

Invitation

You are cordially invited to the public defense to obtain the academic degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS

by Pooria Jafari

INVESTIGATING A ROADMAP FOR DIGITAL WORK PRACTICES BASED ON A MATURITY MODEL APPROACH

Supervisor:

Prof. dr. Amy Van Looy

Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 17h30

In the Faculty Board Room, Campus Tweekerken, Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent

Please confirm your attendance no later than 10 March by email to

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EXAMINATION BOARD

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Chair, Ghent University

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Abstract

The rapid evolution of digital technologies poses challenges to organizations, demanding a holistic understanding of how People, Process, Technology (PPT) aspects impact digital-oriented work practices and influence employee work satisfaction. Existing gaps include the absence of an efficient self-assessment tool for evaluating digital-oriented work practice maturity from the perspective of an integrated combination of the three people, process, and technology pillars, and the lack of a long-term overview on how organizations are employing digital technology through their digital transformation journey. In the context of the rapid pace of digital transformation, the PPT framework emerges as a valuable tool, emphasizing the balanced development of people, processes, and technology. It addresses challenges posed by digitalization, ensuring that the human aspect is integral to organizational success. The adoption of a maturity model approach grounded in the PPT framework provides a structured means to assess and guide the development of digital work practices. Embracing a maturity model approach becomes crucial for organizations navigating the transition to digital-oriented work practices. Maturity model offers a structured means to evaluate, guide, and enhance digital capabilities systematically, ensuring that the adoption of digital technologies is holistic and considers the interdependencies between people, processes, and technology.

The current trajectory of digitalization necessitates a structured approach for organizations to comprehend, harness, and refine the potential of digital work practices. While the adoption of maturity models is envisioned as a strategic tool for this pursuit, guiding the steps in current research and setting the course for future endeavors, there exists a research gap. The inadequacy lies in the absence of a comprehensive exploration and explanation of digital work practices using a systematic approach. The envisioned maturity model offers a conceptual framework that maps the evolution of digital work practices from their nascent stages to achieving optimal performance. This research gap highlights the need for a deeper investigation into the systematic identification, assessment, and explanation of digital work practices, ensuring a comprehensive understanding and effective utilization within organizational contexts.

As a consequence, we identified the following research issues that will be addressed as part of this PhD project: (1) inadequate attention to understanding how People, Process, and Technology (PPT) aspects impact digital-oriented work practices holistically and how they affect employee work satisfaction; (2) absence of a swift self-assessment tool for assessing digital-oriented work practice maturity effectively; and (3) lack of long-term research on organizations' employing digital technology and theorizing the findings.

The overall objective of this PhD dissertation is to thoroughly improve understanding of digital-oriented work practices in order to establish an approach that advances and enhances understanding of PPT aspects and contributes to PPT-based capability development. To address the identified issues and achieve the defined objectives, this dissertation conducted three research studies - each of which comprised a chapter in this dissertation - in order to contribute and provide knowledge-based additions to the field of digital transformation and digital-oriented work practices.

As a result of this, the PhD research first conceptualizes the interdisciplinary concept, exploring management and organizational perspectives based on literature reviews and data-driven approaches, and studying the issue from an employee standpoint. The research introduces digital work practices by proposing a digital work practice maturity model and identifying the maturity levels. Subsequently, the study optimizes and validates the framework and proposes a new self-assessment tool utilizing the data mining method. The assessment of digital work practices is carried out through a decision tree approach, serving as a double validation based on Design Science Research (DSR) and field study. This comprehensive approach results in the development of a robust self-assessment tool. In the last step, the study refines the framework through a long-term case study approach, refining the evolution of digital work practices over time. Theoretical underpinning and explaining of the maturity levels are achieved by grounding the findings in relevant organizational theories.

This PhD dissertation is a paper-based thesis consisting of three chapters. One chapter (chapter 2) of this dissertation has been published in an international peer-reviewed journals; one chapter (chapter 3) has been submitted to international peer-reviewed journal and is in the review process; and one chapter (chapter 4) will be submitted to an international peer-reviewed journal after jury committee feedback.

Curriculum vitae

Pooria Jafari (born in Tehran, Iran) holds a Master of Science degree in Information Technology (Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran Polytechnic, Iran) and a Bachelor of Electronics Engineering. Pooria joined the Department of Business Informatics and Operation Research at Ghent University in October 2019. Prior to his return to academia, Pooria served for several years as an IT consultant for different strategic projects in ICT and FinTech. He has worked on strategic and change management at Panasonic Company, Post Bank, and Mazda Automation in Iran. During his PhD, Pooria presented the results of his research at several conferences, including: the 2022 RCIS proceedings conference in Barcelona (Spain), the 2022 European Conference on Information Systems (Romania), and the Slovenian Academy of Management (SAM) in Ljubljana. He presented his work at numerous international workshops, including the 2020 BPM workshop (online), as a selected paper to present. Besides the work in his dissertation, Chapter 2 of Pooria's dissertation was published in *IEEE Access in 2022*, while Chapter 3 is under review in the Information Systems and e-Business Management Journal. His fourth chapter will also be submitted to Government Information Quarterly.