USING HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND DECREASE EMPLOYEE TELECOMMUNICATION VIOLATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

In the United States, organizations can be held legally liable when their employees create conditions for a hostile work environment by operating telecommunication systems for personal use in the workplace. Conventionally, many organizations implement acceptable telecommunication usage policies and electronic surveillance to prevent harassing situations from occurring and to protect themselves against costly liability lawsuits. However, these authoritarian methods have been criticized because of the apparent trade-offs they cause among employee privacy rights, productivity, and the need to safeguard the firm from harassment lawsuits. As an alternative approach, our analysis shows that the development of a High-Performance Work System (HPWS) will lower employees' propensity to misuse telecommunication systems in the workplace, resulting in the reduction of employee rights lawsuits for the firm. Our analysis indicates that a HPWS creates a work environment that ensures telecommunication systems will be properly used and employees will not have to relinquish their expectation of privacy. We argue that organizations that manage their telecommunication systems by HPWS practices rather than bureaucratically controlling them will be in a better position to overcome the legal inadequacies of authoritarian methods.

TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

To successfully compete in the global economy, companies now use telecommunication systems as a critical organizational resource in the workplace.

Telecommunication systems are electronic devices consisting of, but not limited to, the Internet and electronic mail (e-mail) that permit organizations and their employees to communicate important information globally by collecting files from and uploading files to other computers in a diverse global network [1]. In particular, white-collar workers are the foremost users of telecommunication systems, spending nearly one-half to three-quarters of their workday using them [2]. White-collar work requires high levels of discretion, which is characterized by performing intangible work activities using telecommunication systems.

However, the freedom these employees have when using telecommunication systems during working hours permits them to send offensive or private e-mail messages and access personal or objectionable Web sites from the Internet for nonbusiness purposes. Employees abuse telecommunication systems in the workplace by circulating inappropriate e-mails consisting of derogatory statements about co-workers, off-color jokes, bigoted remarks, overt or implied threats, messages containing offensive language, and solicitations for charities [3]. In addition, objectionable Web sites include references to offensive issues such as sexually explicit material, violence, racism, gambling, and areas that transmit hate mail [4]. The content of these Internet Web sites may be distributed via e-mail to others in the workplace, enabling harassment of one employee by another. In addition, when employees access the Internet for personal reason and send nonbusiness-related e-mails, they waste a tremendous amount of firm resources, thereby decreasing their productivity [3].

The rapid deployment of telecommunication systems in the workplace has left many in the business community unprepared to handle diverse issues such as productivity, individual employment rights to privacy, and a work environment free from sexual, racial, and other types of harassment. Tortious actions and behaviors by employees while using telecommunication systems will produce the conditions for a hostile work environment, causing a potential costly liability lawsuit for the organization [5]. In the United States, strict liability standards hold that firms, even if they are blameless, are socially and legally responsible for all inappropriate, tortious actions and behaviors of their employees as long as they are within the scope of their duties during business hours [6]. Sanderson stated, "After the case of *Morse v. Future Reality*, employers are justified in worrying about their exposure to sexual or racial harassment claims as a result of the downloading of pornography or circulation of distasteful jokes by e-mail [7, p. 9].

Usage Policies and Technology Surveillance

More recently, it has become apparent that telecommunication systems convey new legal and productivity challenges for management, and many organizations are now aware of the need to monitor and control their employees' abusive actions [8]. As an effective regulation and control system to prevent employees from distributing unacceptable material via telecommunication systems, many

organizations have implemented an acceptable telecommunication usage policy [5], electronic surveillance [9], or, in most instances, a combination of the two, to protect themselves against costly liability lawsuits.

Acceptable telecommunication usage policies and electronic surveillance are the two traditional, hierarchical, control-oriented approaches that telecommunication-dependent organizations currently utilize. These bureaucratic approaches enable telecommunication-based organizations to avoid vicarious liability lawsuits for defamatory remarks, discrimination, emotional distress, and the circulation of offensive material by employees, while simultaneously ensuring that a professional, productive, and secure workplace is sustained [10].

An acceptable telecommunication usage policy consists of formally written rules, standards, procedures, and policies defining acceptable employee use of organizations' telecommunication systems and indemnifies the employer from impermissible uses of this equipment in the workplace [5]. If no limitations or constraints over the use of telecommunication systems are established in the workplace, it will be more difficult for an organization to ascertain that a misuse has occurred. In the *PPG Industries and Brotherhood of Painters & Allied Trades, Local 579* case, the arbitrator reinstated a terminated employee without back pay for sending pornographic e-mails at work because the employee had not been informed of the rule that made this type of activity a form of harassment [11].

Electronic surveillance can be construed broadly to include discreet, sophisticated devices with relatively inexpensive content-filtering software that restricts access to prohibited Web sites. Such sites are identified by the organization or tracked (monitored) to determine how much time had been spent online, which Web sites employees had accessed, and when they did [6]. In addition, electronic surveillance can monitor, record, sort, and filter the content of employees' e-mails, which could warn firms about possible exposure to sexual harassment. Some of the new technology in monitoring software generates charts and graphs to indicate which employees receive and send the most e-mails and lists their specific content. An organization can use information obtained from electronic monitoring to discipline or terminate an employee, as long as the employee was made aware of such surveillance through an acceptable telecommunication use policy, and if the content of such information had created a hostile work environment [9].

Conversely, these authoritarian prevention and control methods have come under extreme scrutiny because of the apparent trade-offs among the constitutional scope of employee privacy rights, employee morale and productivity, and the desire to safeguard the company from potential legal liabilities based on harassment [1, 9]. Organizations recognize that they could be exposed to potential invasion of privacy liability lawsuits for inadvertent or intentional electronic monitoring of internal telecommunication resources [6, 9]. The Supreme Court, in *Katz v. United States*, determined that a person must have a definite or subjective expectation of privacy that society reasonably recognizes [12, 13]. In a controlled study designed to examine the effects of technological monitoring. Urbaczewski

and Jessup [14] found that an increase in electronic monitoring helped to ensure productivity, but only at the expense of employees' overall negative satisfaction with monitoring and the violation of trust between the employer and themselves [14].

A review of the literature indicates that there appears to be a conflict between an organization's right to protect itself from telecommunication harassment lawsuits and the employees' rights to have a reasonable expectation of privacy [9, 13, 15]. This would require organizations to abstain from electronically monitoring their employees' use of telecommunication systems in the workplace. In addition, the Supreme Court, in *O'Connor v. Ortega*, held that an employee had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the desk and file cabinets in his or her office, but indicated that an organization's practices or policies could lessen such an expectation. Such practices would include an organization's acceptable telecommunication use policy [13, 16].

Therefore, given the combination of useful business information and objectionable content provided by global telecommunication systems, it can be expected that disputes will arise in the workplace concerning violation of workers' right to privacy, freedom of speech, decreasing worker productivity, and possibly charges of sexual harassment over the improper use of telecommunication systems during working hours. Thus, it is reasonably possible that organizations can be simultaneously defending themselves from both the individuals who are being harassed and the individuals who are responsible for contributing to the harassment.

A SOCIOTECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS AND TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

As an alternative approach to both acceptable telecommunication usage policies and electronic surveillance, this article proposes that firms can decrease their employees' tendency to inappropriately use telecommunication systems in the workplace by creating a work environment that encourages mutual trust, respect, and confidence. Telecommunication-based organizations must maintain a work environment that supports employee autonomy and quality of work life by open communication. Furthermore, our analysis will indicate that implementing a committed, supportive, and trusting work environment free from authoritarian control will enable organizations to circumvent any costly employee rights lawsuits concerning both harassment and privacy violations, while simultaneously increasing workforce productivity. Thus, employees will preserve their expectation of privacy and simultaneously be free from any harassing activities when a work environment facilitates the proper use of telecommunication systems.

To better comprehend how to create an open, employee-centered, and trusting work environment; organizations must understand how dynamic sociotechnical factors influence the interaction between individuals and telecommunication systems in the workplace. The Sociotechnical Systems (STS) Theory provides one theoretical rationale for examining the effects work systems will have on employees' motivation, behavior, and attitude toward violating telecommunication systems in the workplace [17]. STS redesign efforts have been modified to be linked with increased productivity, more effective human resource systems, and quality-of-work life initiatives in services and nonroutine situations [18]. The STS approach can also be associated with the firm's vision to position telecommunication systems in the workplace and simultaneously ensure employee rights and maintain a productive working environment free from harassment.

Our analysis takes a contextual approach to managing telecommunication systems in the workplace. As applied to the context of individual employment rights to privacy and a work environment free from harassment, STS theory attributes the successful design and implementation of technology to the human and social element of a firm. One underlying assumption of the STS approach is that employees are recognized as valuable resources in technological environments [18]. In this regard, for organizations to effectively manage telecommunication systems in the workplace, they must consider the technology, the individual, and the working environment confronting them.

HPWSs Compared to Usage Policies and Technology Surveillance

This article conceptualizes the firm's technical element as its telecommunication system, consisting of the Internet and e-mail systems. The human and social element is conceptualized as a high-performance work system (HPWS), which is defined as a managerial strategy that facilitates the firm's ability to decrease employees' propensity to violate telecommunication systems rules, thereby preserving individuals' privacy rights and ensuring a work environment free from harassment. The STS approach offers a theoretical advantage with regard to the potential violation of employee privacy rights and prevention of harassment in the workplace, in that it permits such systems to act as catalysts for change by supporting the appropriate use of telecommunication systems by all employees. HPWSs represents a paradigm shift from more traditional, bureaucratic approaches based on top-down control to one that explicitly involves all employees through open communication and decision making [19].

A HPWS consists of a complex set of distinct, but complementary, managerial practices that attempt to manage, involve, and empower the workforce [20]. These practices achieve synergy among employees, technology, and the work environment in such a way that employees are more motivated, satisfied, and committed and so allow organizations to experience superior performance [19, 21]. In this

work system, we argue that employees will not abuse telecommunication systems since such firms are employee-centered by design [22].

From this perspective, HPWSs are labor-management systems that have a significant effect on employee skills, motivation, commitment, behaviors, and values because the specific set of human resource management (HRM) practices improves employees' orientation to work [23], which makes them more productive and more informed about conditions that may violate telecommunication systems rules in the workplace. When utilized as a coherent system, this set of interrelated HRM practices selects, develops, retains, and motivates a workforce to obtain desired telecommunication goals and objectives [24]. HPWSs require greater commitment to employees to get greater commitment from employees [25].

In contrast to HPWSs, firms that use authoritarian methods to prevent and control telecommunication violations communicate to employees that they are not serious about protecting the rights of individuals. In terms of individual employment rights, a control-oriented approach to the management of tele-communication systems emphasizes the use of rules and monitoring to enforce behaviors, and the use of punishment to increase employee compliance with the rules. The popularity of the control-oriented approach to telecommunication management is reflected in the fact that much of the existing individual employ-ment rights literature is focused on examining the role that individual differences play in causing telecommunication violations [9].

Electronic surveillance has serious legal consequences because employees believe that the abuse of such technology by many firms has led to an ever more pervasive intrusion into their private lives [9]. In addition, when an employee is aware of and consents to a telecommunications-use policy, that employee forfeits the legitimate expectation of privacy [9, 15]. Implementing written usage policies and electronic surveillance is a potential treat to employees' privacy because these bureaucratic regulatory methods may substantially reduce or effectively remove the employees' reasonable expectations of privacy [5, 6, 9, 15].

An organization that protects its workforce from harassment, ensures workers' rights to privacy, and encourages employee autonomy and trust through HPWS management practices should experience more successful telecommunication systems outcomes in the workplace and avoid employee rights lawsuits. Organi-zations that manage their telecommunication systems through best management practices using a HPWS instead of bureaucratically controlling them will be in a better position to overcome the legal inadequacies of telecommunication usage policies and electronic surveillance.

BEST PRACTICES FOR DESIGNING HPWSs FOR USE WITH TELECOMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

We have conceptualized a high-performance work system in this article that identifies a specific complementary set of HRM practices that aim to provide

employees with the trust, information, skills, incentives, and responsibility to make effective decisions about using work-related telecommunication systems. Developing the ability to make responsible decisions requires a variety of HRM practices [25]. Since individual HRM practices can be deployed with varying degrees of commitment, and there is little consistency among researchers and practitioners in regard to which practices constitute a high-performance work system [22], previous research suggests the need to develop broad categories of HR policies in which various specific HRM practices can be grouped and classified [23]. An extensive review of the literature by Way resulted in identifying six broad HRM policies of personnel management where a corresponding set of innovative work practices is hypothesized to produce higher levels of individual and firm performance [23]. These broad HRM policies include: 1) recruiting and selection, 2) incentive compensation plans, 3) teamwork, 4) flexible job assignment, 5) skills training, and 6) labor management communication.

Based on examining the extant literature on telecommunication employee rights and high-performance work systems, this article adopts these same broad categories of HRM policies. Combining these categories into a coherent, mutually reinforcing system may lead to better telecommunication outcomes. This implies that these categories cannot be selectively reduced or eliminated without diminishing the effectiveness of the system as a whole [21]. Within each of these broad HRM policies, the specific work practices to be included in this High Performance Work System was conceptualized based on the unique technical and social characteristics embedded in telecommunication systems. Gephart and Van Buren stated, "No two High Performance Work Systems are exactly alike. The exact components depend on the setting and the needs of the organization" [22, p. 22]. Table 1 summarizes the specific complementary, mutually reinforcing, innovative HRM practices that are components of the high performance work system for this analysis.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection of the workforce can be conceptualized as a way in which organizations can acquire exceptional individuals with telecommunication systems competencies. These organizations want to hire individuals characterized by superior attitudes, values, behavior scripts [23], skills, knowledge, motivation, and commitment [20] to correctly use telecommunication systems. Firms must first recruit individuals with these characteristics and then select those that can potentially use telecommunication systems appropriately, after which they must structure the work environment to elicit this outstanding behavior. Thus, extensive recruitment and selection procedures attempt to select and retain those who fit the firm's telecommunication systems standards.

The scope of a firm's recruitment and selection processes applies information gathered from numerous recruiting methods, such as a preemployment test,

Table 1. Components of the HPWS

Recruitment and Selection
  Preemployment Test
  Realistic Job Previews
  Job Analysis
  Use of Temporary Employment Agency
  Drug/Alcohol Screens
  Structured Interviews
  Involvement of Existing Employees in the Selection Process

Incentive Compensation Plans
  Rewards and Bonuses
  Performance Appraisals and Feedback on Goal Accomplishment

Skills and Behavioral Training
  Formal Training

Flexible Job Assignment
  Flexible Work Schedules
  Self-Defined Work Plans

Labor-Management Communication
  Small Group Discussions
  Employee-Management Committee

Teamwork
  Self-Directed Workgroups

realistic job previews, job analysis, the use of temporary employment agency, and drug/alcohol screens. Such practices enable firms to screen for the desired characteristics and competencies before selecting potential applicants. Telecommunication firms should search for employee competencies related to exceptional judgment based on nonharassing assumptions, awareness of conditions affecting the harassment of others, and taking initiative beyond what is necessary to prevent harassment from occurring.

After extensive recruiting, firms must select individuals based on structured interviews and involving existing employees in the selection process. These practices ensure that individuals with superior characteristics and competencies will be selected and that they may use telecommunication systems appropriately. The added effort to increase selectivity implies that the payoff from hiring qualified applicants will result in preserving individuals' privacy and preventing harassing behaviors. The nature of individuals recruited and selected over time can have a noticeable impact on the working environment. When implemented in an

electronic environment recruiting and selecting people for appropriate telecommunication system competencies may prove one of the simplest and most-effective innovative HPWS policies. Highly motivated individuals will actively seek working environments that preserve their privacy and limit electronic harassing and threatening situations. Thus, an organization can develop a HPWS to make the firm an employer of choice that attracts and retains motivated, committed, and trustworthy employees.

This analysis suggests that the identified HRM practices be integrated into the recruitment and selection component to improve the quality of the individuals hired. The more rigorous and comprehensive recruitment and selection practices are, the greater the opportunity the company has to preserve the rights of employees and simultaneously reduce harassment conditions from occurring when utilized as a system with the other HPWS policies.

Incentive Compensation Plans

Incentive compensation plans can be conceptualized as a way in which organizations align the desired operation of telecommunication systems with employees' behaviors and competencies by providing adequate rewards and bonuses. Snell and Dean stated, "Reward systems are investments designed to induce individuals to perform well over time" [24, p. 475]. By clearing stating which telecommunication behaviors are to be rewarded, the organization signals unambiguously the behaviors it values.

These incentive plans should focus on motivating employees to appropriately use telecommunication systems in the workplace. They should be framed in such a way as to administer rewards and bonuses for reducing and preventing employment rights violations for the firm. Incentives in the form of bonuses must be implemented to reward employees if they are going to commit extra effort toward decreasing telecommunication violations. Employees are less willing to apply additional effort if they get nothing extra in return. Thus, rewards and bonuses linked some way toward progressing in using appropriate behavior can provide a powerful incentive to operate telecommunication systems suitably.

Performance appraisals that assess individual and workgroup performance that are tightly linked to incentive plans can directly motivate employee behaviors, attitudes, commitment, and values [20]. Performance appraisals can take on an important developmental function under telecommunication systems because employees are given substantial feedback on goal accomplishment and are rewarded with bonuses based on collaboratively defined privacy rights and harassment objectives.

Rewards and bonuses should be an effective means to preserving the privacy rights of all employees in the workplace because employees are more motivated to use telecommunication systems correctly when their own interests are in line with those of the organization and their workgroups. Accordingly, rewards and bonuses

should be tied to self-directed work groups or the firm as a whole. In this way, rewards and bonuses are part of a coherent system of HRM practices.

Providing rewards and bonuses may lead to an increase in perceived obligation that employees feel toward the firm, in that they may interpret the rewards and bonuses as an indication of trust and confidence from the firm. When utilized in a coherent system with other policies and practices, rewards and bonuses based on formal performance appraisals and substantial feedback on goal accomplishment may signal to employees that the firm places great value on them as crucial constituents in preventing telecommunication harassment and protecting individual privacy rights in the workplace.

Skills and Behavioral Training

Skills and behavioral training can be conceptualized as a way in which organizations can develop the required characteristics and competencies of the workforce and educate them on protecting their expectations of privacy rights and prevent telecommunication system harassment violations. Such training enables firms to trust and rely on employee judgment to appropriately use telecommunication systems, thereby effectively preventing any harassment violations from occurring and preserving the privacy of individuals.

Developmental interventions in the form of traditional classroom training, seminars, self-study programs, conference attendance, and external courses can illustrate the potential negative effects to both employees and employers using telecommunication systems for nonbusiness purposes. In addition, coaching and mentoring may be used to focus on how employees are approaching telecommunication systems in the workplace, thereby providing guidance and motivation for appropriate behaviors. These formal training programs may be used to shift employee perceptions regarding their privacy and harassment rights by providing them with the competencies required to decrease telecommunication violations.

This analysis argues that formal training procedures can assist in educating the workforce about what comprises telecommunication violations. The focus is on developing committed employees who are provided autonomy and can be trusted to use their discretion to use telecommunication systems in ways that are consistent with rights to privacy and harassment–prevention goals. The workforce is the foundation on which telecommunication systems operate, and skills and behavioral training directly benefits employees and organizations.

This analysis suggests that comprehensive, ongoing training and development programs can enhance individuals' perceptions and competencies regarding how to use telecommunication systems without causing a hostile work environment. However, only the integration of all HRM practices into a mutually reinforcing system can influence employees to use telecommunications properly, thus preserving their privacy rights. These programs are most effective if aimed at ensuring high levels of telecommunication competencies for the workforce.

Flexible Job Assignment

Flexible job assignments can be conceptualized as a way in which firms can expand the range of work duties or activities available to employees by providing them with more challenging and satisfying work. In exchange, employees work in a much more flexible work environment with greater freedom and responsibility in their work roles and context. By assigning challenging work and additional responsibilities, this practice may facilitate the necessary characteristics and competencies of the workforce to have a positive impact on telecommunication system performance.

Jobs should be defined to allow employees the freedom to pursue emerging opportunities and reallocate efforts based on changing telecommunication requirements. Because jobs require a certain level of autonomy and freedom from distractions, they should be structured to facilitate a substantial amount of discretion in how employees conduct their work and use telecommunication systems. Providing autonomy and discretion will facilitate a higher interest level in the work content and enhance perceived trust and confidence in employees' ability to make exceptional judgments when using telecommunication systems in the workplace. Allocating employees considerable variation in the tasks they do and the control over how and when they do them can significantly reduce the boredom they may feel in their work roles. Jobs that are monotonous may increase an employees' propensity to inappropriately use telecommunication systems.

Pasmore suggested that organizations assigning employees work that is consistent with their interest and work styles may elicit better performance from their workers [18]. This suggests that allowing employees to self-select or structure their work so it is interesting to them may contribute to lowering their propensity to misuse telecommunication systems in their work roles and context. Specific HRM practices that promote discretion in employee work roles and contexts include flexible work schedules and self-defined work plans.

Thus, practices that allow greater autonomy in pursing substantive interest, permit more freedom to schedule work activities, and provide employee discretion in appropriately using telecommunication systems may prove valuable in preserving individuals' rights to privacy and preventing harassing actions and behaviors. The use of flexible work schedules and self-defined work plans may accomplish these objectives, but only through self-directed work groups and other HRM practices. In addition, rigorous recruitment and selection, higher rewards and bonuses, better training and development, and open labor-management communication should also be present to realize the benefits of telecommunication systems in the workplace. Together, this complementary system of interrelated HRM practices can be applied toward decreasing telecommunication violations in the workplace.

Labor–Management Communication

Labor–management communication can be conceptualized as a way in which organizations and their employees share information regarding the individuals' right to privacy and the concerns of the firm about productivity and a work environment free from harassment. Information sharing helps to create commitment, trust and confidence between organizations and their employees [25]. Any organization committed to the idea of decreasing telecommunication violations and preserving the privacy rights of individuals through human resources must pay a great deal of attention to how they communicate with their employees.

Leader Member Exchange Theory suggests that when supervisors have high-quality relationships with their employees, they have close working relationships characterized by high trust and confidence in the employee. Supervisors with high-quality relationships support employees in challenging work situations, provide helpful advice, and provide special consideration to these individuals. This article argues that when firms have trust and confidence in employees, they encourage employees to apply their characteristics and competencies to telecommunication systems in the most appropriate behavioral conduct.

Because telecommunication system harassment violations can contribute to vicarious liability lawsuits for the firm, management should stress the negative outcomes of inappropriate telecommunication behavior by formally communicating them to all employees. In addition, the organization should develop a method in which employees can express their opinions and views regarding their right to an expectation of privacy in the workplace. Incidentally, one strategy that might prove useful is to encourage open communication between employees and management concerning the substantive, as well as the practical, implications of unwanted harassing behaviors and conditions, along with the preservation of individuals' privacy rights.

Open discussions and information flows between supervisors and employees and among employees themselves allow the workforce to express their opinions and views concerning what behaviors are most appropriate when using telecommunication systems in the workplace. Systematic open and continuous communication practices such as small-group discussions and employee–management committees that are designed to provide adequate feedback and guidance about the use of telecommunication systems in the workplace may prove valuable.

Small-group discussions and employee–management committees can motivate employees to apply their superior characteristics and competencies to ensure that their actions are not causing a threatening or harassing work environment when using telecommunication systems in the workplace. In addition, such communication practices can serve as the platform in which employers inform and individuals can express their concerns regarding their rights to privacy. When supervisors serve as good work models, set goals appropriately, discuss work-related

rights and behaviors, and provide useful feedback concerning those behaviors and rights, employees are more committed and motivated to use telecommunication systems more appropriately.

Teamwork

Teamwork can be conceptualized as a way in which organizations provide an arena so employees are exposed to and can utilize the knowledge, skills, and resources of others to augment their own telecommunication behavior. This analysis argues that when individuals work within a team setting, they demonstrate cooperation and collaboration among each other and will be more motivated to use telecommunication systems appropriately. Team members must acknowledge and respect the work environment in which all employees share and be willing to assist teammates who are faced with difficult decisions regarding appropriate use of telecommunication systems.

Teams must be empowered to demonstrate responsibility for telecommunication systems usage in the workplace. Empowerment is a principal component of the organization's commitment to the ability and motivation of employees to make effective decisions by providing them high levels of autonomy in their work roles. Autonomous work groups represent a restructuring of the work organization to give team members much more authority to operate and make suitable telecommunication decisions. These groups are self-directed and rely on group consensus to arrive at decisions regarding how to use telecommunication systems properly. This practice may discourage individuals from using telecommunication systems for nonbusiness purposes by guiding appropriate behaviors and minimizing the organization's reliance on rules and surveillance. However, this assumes that employees can responsibly use telecommunication systems and make valuable decisions for the good of the organization, with less of direct control from management. Employees who are given autonomy at work tend to feel more motivated and are likely to remain committed to the organization.

Assigning this type of control to autonomous work groups is in opposition to the traditional forms of telecommunication management. The literature has increasingly emphasized the strong impact self-directed teams have on employee attitudes, job satisfaction, and productivity. Self-directed work teams can result in the preservation of individuals' right to privacy and fewer harassment lawsuits by involving more people who have direct understanding of the issues at hand and by eliciting greater commitment from team members. It is important to note that within HPWSs, self-directed work groups are not enough. Organizations need to go beyond this by extensively selecting, rewarding, training, and openly communicating that they are committed to decreasing telecommunication violations and preserving the privacy rights of workers.

CONCLUSION

The overall aim of this analysis was to go beyond traditional control-oriented approaches to telecommunication management in the workplace and assess the effectiveness of developing a HPWS for protecting individual employment rights to privacy and preventing harassment in these organizations. This article argues that when the previously identified sets of HRM practices are utilized in a coherent, mutually reinforcing system, the overall result is a HPWS that diminishes employees' propensity to misuse telecommunication systems, provides employees with expectations of privacy in the workplace while simultaneously ensuring that telecommunication systems are not causing a threatening work environment.

This approach suggests that if one of the components of the high performance work system is not present, performance is reduced. Indeed, these components are interdependent. For example, having the autonomy to make telecommunication decisions serves little purpose if employees do not know how to make effective decisions. Training educates the workforce about current expectations of privacy and about harassment laws. With incentives, employees are motivated to contribute discretionary efforts to decrease telecommunication systems violations, and with training, communication, and autonomy, the effort exerted is effective. Connecting autonomous teams to the consequences of their job-design and work-schedule decisions through recognition and rewards highlights the importance of free-flowing communication between management and employees during performance appraisals and feedback on goal accomplishment.

Finally, if a firm does not recruit and hire individuals with the appropriate telecommunication systems attitudes, no amount of training, incentives, communication, and autonomy will significantly reduce the employees' propensity to misuse telecommunication systems in the workplace. HPWSs require consensus building, cooperation, and bottom-up decision-making to ultimately optimize the skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment, behaviors, and attitudes of the workforce, as well as the demands of telecommunication systems.

A HPWS should be instituted if an organization's vision is to position telecommunication systems in the workplace and simultaneously maintain a safe, productive working environment free from harassment. Future research is needed to empirically examine the influence a HPWS may have on telecommunication violations and individual employment rights. A case study may highlight which practices telecommunication firms are utilizing and with what intensity to address employment rights issues. In addition, future research may identify additional HRM practices that may function more appropriately as the necessary components of a HPWS to decrease telecommunication system violations, as well as to decrease the incidence of employment rights violations. A survey analysis may determine which practices have the greatest influence on decreasing telecommunication violations and provide managers with valuable information

concerning which HRM practices they should focus on implementing within the workplace.

This analysis has shown that organizations should more enthusiastically implement a HPWS, since employees are critical to the success of the organization. The key problem for many organizations is to try to design work systems that benefit both employees and the organization—systems that are capable of realizing their mutual gains potential. Preparing the workforce for making better use of telecommunication systems is both a socially complex and a constant organizational process. A safe, challenging, and satisfying work environment is imperative to preserving the privacy rights of individuals and decreasing the number of harassment lawsuits for the organization. The development of the identified HPWS for telecommunication environments represents a win/win situation for both workers and employers.

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