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Nudging Privacy in Digital Work Systems – Towards the Development of a Design Theory

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Digitization changes our society, the way we work and the way we generate value in work systems. More precisely, it equally affects how business and employees organize their work. While there is a tremendous innovation potential for businesses such as more flexible and efficient work arrangements, there are also tremendous privacy risks. Such privacy risks especially relate to issues that employees leave data traces in every working step while being oftentimes not aware of their generated data. Employees leave data traces on intranet platforms such as Wikis and on external work tools such as Slack and reveal not only personal information but also company insights. At the same time companies must handle new privacy regulations such as the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which do not only affect companies in the European countries but also providers of information systems (IS) all around the world that offer their services in Europe. Thus, innovative approaches for considering challenges that exist because of privacy related issues are needed.

A promising approach to overcome the aforementioned privacy issues of digital working environments is the application of digital nudges in IS – small design modifications in digital choice environments which guide peoples' behavior (Weinmann et al. 2016). The nudge theory – originally derived from behavioral economics– is based on the irrational behavior of human beings. A nudge “is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives” (Thaler and Sunstein 2008, p. 6) and is typically applied in offline environments, e.g., to nudge individuals for being organ donors through a default opt-in. By relying on the concept of nudging, individuals in digital work system could be nudged to improve their decisions when disclosing data. This is especially prevalent, since many individuals are not aware about how their data is used. As such, there is a lack of research regarding nudging in context of digital work systems and privacy which should be addressed in a socio-technical research approach.

By examining the impact and perception of digital nudges in work systems, we want to shed light on the application, design and effects of nudges to overcome challenges that arise because of privacy related issues. We therefore first examine use cases and requirements for nudging in digital work system under the consideration of users, companies and other stakeholders. Since we draw on a socio-technical view, we incorporate requirements that relate to a legal as well as an ethical perspective for nudging privacy. By this means, we develop a design theory for privacy nudging by an iterative design and evaluation process in the field. The ultimate goal is to improve decisions concerning data disclosure and, secondary, increase by this means trust and acceptance of digital work systems by lowering privacy concerns. By developing a design theory, we contribute to the body of knowledge with a more profound understanding of digital nudging in the context of privacy as well as with prescriptive design knowledge for nudging in digital work systems.

References

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- Weinmann, M., Schneider, C., and vom Brocke, J. 2016. “Digital Nudging,” *Business & Information Systems Engineering* (58:6), pp. 433–436.