

Cameras in the Office

What do people think of having a security camera in the office? Is that too Orwellian and creepy?

Absolutely not. Do it. And see my list of 101 business protection tips on my website. Also see the chapter I wrote for the ABA's book. COTE can give you the reference.

David Kaufman, Virginia

To my view, it is a good plan. You have tremendous options on what you monitor and retain, which need to be tailored to your needs.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

I've been thinking about it too

I'm thinking (1) outside front door; (2) waiting/reception area; (3) conference room; (4) workstation area.

I stop thinking about it when it comes to (1) hardwired or wireless; (2) viewing monitor; (3) how to handle recording and retention.

What am I leaving out?

What is the universe of investment?

Michael J. Sweeney, Connecticut

Are there any suitable products at Costco -- for this application?

Roberta Fay, California

My general recommendations:

1. Only use 4MP or better cameras.

2. Hardwired.
3. Commercial quality recorder.

You could consider customizing system or buying the high end unit at Costco and paying someone to install. You can typically use phone or computer monitor to view cameras. Locally I don't find a lot of sophistication among vendors, so would typically spec out system to customize or buy a good system on my own and then pay to install. Installation here appears to run \$125 to \$150 per camera, but your experience may vary.

Depending on use, you could consider other alternatives. I bought a couple of Canary systems to enhance my security system here. Partly it was because I was in a time crunch for a trip a year ago or so. While the system does not meet my recommendations above, it serves as a live interface to view office when I am traveling or offsite. Such was valuable when on vacation this summer and I was getting false alarms on security system.

Darrell G. Stewart

In the office in general it is a good idea, but as a privacy freak, I suggest using an encryption program to encode the image. You want the record for your own use, but never for anyone else's. Have the discussion of whether you want audio or just video. If it includes audio you must post a reasonable notice, satisfactory in your state, informing people of the recording.

Roger Traversa, Pennsylvania

Not really Orwellian. Creepy sort of depends on what usually happens in your office. It does mean an additional expense and poses a number of

questions: How many cameras? What quality? Monitors on premises or cloud based? Cameras on 24/7 or only when activated? How long do you maintain images? Are cameras hidden or openly displayed? Are you going to post a warning that area is under surveillance? Are you familiar with California laws on electronic surveillance? Will your clients feel safer or uncomfortable? What problem will installing cameras solve for you? What additional risk do you assume of someone else attempting to get access to the recordings through discovery, subpoena, or search warrant?

As for myself, I don't have any problems that would be solved by adding security cameras and I don't need the additional complexity of answering the above questions even if the camera system was completely free.

Duke Drouillard, Nebraska

Great input from everyone, thank you so much. Lots to think about.

I was thinking of going with a Ring.com camera as I use it for a Ring.com doorbell and it works pretty well - uploads all motion-triggered footage to the cloud that I can see from my phone. I'm going to have lots of computers and electronics in the office, and we've had some petty theft (I suspect the cleaning ladies), so that's why I'm thinking of installing the camera.

Eugene Lee, California

In my actual office no. My landlord whose been a lawyer forever has cameras in the hallways of the main building, the parking lot and we're a block from police headquarters.

John Davidson, Pennsylvania

I think you need to ask yourself, why do you want a camera in (or near) the office?

Security? There's lots of cameras that will provide coverage of your entryway/walkway, and record anything that happens. Some of them have motion detectors that will only run it and send you an alert when someone triggers the camera. Do you need in in your actual office/conference room? I'm not sure what utility it has; once someone is in, they're in. Maybe to catch a burglar when you're not there but that's about it.

To monitor your employees? Well, maybe, but if you're that paranoid about what your employees are doing then maybe you need new employees instead of a camera system.

To document that there's no sexual harassment or such? Kind of intrusive way of doing it but you could.

To document lucidity of clients when they're signing docs? I know some EP lawyers that do this; to show that client was competent (for whatever evidentiary worth that may be) at the time they signed the docs; but you are definitely going to have to disclose, every time, that you are doing so.

Once again, why do you want camera system?

Ronald A. Jones, Florida

We have video, but no sound, cameras in our waiting room/entry way and both conference rooms.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida

I'm in an executive suite and the problem is, I don't have full control over who has access to my office. We've had some minor stuff go missing.

The office manager can come in any time and the cleaning staff which comes at night also has full access. I wasn't kidding when I said I suspect the cleaning staff. With lots of electronics on display worth a lot of money, I thought a motion sensing security camera like the Ring spotlight cam (which is what I picked up) would make sense. I was testing the camera out yesterday and it looks like it fits the bill perfectly. Wide area of view, good motion detection, night vision, and uploads high quality videos to the cloud immediately.

Eugene Lee

I picked up this sign too, that warns everyone of audio/video recording:

https://www.mysecuritysign.com/video-and-audio-surveillance-in-progress-warning-sign/sku-s-9389?engine=googlebase&keyword=&skuid=S-9389-PL-10&gclid=CjwKCAiA-KzSBRAAnEiwAkmQ150cI-rl81xhNoZRHbVkJTKrWK4yXDH6u0ACrKHQKobib2DRoe0R8j6BoCJekQAvD_BwE

Eugene Lee

I don't think it is creepy depending on the location. We have cameras in the outside and back doors, in the waiting area and plan to install two more in the working space area. None of them have sound. I won't install them on my office or conference room (mainly because I think it would scare my clients and make them shy). I bought the package at Brandsmart for about \$800 including warranty. A specialist installed them for about \$700.

They are hardwired, everything records to DVR and I have access to them offline through an app.

I think is a good investment.

Christian Veras, Florida

I'm on the "that's kind of creepy" side.

It depends on where the cameras are located. If they are in the public areas, monitoring doors and other entry points, that's okay. If they are pointing at my desk - not okay.

Why? Well frankly, I don't want my boss watching me while I am at my desk. Does the angle of the camera look down at my cleavage? Can my boss see what I am texting when I am sitting at my desk, but on lunch? How often will the footage be reviewed and deleted? Do my clients want to be recorded?

Anyway - just my thoughts. Given the theft, etc. that you have found, it makes sense to have some recording done after hours or when you are not present. The culprit in one of my old buildings was someone's kid. He would wander around, go through desks, eat people's candy, etc.

Corrine Bielejeski, California

Come on, be a pioneer and set your cameras up to livestream and then give all of us the link! :-)

Seth Combs, Kentucky

Yeah, get a million subs! I'll retire off the YouTube income!

Eugene Lee

I know, right! You can even call it "Lawlyer Office Antics" and trim the "bloopers" or unthinkable stuff that ONLY clients do/say. Go ahead and send my idea/agent/licensing/royalty fees in cold, hard, unmarked \$20s - thanks.

Seth Combs

We have a cheap one in the reception area, so secretary can monitor who comes in when the reception area is not covered. Otherwise, we would hear the door open, but there would be no one there when we went to look. That was creepy!

Nanci Bockelie, Utah
