Internet abuse on rise

How stupid do you have to be to look up how to buy fake exam certificates on the internet using a work PC? Or try to buy a mail order bride? Or an AK-47 assault rifle? Well, some of your colleagues have done and these are just some of the many cases of internet abuse that AXA has found out about in recent months.

AXA ban Facebook

AXA UK have banned staff access to social networking site Facebook due to the increasingly high level of usage, as this was impacting its IT function. There were even some examples of people having the Facebook site open on their work PC all day.

Unite resisted a previous attempt to ban Facebook in January, instead negotiating a 'reasonable use' policy with AXA. However the failure of some staff to abide by this policy has now resulted in the complete ban for Facebook on work PC's.

"We are extremely disappointed at what has happened as we recognise the importance to many individuals of Facebook in planning their lives", said Hugh Jones-Glass from Unite. "But despite the introduction of the reasonable use policy the situation was getting worse and when it impacts business functions there was nothing more that could be done".

Personal use of the internet by employees is one area the union have been extremely resistant to attempts to ban, recognising the fact that in this day and age, with the long hours culture, a reasonable company policy benefits both the individual and the company.

However a small number of individuals are exhibiting a complete lack of common sense on using the internet in the office, completely disregarding the fact that **AXA** can discover any website visited on a work PC and identify who visited it as it frequently audits PC use as part of its **FSA** requirements.

"The level of ignorance can be quite startling." Said **Unite** official Hugh Jones-Glass, "If these staff believe that if the firewall doesn't block a site, it is ok, then they are very much mistaken. The internet is continually changing and the firewall software is purely reactive. Staff should use their common sense, failure to do so can result in the loss of your job" (In the public sector alone 1,700 staff were sacked or disciplined for internet abuse between 2005 and 2007).

AXA has even come across examples of staff deliberately circumventing company systems and the firewall to view pornography in the office. "This is so incredible that we almost didn't believe it, but it is true", said Hugh Jones-Glass. "Why on earth they have done this is incomprehensible. There can only be one result when the company inevitably find out and the consequent impact on the individual's ability to get another job, pay their bills and mortgage and on their family is surely obvious to all."

Find out more: www.axa-unite.org