

Acceptable Usage Policies at the Mater Private Hospital

by Anna Kelpie

Having read the article on Online Usage Policies¹ in *Accountancy Ireland's* August issue, I thought it would be useful to share with other readers some practical experience gained at the Mater Private Hospital in Dublin that shows how technology can be used to assist in the process of implementing more effective acceptable usage policies.

The Mater Private is one of Ireland's leading private hospitals - a centre of medical excellence offering the very highest standard of acute medical treatment. Since its opening in 1986, it has pioneered major developments in Irish medicine particularly in the area of technological innovation. The hospital employs 700 medical and support staff with over 140 specialist consultants and a turnover in excess of €100M.

A strategic priority for the Mater Private was the improvement of their methods of implementing unambiguous network usage standards on its 250 computer user-based employees.

The hospital realised that they were facing demands for compliance - from security, risk management and internal audits.

The need to adequately inform the employees caused the hospital to review both the Acceptable Usage Policy and the means of delivering it.

TRADITIONAL METHODS

The traditional methods of communicating policies were not effective due to administration distribution and a cumbersome signature based approach.

At the outset of the project, the IT Manager, Mr Michael Power explained the existing methods of

“A formal electronic online and email usage policy helps users understand their rights and responsibilities. It can also protect your company.”

Tony Connolly, *Accountancy Ireland*, Vol 37, No 4, 2005.

communicating to staff, which, in common with many organisations, were primarily:

- ▶ email
- ▶ departmental presentations
- ▶ manual Acceptable Usage Policy acceptance signatures.

These were proving to be time-consuming and ineffective because employees rapidly forgot the content of the Acceptable Usage Policy. There is little point in having a policy unless it is constantly before the users.

The decision to seek a technology based solution resulted in Baronscourt Technology being selected to provide a solution to the Mater Private Hospital's problem.

Running over all major computer networks and operating systems, the MetaCompliance Policy Communicator is a software solution that directly deals with the issues surrounding the communication, deployment and affirmation of company policies and information to the employee.

It allows the organization to communicate its messages to one individual, groups of employees or all members of staff. It therefore works within diverse organisations to communicate with various

departments, locations and job titles. It provides the logging & reporting capability to provide documented backup in the event of litigation.

The MetaCompliance Policy Communicator enabled the Mater Hospital to successfully communicate their most important policy to date - their Acceptable Usage Policy. It is used in conjunction with Internet and email filtering software.

CONCLUSION

Business has everything to gain from going on to the Web including gaining new customers. But the Web provides employees with the temptation to spend their time and use the resources for non-business ends. Controlling Internet usage is only one aspect of the e-business security issue, but it is one that is important to all businesses.

Notes:
“Email Troubles and Online Usage: Formulating a Policy for Your Company”, by Tony Connolly. *Accountancy Ireland* Vol. 37, No. 4, August 2005. pp 77-78.

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