Making Sense of IT in Organisations: The Repertory Grid Technique in Information Systems Research

Dr. Felix B. Tan

Discipline of Business Information Systems, AUT University, felix.tan@aut.ac.nz

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## Abstract

As the uses of information technology (IT) in organizations increase in both variety and complexity, practitioners and researchers are searching for ways to better understand how various information system (IS) stakeholders (users, managers, IS professionals) make sense of IT in their organizations. Sensemaking in organizations begins with the personal constructs individuals use to understand and interpret events that occur around them. A technique suitable to the elicitation of personal constructs that individuals use to understand IT and its role in organizations is the repertory grid (RepGrid). This technique offers the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of how users, managers and IS professionals make sense of IT in their organizations.

The tutorial presents an overview of the RepGrid and discusses how the technique has been employed in the IS field including a program of research using the RepGrid undertaken by the presenter.

At the end of the tutorial, participants should be able to:

- demonstrate a basic understanding of the RepGrid,
- demonstrate a clear understanding of issues they need to consider when employing the RepGrid,
- apply the RepGrid in their own research.
Speakers' background, description of workshop, and envisioned activities during the workshop (please provide information for each speaker)

**Dr. Felix B Tan** is Professor of Information Systems and Chair of the Business Information Systems discipline in the Faculty of Business and Law at AUT University, New Zealand. He serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Global Information Management*. He served on the Council of the Association for Information Systems between 2003 and 2005. Dr. Tan is internationally known for his work in the global IT field. His current research interests are in IT user behaviour, global information management, business-IT alignment, and the management of IS. He actively uses the RepGrid and narrative inquiry in his research. Dr. Tan has published in *MIS Quarterly, Information & Management, Journal of Information Technology, Information Systems Journal, International Journal of Electronic Commerce, IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, IEEE Transactions on Personal Communications*, as well as other journals and refereed conference proceedings.

Dr. Tan has employed the repertory grid technique in several research projects which have since been published:


The tutorial provides an overview of the repertory grid technique and discusses how the technique has been used in IS research. It expounds on the potential of this technique to IS researchers by considering the variety of ways the technique may be employed – for both qualitative and quantitative investigations. The flexibility of the RepGrid is further illustrated by considering a program of research using the RepGrid undertaken by the presenter. The session will wrap up with participants doing a short hands-on exercise applying the technique.
**Special Requirements**

Note: Regular equipment includes a computer, projector and screen.

( ) Computers  
( ) Internet Access  
( ) Others, Please specify: ______________________

**Audience**

Insert a description of likely participants  
Researchers interested in understanding how various information system (IS) stakeholders (users, managers, IS professionals) make sense of IT in their organizations.  
Maximum number of participants: 20  
Specify the requirements for the audience such as computer, special software, and Internet access etc., in the following:  
NA