

‘Bossware is coming for almost every worker’: the software you might not realize is watching you | The Guardian

By Zoë Corn

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When the job of a young east coast-based analyst – we’ll call him James – went remote with the pandemic, he didn’t envisage any problems. The company, a large US retailer for which he has been a salaried employee for more than half a decade, provided him with a laptop, and his home became his new office. Part of a team dealing with supply chain issues, the job was a busy one, but never had he been reprimanded for not working hard enough.

So it was a shock when his team was hauled in one day late last year to an online meeting to be told there was gaps in its work: specifically periods when people – including James himself, he was later informed – weren’t inputting information into the company’s database.

As far as team members knew, no one had been watching them on the job. But as it became clear what had happened, James grew furious.

Can a company really use computer monitoring tools – known as “bossware” to critics – to tell if you’re productive at work? Or if you’re about to run away to a competitor with proprietary knowledge? Or even, simply, if you’re happy?

[...]

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