Chapter 6: Work

**6.1 Fears and questions:**

Computers free us from the repetitious, boring aspects of jobs so that we can spend more time being creative and doing the tasks that require human intelligence. Computer systems and the internet provide quick, reliable access to information so that we work smarter and more efficiently.

* Offshoring: is basically hiring people or companies in other countries to perform services that workers in one’s home country used to do
* People that oppose offshoring argue that it will eliminate a huge number of jobs

More over ***Telecommunicating*** has become part of our vocabulary, describing the phenomenon of working at a distance from the traditional company office or factory, connected by computers and telecommunications devices.

**6.2 The Impact of Employment:**

**6.2.1 Job Destruction And Creation:**

The adoption of computers and automation has had horrific consequences on human labor and time required to produce goods and services, because what was once done by our people is now done by computer systems(example: cars manufacturing in the US).

1. Technology in general and computer in particular eliminate human labor and jobs.
2. By making tasks more efficient, computers reduce the number of workers required to carry out the tasks.
3. The goals of technology include a reduction in the resources needed to accomplish a result and an increase in productivity and standard of living.
4. A successful technology eliminates some jobs, but creates others.
   * New technologies and products create jobs in design, marketing, manufacture, sales, consumer service, repair, and maintenance.
   * New technical jobs also create jobs for such support staff as receptionists or janitors

**1-Technology, economic factors, and employment:**

It is obvious that computer technology did not cause mass unemployment. Recent reports say that when technological progress accelerates, so do:

* Growth
* Living standards
* Employment

**2-But are we earning less?**

The value of human work is declining as computers take over tasks people used to do. However it is not clear at all that we are earning less, but if we are, the causes include 1-social, 2-political, and 3- economic factors as well as the impact of technology.

**6.2.2 Changing Skill Levels:**

* Computers eliminate a much wider variety of jobs than any single new technological advance in the past.
* The improvement in speed, capability, and cost for computers is much faster than previous technologies.
* The pace itself will cause more job disruption as people continually face job elimination and the need to retrain.
* The new jobs created by computers are different from the jobs eliminated.
* Computers could take over many white-collar, professional jobs.

**6.2.3 A Global Workforce:**

**Offshoring:**

* As transportation and communications improved. Manufacturing jobs moved from wealthier countries to less wealthy countries, because of the difference in pay rates which was large enough to make up for the extra transportation costs.
* “Transportation” costs for many kinds of information work to almost zero with the web and internet services.
* We conclude that with the ease of working with people and companies in other countries, offshoring has become a phenomenon and a political issue.

**The Impact of Offshoring:**

From the perspective of workers in developed countries:

1. It meant that millions of jobs lost
2. Lower pay and reduced standard of living.

* Offshoring creates jobs for both low and high skilled workers in less wealthy countries.
* The combination of increased income and reduced prices for goods and services helps the economic growth of these countries, making more jobs available on both sides.

**Problems and side effects of offshoring:**

Consumer-service call centers in foreign countries: Foreign accents are difficult to understand. Service personnel are not familiar with the product or service the consumer is asking about---they just read from a manual.

**6.2.4 Getting a Job:**

* Learning about jobs and companies:
* The web has made it much easier to find information about jobs and employers.
* We can learn about companies and nonprofit organizations from their websites. We can read company histories and annual reports online.
* For people whose jobs were eliminated by technology or for people who just want to keep up with new technologies, online training programs can help them to learn new skills.

**6.3 The Work Environment:**

6.3.1 Job Dispersal and Telecommuting:

* The internet makes it possible for companies to locate in small towns and work with dispersed consultants instead of having hundreds or thousands of employers in larger population centers
* Millions of people work without “going to work,” that is, without going to their employers’ (or their own) business office.
* In many fields, professional people, no longer have to live in the same city of state of their employer.

**Benefits:**

* Telework reduces overhead for employers and, in some cases, increases productivity.
* Telecommunicating and telecommunications generally make it easier to work with clients, customers, and employees in other countries: At home, one can easily work a few hours at night that are compatible with foreign time zones.
* Telecommuting reduces expenses for commuting and for work clothes.
* It saves time that workers can use for exercise, sleep, or more interaction with friends and family.
* It provides previously unavailable work options for some elderly or disabled people for whom commuting is physically difficult and expensive
* It allows work to continue after blizzards, hurricanes, or other disasters.
* Telecommuting, and the flexible hours it permits, can help reduce child-care expenses and give parents more time with their children

**Problems:**

* Some employers see resentment among employees who must work at the office
* Some found that the corporate loyalty of telecommuters weakened, because of the lack of immediate supervision, some telecommuters become less productive, while others work too hard and too long.
* The ease of working with people around the world leads some to work odd hours to match time zones of clients.
* Some employees need better direction about what work and how much work they should do at home
* Being at home with children is an advantage for some telecommuters, but a distraction for others.
* Some employees complain that the costs of office space and overhead that have been reduced for the employer have simply been shifted to the employee who must give up space at home for the office, learn how to maintain, and so on.
* Some employees believe that by working at home they miss mentoring relationships and opportunities for advancement.
* For many people, the social interactions and camaraderie at work are a significant part of pleasant working conditions, so social isolation and low morale can be a problem.
* Security issues occur when telecommuters use their home computer for both personal and work activities.
* Employees address the social isolation problem by holding regular meetings and encouraging other activities such as employee sports leagues, where employees interact in person.
* Some companies set up scattered offices in suburbs where telecommuting employees can meet and use support services and office equipment they do not have at home.

6.3.2 Changing Business Structures:

Some see trends toward smaller business and more independent consultants and contractors. It allows workers to become self-employment and small businesses that operate globally on the web have increased significantly.

**6.4 Employee Crime:**

* + Embezzlement is “fraudulent taking over of property by person to whom it has been entrusted.” With the use of computers, trusted employees have stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars from their employers.
  + Some frauds require specialized knowledge or programming skills. Others do not; Employees taking advantage of poor security on their company’s computer systems can commit them.
* Fired employees, or those angry at their employer for some other reason, sometimes sabotage the company computer systems. A logic bomb is software that destroys critical files such as payroll and inventory records.
* Each employee should have his/her own user ID and password and, where possible, the system should code IDs to allow only specific tasks for each employee.
* An employee’s access should be canceled immediately after he/she quits or is fired
* Audit trails protect privacy. They also protect against fraud by providing a record of transactions and of the employee who authorized them

**6.5 Employee Monitoring:**

6.5.1 Background:

* Supervisors and managers have always monitored their employees.
* Computers have made new kinds of monitoring possible and old methods are more efficient. With computers, monitoring can be constant, more detailed, and unseen by the worker.
* Supervisors of customer-service representatives can set their terminals to show exactly what the monitored worker sees and is doing on his/her screen.
* Some companies install devices or software that secretly capture and store every letter typed on the keyboard. Employers can also store recordings of telephone conversations, email, voice email, web activity logs, and physical surveillance information.

6.5.2 Data Entry, Phone Work, And Retail:

* Monitoring systems can automatically count every keystroke of data-entry and data-processing.
* Some employers make the records of employees’ performance public in the workplace to encourage competition among workers.
* Terminals beep if the employee pauses his/her work.
* The purposes are to evaluate individual employees and to measure and increase productivity.
* Such modern, computerized workplaces are called “electronic sweatshops”.
* Complaints about monitoring made many companies establish clear and detailed monitoring policies.
* Another purpose of monitoring (besides training or measuring productivity) is to reduce theft.
* Employers who are convinced that monitoring guidelines are beneficial to their company can adopt them.

6.5.3 Location Monitoring:

Location surveillance can be easily enabled by electronic identification badges, they allow monitoring the movements of the employees.

Global positioning systems (GPS) are used so that supervisors can determine where employees are at all times

A company might also provide video surveillance and implanting chips for employees who access secure areas.

**6.5.4 Email, Blogging, and Web Use:**

The use of email and access to the web at work makes a lot of work more efficient and more pleasant benefiting both employers and employees.

**Email and voice mail at work:**

In virtually all systems, the system manager can access anything on the system. Employers can read the email of employees, they can listen to voice mail messages, and they can read computer files.

Some businesses install filtering software to review all outgoing messages for content that violates laws or company policy, could damage relations with customers or could expose the company to lawsuits.

**Reasons for Monitoring Email, voice mail, and computer files:**

* Find needed business information when employee is not available
* Protect security of sensitive data and information
* Prevent personal use of employer facilities (if prohibited by company policy)
* Investigate complaints of harassment
* Check for illegal software
* Prevent or investigate possible criminal activities by employees (fraud, drugs…)

**Laws and cases:**

* The Electronic Communications Piracy Act (ECPA) prohibits interception of email and reading of stored email without a court order, but the ECPA makes an exception for business systems. It does not prohibit employers from reading employee email on company systems.
* The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) sets rules and decides cases about worker-employer relations.

**Using the web at work:**

* Many major companies use software tools that provide reports on employee web use. The tools rank sites by frequency of visits or create reports on an individual employee’s activity, for instance. Web sites can determine where a visitor is coming from