

Dummy cameras in the workplace? Ha!

Maybe it's come down to a lack of trust and you need to keep an eye on your workers. Are they goofing off? Stealing stuff? Sabotaging?

Maybe it's a matter of boosting productivity and you think perpetual monitoring will keep your worker bees buzzing. Or perhaps you need an extra layer of protection for your employees.

Whatever the reason, your thoughts turn to a camera system throughout the workplace. You've checked your state's laws and cleared it through HR. You can be Big Brother, Sister, whatever.

But one look at the price tag of a high-tech closed-circuit TV monitoring system, plus installation costs, and those thoughts are tempered. Perhaps phony cameras will do the trick, you think. Heck, the janitor could install them.

Hold it right there.

Before you go on Overstock.com to buy a dozen gutless cameras and a jumbo pack of AAA batteries to keep the red LED lights winking their fibs, consider this scenario:

After installing the faux system, your workplace has the look of a well-scrutinized bank lobby. Your employees fall for it. They feel watched and suddenly they're getting a lot of work done. But they also feel they and their belongings are secure under the digital gaze. You've created a sense of protection. Then, one day one of them claims she was groped by a co-worker and insists the action was caught by one of the cameras. When her attorney asks for the footage, you have to come clean. Cameras *do* sometimes lie. You've duped your employees and provided them with a false sense of security. No telling what that could do to that sexual assault case or your company's insurance rates for that matter. Plus, now you have the reputation of a fraudster, a label that's a little hard to shake.

It worked for a while. It goosed productivity and deterred most of the employee nonsense, but now it's a liability on multiple fronts.

If you want to go the employee surveillance route, then get a real system and be straight with them. Tell them it's to promote professional and responsible behavior, and to maximize safety for all. Avoid terms like "surveillance" and "monitoring."

Want honest employees? Be honest first.