

## SOME THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORK EMAIL



Unless you're a \$3-an-hour slave laborer in a downtown Los Angeles garment factory, you probably have the opportunity during work hours to deal with issues from your personal life. Largely, these issues are dealt with online or via email. Unfortunately, your personal business on your work's computer network may not be as "personal" as you would like. Of course, if you conduct business using your work email, your company can archive and read everything you send and receive. You would think this was obvious to everyone, but news stories pop up all the time about employees conducting inappropriate business via their work email address and getting fired or sued over it. What's less obvious is that your company may have the right to track everything you do over their computer network, even if it's your own personal private business. If you're checking your own personal email account, perhaps through Gmail, your company can read over your shoulder because you're using their network. They are also free to track your web surfing, and to hold you over the coals for anything they don't like -- or, more importantly, anything that can get the firm in trouble, like adult sites or questionably legal gambling sites. The best thing to do is to ask about your company's Internet policies (and look at the contract or NDA you signed when you were hired), and then don't violate them. If your employer allows a certain amount of personal Internet use, you still need to be smart. Don't discuss sex, race or religion if you're on the company network. Watch out for inappropriate humor, or "NSFW" web content. You can indulge in all of these activities freely at home. Be sure to watch for inappropriate communications via instant message, as well. Not only can your IT department monitor what is said, but most IM programs store a log on your hard drive of all conversations. If your boss has done something to piss you off, wait until after work to tell your buddies all about it. Just follow common sense rules of professionalism, and you should be fine.