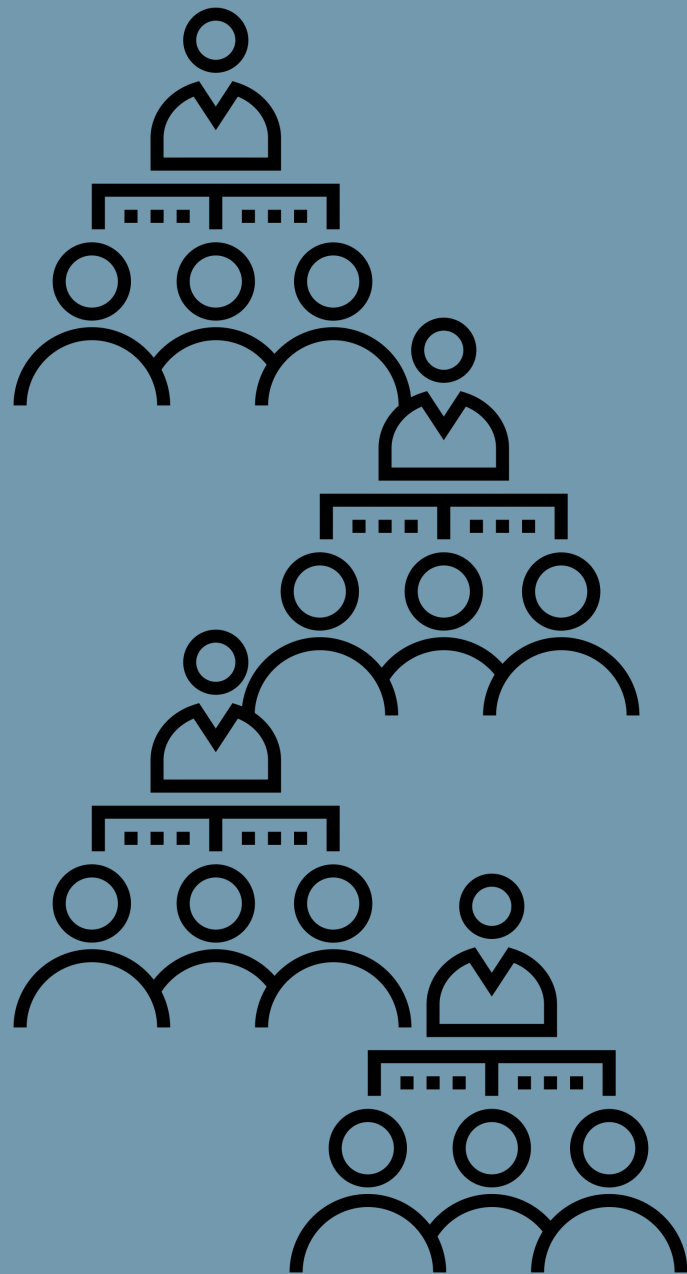
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1

What is Power



In Virtual Teams

1. What is Power?
2. Formal Roles and Responsibilities
3. Three Uses of Power
4. Real-World Implications

1.1 What is Power

In the context of virtual team dynamics, power is having the ability to lead, supervise, and evaluate team members' operations, particularly when they are working remotely. The concept of power in virtual teams is complex and includes aspects such as leadership, governance, evaluation, and moral concerns related to these tasks. In a video explaining how to build a high-performance virtual team, Jason Whaling states that power is, "making sure they [the team] has everything they need to be successful and answer any questions," (1:19). In virtual team dynamics, power encompasses not only the traditional components of authority and expertise but also the nuanced aspects of monitoring, surveillance, and ethical considerations.

Effective use of power is what distinguishes a successful team; a competent leader can motivate the group to carry out tasks with greater speed and precision.

What Is Power?



Abed Adawi, Founder of AB Marketing, underscored the influential role of his leadership in keeping the team focused on tasks, expressing, "Establishing KPI (key performance index) making clear what success looks like upfront, showing what metrics we are measuring. The frequency in which you connect on the metrics will alter the success rate, if you check in once a month the success rate will be lower than if you were to check in once a week."

In the same way, Bython identifies the need to define the features and capabilities that team members may need as one of the five most efficient ways to foster teamwork and communication. Taking into consideration that, "workforce demographics will heavily influence the types of tools your organization may need to succeed," (1:23).

1.2 Formal Rules and Responsibilities

Those in leadership roles in virtual teams carry the essential responsibility of placing monitoring technologies into place strategically. They do this through implementing tools like keystroke tracking and facial recognition to improve security and productivity. These executives must navigate the legal system while striking a balance between organizational interests and privacy rights.

Referencing court decisions like "O'Conner v. Ortega." Beyond technology, transparent communication, trust-building, and granting team members autonomy are the fundamentals of effective leadership. This comprehensive strategy takes into account leadership techniques, technology implementation, and ethical issues—all of which are essential for developing a supportive and effective virtual team environment.

Three efficient uses of power

- 01 Virtual Team Skill Building Workshops
- 02 Recognition and Appreciation
- 03 Offer Flexible Work Arrangements

Virtual team skill-building workshops encourage team members to develop their skills, resulting in a workforce that is more qualified and flexible. when used as positive reinforcement, recognition, and appreciation inspires team members, raising spirits and fostering a culture of cooperation. Providing flexible work schedules is a sign of a company's concern for its workers' well-being. It also builds loyalty and fosters an environment that improves output and team performance.

1.4 Real World Implications and The Teramind Case Study

The Teramind case study serves as an example of the practical difficulties associated with corporate surveillance in virtual teams. It demonstrates how technological innovations such as keystroke tracking and facial recognition software can raise ethical questions in addition to being useful for boosting productivity. This particular example emphasizes how important it is to use moral principles and openness when putting monitoring procedures in place for remote teams in order to balance management goals with worker rights.



2

What is Surveillance and Monitoring?

In Virtual Teams



1. Defining Surveillance and Monitoring
2. Am I Being Watched?
3. Pro's and Cons of Surveillance and Monitoring
4. Virtual Teams and Surveillance Tools

2.1 Defining Surveillance and Monitoring

Surveillance: close watch kept over someone or something (as by a detective)

Monitoring: to watch, keep track of, or check usually for a special purpose



The terms surveillance and monitoring mean to keep a close watch over something or someone. This is applied differently in virtual work compared to in person. Virtually employers are able to keep logs of when an employee is logging in and out of any website, or even to watch the screen in real time (Long et al 2010). Due to the isolation of virtual work, it is important to put extra thought into surveillance. Workers are not clocking in or traveling to work physically with their team. In a virtual team this isolation can impede teamwork and connection.

Team leadership could be worried that they will not be able to keep their workers and team members accountable. Both in person and virtually workplace surveillance is used to ensure productivity, mitigate employee theft, and to keep workers accountable to their working hours (Vitak, J., & Zimmer, M. 2023). Virtual teams are also able to keep one another accountable adjacently with monitoring technologies, although surveillance is most commonly used from the top down.

When learning about monitoring technologies, discussion between workplace leadership and staff is important to acknowledge the extent of what the technologies will see and report. In order to avoid mistrust and confusion everyone in the group should be on the same page in what surveillance and monitoring are.

Overall, remote employee surveillance is a way for employers to track what workers are doing on the job when they are working from home or remotely (Workest). Depending how it is used it can make a positive, negative, or neutral impact on the workplace. Like any technology everything depends on which software is chosen and how it is utilized

2.2 Pro's of Surveillance in Virtual Teams



1.Flexibility

Working with virtual teams allows for flexibility to hire a more diverse set of people to contribute. The online nature of virtual teams allows employers to pick the best person to compliment the team's skills from anywhere in the world.

2.Tracking Work

Although tracking work sounds stressful, teams have been able to take advantage of virtual systems in order to balance the workload and prevent team members from becoming burnt out. Zenefits notes, “Employers using remote monitoring can gain important data to help manage workloads and timelines to make sure both are realistic.” (2022). Tracking work can help manage the delegation of tasks but also keeping track of hours to pay.

2.2 Con's of Surveillance in Virtual Teams



1.Micromanaging

While virtually working a team leader might be so worried that they could use surveillance technology in order to monitor the exact hours each person of the team is working. Micromanaging of time can cause team members to feel like they are not trusted to manage their own time and workload.

2.Home Invasion

Especially for workers forced to work online for the first time, virtual work blurs the line between work and home, therefore blurring the line of work surveillance to personal life monitoring from the employer. One study of remote workers revealed that 56% felt stress and anxiety due to being monitored by their employers, with 41% constantly wondering if they were being watched (Kurkowski 2021).

2.3 Am I Being Watched?!

The demand for virtual surveillance has been around for as long as virtual work has existed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic forcing lockdowns and work-from-home the use of surveillance tools increased by 74% in March 2020 compared to March 2019 (Kurkowski). Employers suddenly realized that they had to measure work differently. They scrambled to maintain control of their workers while they were in their homes.



This causes the line between home and work to be blurred. Strong boundaries are needed to ensure work-life balance when our homes are our offices. When an office had a strong trusting work culture prior, the trust transferred to work from home. But, working from home has scared employers causing them to turn to micromanaging. This environment of being constantly monitored and being checked up on leads to burnout and the stress of not being trusted and able to do their job.

2.4 Virtual Teams and Surveillance Tools



As reinforced throughout this chapter, Virtual teams have different surveillance and technology needs than in person teams. The Washington Post states, "Market research firm Gartner says companies used more surveillance tools during the coronavirus pandemic to keep tabs on employees and monitor work productivity." (Abril Harwell 2021). Every surveillance tool has a different function, therefore one workplace can use multiple tools at once.

One hybrid worker, Jessica, outlined the virtual work tools she uses everyday. She uses Teams for active working time, Smartsheet to give availability, Zoom to meet with one another, and Slack. She stated that her current work culture is built on trust and respect within colleagues, therefore there is no need for intense surveillance. If someone needs to work-

-online one day they simply must communicate with a google form ahead of time. (2023)

When considering what tools to use for your team, consider your team's needs. Does your team need to keep workers accountable to their working hours, or to log their hours. Does the team need to be monitored at all times if they are working with sensitive information remotely? It is important to consider the level of surveillance required, but also to communicate with the team members and work with their boundaries.

Conclusion

In Virtual Teams surveillance and monitoring is an important asset yet delicate matter. Employers use surveillance technology in order to monitor their team members and keep tabs on what they are doing during working hours and on their work devices. When using surveillance technology aggressively without the knowledge of employees or team members, they can lose trust and motivation for their tasks. When used wrong, virtual monitoring can invade an employees home and cause them to feel isolated and violated. Surveillance and Monitoring technology can also increase the diversity of the team by allowing workers to work anywhere while their employer knows they are working. These tools can also allow team leaders to properly track contribution hours of individuals who are working above and beyond for the team. Overall, surveillance and monitoring in teams can sound scary but positive when used effectively.



3

Challenges and Maintaining Trust



1. Power Dynamics in Virtual Teams
2. Surveillance and Monitoring Challenges
3. The Role of Trust



Virtual teams have become increasingly prevalent in today's globalized world, enabling organizations to leverage talent from different locations and time zones. However, the virtual nature of these teams presents unique challenges when it comes to power dynamics, surveillance, and monitoring. This e-book chapter aims to explore these challenges and provide insights into how organizations can address them while maintaining trust within virtual teams.

3.1: Power Dynamics in Virtual Teams

Power dynamics play a crucial role in any team setting, including virtual teams. In traditional office environments, power is often exerted through physical presence and hierarchical structures. However, in virtual teams where physical proximity is absent, power dynamics can be more complex. According to my interviewee, Jennifer Sumalinog, "Power within virtual teams can be subtle yet influential." The absence of face-to-face interactions can lead to power imbalances that may go unnoticed by team members or leaders. It becomes essential for leaders to establish clear channels of communication and ensure equal participation among team members.



3.2: Surveillance and Monitoring Challenges

Surveillance and monitoring are integral aspects of any work environment but present unique challenges within virtual teams. While monitoring progress is necessary for effective project management, excessive surveillance can lead to feelings of mistrust and hinder productivity.

Anonymous highlighted that "virtual teams require a delicate balance between trust-building measures and monitoring mechanisms." Leaders must implement transparent systems that allow for accountability without compromising individual autonomy or privacy. Regular check-ins should focus on progress updates rather than micromanagement.



Surveillance is essential for monitoring individual performance within virtual teams. However, Nydegger & L. (2008) argue that excessive surveillance can be counterproductive as it may lead to feelings of mistrust and invasion of privacy among team members.

Robert (2016) emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to surveillance by stating that "while monitoring is necessary for ensuring accountability, it should be done transparently without compromising individual autonomy." This suggests that open communication about monitoring practices can help alleviate concerns related to privacy invasion.

Effective monitoring strategies are vital for maintaining trust within virtual teams. Bjornberg (2014) proposes mutual performance monitoring as an effective approach where team members collectively assess each other's contributions based on agreed-upon criteria.

In the provided video, Siantonas (2015) suggests that regular communication and feedback sessions can enhance monitoring efforts by providing opportunities for team members to discuss their progress and address any concerns. This fosters a sense of accountability and encourages trust-building among virtual team members.

3.3: The Role of Trust

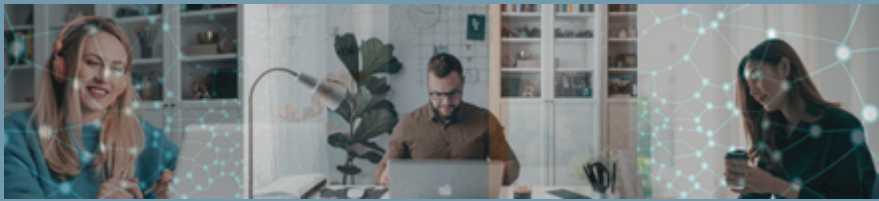
Trust is the foundation of successful collaboration within virtual teams. However, building trust in a virtual setting can be challenging due to the absence of face-to-face interactions. Nydegger & L. (2008) argue that trust-building requires consistent communication, shared goals, and mutual understanding among team members. He suggests that establishing clear communication channels is vital for fostering trust. Regular video conferences or face-to-face meetings can help bridge the gap created by physical separation, enabling team members to build rapport and establish stronger connections.



In the interview conducted with Jennifer Sumalinog, it was revealed that "trust is built through consistent delivery of high-quality work, open and honest communication, and demonstrating reliability." This highlights the importance of individual actions in establishing trust within virtual teams.



Bjornberg's research (2014) emphasizes the importance of mutual performance monitoring as a means to build trust within virtual teams. When team members collectively monitor each other's progress and provide constructive feedback, it promotes transparency and accountability. This practice helps mitigate power imbalances by encouraging shared responsibility among team members.



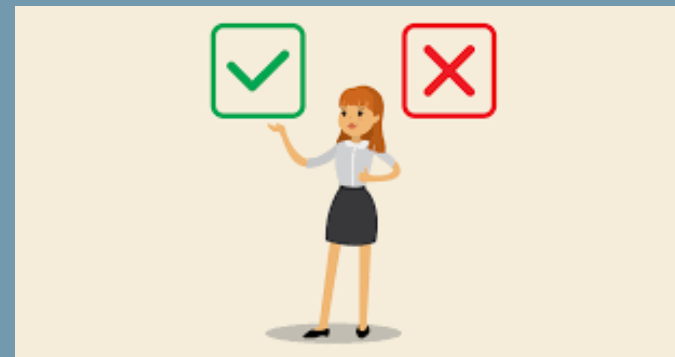
In conclusion, power dynamics, surveillance, and monitoring pose significant challenges to building and maintaining trust within virtual teams. The absence of non-verbal cues in online interactions can exacerbate power imbalances, leading to mistrust among team members. Furthermore, excessive surveillance may hinder creativity and autonomy within virtual teams if not balanced appropriately.

To overcome these challenges, it is crucial for virtual teams to establish clear communication channels that facilitate regular interaction. Mutual performance monitoring can also play a pivotal role in building trust by promoting transparency and shared responsibility among team members. As technology continues to shape our work environments, understanding these challenges becomes increasingly important for effective collaboration in virtual teams. By addressing power dynamics and finding ways to strike a balance between surveillance and autonomy, organizations can foster an environment where trust thrives even across digital boundaries.

4

How it can ethically be incorporated in today's world?

In Virtual Teams



1. Transparency and Communication
2. Legal Compliance
3. Ethical Leadership

4.1: Transparency and Communication

Employees on a team have a right to know whether, how, and why they are being watched at work. Employees should be fully informed of all forms of monitoring, including call recording, video monitoring, productivity tracking software, and metadata collection, as soon as they begin working. They ought to be informed on a regular basis about the different kinds of monitoring that are in place and have access to a comprehensive monitoring policy that describes the data being collected, why it is being collected, how long it will be kept, and who will have access to it. Getting voluntary and informed consent is essential when it comes to monitoring. Although legal or contractual requirements may prevent consent in some situations or settings, it should be assumed that only monitoring staff who are aware of and in agreement with the terms will be monitored.



Although managers must make up for significant power imbalances introduced by technology and data collection, virtual team members may need to be monitored to maintain alignment. Inherent imbalances can be balanced by keeping employees informed about the monitoring system's operation on a regular basis, focusing on performance requirements rather than control, and granting flexibility based on employee input. Remote worker surveillance greatly depends on teamwork and technological trust.



Surveillance and monitoring can be useful and moral tools for managing virtual teams if they are used with care and adhere to employee rights. Understanding the distinctions is essential to integrating these technologies into the developing virtual workplace in an ethical and responsible manner.

4.2: Legal Compliance

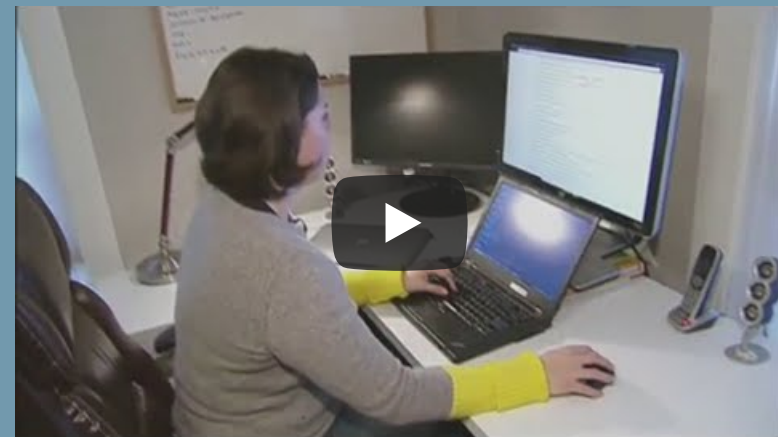
When integrating surveillance and monitoring operations into virtual teams, it is imperative to uphold pertinent laws and regulations as a matter of ethics. Managers must comprehend and keep track of a patchwork of diverse data protection and privacy laws because their remote workers operate across multiple jurisdictions. Ignoring this due diligence not only puts you in danger of breaking the law, but more significantly, it erodes employee trust.



If monitoring policies and software capabilities need to be adjusted in light of changing regulations, regular legal reviews should also provide this information. Compliance diligence is similar to the transparency ethic in that it is complex, but managers cannot reasonably expect staff trust if the monitoring regimes they impose violate fundamental rights and protections that are guaranteed elsewhere.

Furthermore, “Letting employees know that they will be monitored removes employees' reasonable expectation of privacy—the element that often forms the basis for invasion-of-privacy lawsuits arising under common law,” (JOSSO 2 by Atricore, n.d.). The cornerstone of any successful remote team is employee trust in leadership and the employment relationship itself, which is ultimately preserved by upholding ethics and laws governing surveillance. It is this sincere attempt at compliance that renders it inherently moral.

4.3: Ethical Leadership



How Employers Monitor Employees Working Remotely

Leadership has a significant impact on moral behavior and organizational norms. This is especially true in the modern era of remote work, virtual teams that rely on technology, and monitoring systems that are vulnerable to misuse. The tone at the top, as demonstrated by the priorities and actions of the leadership, may be more important in maintaining an ethical environment than regulations, codes of conduct, and compliance.



A quote from an interview I did with Dr. Dena Orkin, the Cooperman and Posse Scholar Program Director at Rutgers New Brunswick within the Educational Equity Group perfectly encapsulates the extent of being monitored at home. She states, “the computer belongs to the company and then I was required to fill out a Qualtrics form with my work product every day when we were first sent home as remote workers. In other words, you had to apply for the location and submit your location. Basically, use your IP address to verify the location from which you were working. That way, they could find out if you pretend to be working in New Jersey when, in reality, you're at your mother's house in Vegas.”

For leaders who want to ethically incorporate monitoring in distributed teams, the first step is to set an example of fairness, respect, and accountability in their own conduct. Senior managers send a strong signal of ethics when they are willing to listen to employee concerns about privacy or autonomy, take accountability for unintentional harms resulting from data practices, and are open to an honest discussion about monitoring policies. The talk of putting employee well-being first must be accompanied by deeds that show true compassion, comprehension, and dedication to striking a balance between the demands of productivity and the rights and dignity of employees.

Instead, they undermine ethical foundations before ground even breaks on implementing monitoring technology when leaders prioritize efficiency and



control over all else and display indifference to these concerns through strict, opaque, and intrusive monitoring policies. Workers quickly distinguish between declared and actual priorities. Organizational justice and faith in the employment compact are undermined by leaders who act coldly and robotically, focusing only on production targets, even in the face of seemingly morally sound regulations.



**THANK
YOU FOR
READING!**

As we conclude this e-book, it is important to reflect on the significance of these topics in today's digital age. Power dynamics within virtual teams can be complex due to the absence of physical presence and traditional hierarchies. Understanding how power is distributed and exercised within these teams is essential for fostering collaboration, trust, and productivity.

Surveillance in virtual teams serves as a means to ensure accountability and maintain security. However, striking a balance between monitoring employees' activities without invading their privacy is crucial. Implementing transparent surveillance measures can help build trust among team members while still ensuring organizational goals are met. Monitoring strategies are vital for assessing team performance and identifying areas for improvement. Regular feedback sessions, performance evaluations, and data analysis can provide valuable insights into individual contributions as well as team dynamics.

In conclusion, power dynamics, surveillance practices, and monitoring strategies are integral components of successful virtual teams.

By understanding these concepts and implementing appropriate measures to manage them effectively, organizations can create an environment that promotes collaboration, productivity, and growth. As technology continues to advance rapidly in our modern world, it becomes even more crucial to adapt our approaches to power dynamics, surveillance practices, and monitoring strategies in order to thrive in the ever-evolving landscape of virtual teamwork.

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