

Employee right to privacy is a pretty new concept in business, but one that is catching on fast. Whether you are a manager or a worker, it definitely makes sense to put some thought into employee privacy rights. There are many different approaches in different businesses, and the courts haven't really decided what they think yet. In short, we are in the middle of a social debate about employee privacy. Which way will the debate go? That is up to all of us to decide together.

In my own business, I am a big fan of employee privacy. I feel like as long as my employees get the job done, that is all that matters. I don't care if they send out personal e-mails, check the Web, use drugs in their spare time, or party all night long on weekends.

You see, giving my employees privacy is a matter of respect for me. I feel that the office environment should be based, as much as possible, on mutual respect. If I acknowledge my employees have a right to self-determination, pay them well, and give them good benefits, they will in turn enjoy working for me. Loyal employees are productive employees, and employees that stay with the company for a long time. Therefore, it is to all of our advantages when employee privacy and other employee rights are respected.

I know other people in business, however, who have much different views on employee privacy. A lot of the time, the argument is made that an employees privacy stops at the door. Everything you do while you are on the job should be related to the job. Some people go even further, using random drug testing as a way to screen out undesirable employees. There are many different argument for this. Some people argue that it decreases health care costs, other people say that drug users are not responsible or dependable employees. Some people even are required to do it by law, for insurance purposes.

For me, it all seems to come down to management styles. I am very laid back. I like to see responsible, hard-working employees. As such, I give them freedom and expect them to do their work in a timely and efficient manner. Other people, however, see things much differently. If you work in a large company, you might see your employees more as cogs in a machine. If you primarily demand strict obedience to office codes rather than self-motivation and independence, workplace privacy probably is not that important to your business model.