

# The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Department of Information Systems, Business Statistics and Operations Management

Seminar Announcement



## Helpful or Harmful? Negative Behavior Toward Newcomers and Welfare in Online Communities

by

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**Date** : **Friday, 3 December 2021**  
**Time** : **2:00 pm - 3:30 pm (Hong Kong Time)**  
**Zoom Details** : [Click here to join Zoom](#)  
**Meeting ID: 936 0055 4079 (Passcode: 869092)**



### Abstract:

Newcomers are important for the survival of online communities, but their contributions often receive negative reactions and comments from established members. Online communities realize that such negativity can take a toll on newcomers and harm the creation of user-generated content. We study a novel intervention aimed at reducing hostility toward newcomers: a “newcomer nudge” that informs community members when they are interacting with a newcomer’s post and asks them to be more lenient toward its creator. Taking advantage of granular data from a large deal-sharing community and a natural experiment, we use a difference-in-differences approach and find robust evidence that the newcomer nudge induced members to write 46% more responses per day with 10% fewer negative words during the first two days after a deal was published. Our results show that the nudge-induced change in behavior toward newcomers increased newcomer retention. However, we also observe that before the nudge, newcomers’ second posts received more net votes (upvotes minus downvotes) than their first posts. After the nudge, newcomers’ subsequent posts were less popular than their first posts, which indicates that the nudge interrupted newcomers’ learning curve by suppressing helpful feedback.

### Bio:

Florian Pethig is an Assistant Professor at the Chair of Enterprise Systems, University of Mannheim, Germany. He received his PhD from University of Mannheim and previously worked as a business data analyst at zeroG, a subsidiary of Lufthansa, specializing in data science and digital transformation. His research interests include the societal impact of IT, data analytics, and user behavior on digital platforms. His work has appeared in Journal of the Association for Information Systems and Government Information Quarterly.