

Poster for the Paper “Taking out the Trash”: Why Security Behavior Change requires Intentional Forgetting.

Full bibliographic citation

Hielscher, Jonas; Kluge, Annette; Menges, Uta; Sasse, M. Angela (2021): “Taking out the Trash”: Why Security Behavior Change requires Intentional Forgetting. In: New Security Paradigms Workshop. NSPW '21: New Security Paradigms Workshop. Virtual Event USA, 25 10 2021 28 10 2021. New York, NY, USA: ACM, S. 108–122.

Link to the Publication

<https://dl.acm.org/doi/fullHtml/10.1145/3498891.3498902>

Abstract

Security awareness is big business – virtually every organization in the Western world provides some form of awareness or training, mostly bought from external vendors. However, studies and industry reports show that these programs have little to no effect in terms of changing the security behavior of employees. We explain the conditions that enable behavior change, and identify one significant blocker in the implementation phase: not disabling existing (insecure) routines – failure *to take out the trash* – prevents embedding of new (secure) routines. Organizational Psychology offers the paradigm Intentional Forgetting (IF) and associated tools for replacing old (insecure) behaviors with new (secure) ones by identifying and eliminating different cues (sensoric, routine-based, time and space based as well as situational strength cues) that trigger old behavior. We introduce the underlying theory, examples of successful application in safety contexts, and show how its application leads to effective behavior change by reducing the information that needs to be transmitted to employees, and suppressing obsolete routines.