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I'm a Social Worker - Not a Technician: An Exploratory Study of Influence of the Technician Identity on Technology Users

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The introduction of technology to organizations has resulted in the creation and evolution of the occupation of technician. Every modern organization that utilizes information and communication technologies in order to improve their organizational effectiveness and efficiency has technicians that act as a buffer or broker between the technology, the organization and its members. Nevertheless, the practical reality is that all organizational technology users must develop some level of technical skills on top of their professional competencies in order to use technology effectively to accomplish their work. Therefore the 'technician' identity must at least be partially assumed by technology users. We use identity theory – a particular perspective on how individual's perceive of and act out their workplace identities - to explore how technology influences an individual's work identity and how that may influence their acceptance and use of technology. Since the ordinary worker's technical identity is most likely called into play when they experience technical problems, we draw on two weeks worth of data collected via the diary method with over 250 workers, to investigate the role that technical problem solving plays in shaping and reshaping an individual's workplace identity. We pay particular attention to an individual's identity as a competent professional in relation to the various ways in which technical problems reveal 'incompetence' and the implications this has for the worker. Our findings provide evidence for the importance of integrating identity theory in post adoption studies of technology.