



Consent Form "Emotion and Status Sharing in Remote Knowledge Work Teams"

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Purpose

Working remotely has become very popular over the past years. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic this trend has grown even stronger, forcing many companies and their employees to work from home. Further, the majority of managers expect to have more flexible work from home policies post-pandemic, and employees would like to continue working from home (at least part-time), making the topic relevant also after the pandemic. However, working remotely also comes with various challenges for knowledge workers, such as feeling lonely and not belonging to a team, not knowing who to turn to in case of a problem, or not knowing what others are working on. While the latter has received a lot of attention in previous research, the existence of tools focusing on the social challenges of remote work is still lacking. By sharing moods and status messages, or more generally, fostering informal communication, team members can develop more personal relationships and teams feel more connected despite the distance. For this reason, we developed AmbientTeams, a casual and informal tool that attempts to reduce the perceived distance in remote work by creating opportunities for more informal interactions.

In this study we want to explore the usability and usefulness AmbientTeams. Further, our goal is to learn which statuses and moods knowledge workers are sharing with their closest team members, what they learn from their team-mates' sharing, and what the overall impact is on their perception of workplace isolation.

Study Procedure

Overall, the study spans across three or more workdays and consists of the following three steps:

1. A kick-off meeting where the study is explained and the opportunity for questions is given. Before attending the kick-off meeting you are kindly asked to fill out a short questionnaire on demographics and your work (taking about 5 minutes to complete). To submit this questionnaire, you will be given a pseudonym with which you will be identified with during the study. After the study is explained and there are no more questions regarding the consent form or other topics, you will be asked to install the application on your work computer. Upon successful installation, you will join the team and the main functionality of the application is explained by one of the researchers running the study.
2. During at least three workdays, we will ask you to continue to work as usual with AmbientTeams running on your computer. While running AmbientTeams, you are completely free in how and how often you use of the application.
3. At the end of the study we will ask you for feedback about how using AT impacted your work and productivity. Similar to the kick-off, we will kindly ask you to fill out another questionnaire prior to



that meeting. In the interview, you will be asked to export the locally stored data and explanations will be given on how the data can be obfuscated before uploading it to a secure drop-folder. All in all, the final interview will not take longer than 30-45 minutes.

Benefits and Risks

By participating in this study, you will have the chance to learn about your own and your co-workers' moods at work. You will use a casual and informal tool that attempts to reduce the perceived distance in remote work by creating opportunities for more informal interactions.

The main known risk of participating in the study is the loss of time required to participate in the study. We estimate the total amount of time required to participate in the study to be approximately 60 - 90 minutes during three workdays. You may use AmbientTeams for more than three days if you want to. We are aiming to make the most efficient use of your time by streamlining the setup and onboarding of the study and providing constant and timely support in case of difficulty with application usage, as well as allowing you to determine a suitable time for the study and interviews. Furthermore, you are free to withdraw from participation at any point during the study, without the need to provide a reason.

Personal Information

For this study, we will collect personal information about you such as your name, email, gender, age, and job role. Your name as well as other identifying information will strictly be kept separate at all times and will be stored in a subjects table at a different location from any other information you give. For AmbientTeams to function properly, it needs to upload to the server and persist some personal data, including status messages' and direct messages' content, shared moods, and active window titles.

To answer our research questions, we will only use your anonymized data (i.e. with the pseudonyms as explained in study procedure) and no identifying information will ever be shared outside of the research group and the confines of this study without your explicit permission. All data collected will be saved in password-protected storages. Your anonymized data will be stored no longer than 5 years. Any identifiable data (subject table) will be deleted after the project is published (if it is) and at the latest after 2 years.

Data, Storage & Confidentiality

AmbientTeams stores data **both locally on your computer and on a server hosted at the Department of Informatics at the University of Zurich.**

Data collected by AmbientTeams

At the end of the study, you will be asked to export your local data and share it with the researchers. Before uploading your exported data to a secure storage hosted by the University of Zurich, you have the opportunity to review and obfuscate the data. The local data contains only a pseudonym (e.g. P0123), provided to the participant at the beginning of the study, no information that would allow the data to be associated with personal data of a participant. Local data include window actions (opening, closing, minimizing, and restoring of AmbientTeams), general usage (starting and quitting of AmbientTeams), timestamps when the team was changed in the dropdown, and active windows (the active window is the window currently in focus and contains the name of the application and, in cases of web browsers, the current URL). In case you are working on something sensitive, we recommend to temporarily quit the AmbientTeams application.



Data stored on the server

Since AmbientTeams allows to exchange your status and moods with co-workers and (optionally) allows to communicate via personal message or audio/video-chat, data has to be persisted on a central server. The server is hosted by the university of Zurich. All requests to and from the server are SSL encrypted by using the HTTPS (wss respectively) protocol. Since the data on server includes identifiable information about the participants, all the data stored on the server will be deleted after the completion of the project, at the latest 2 years after participation in the study. Further, the data that will be downloaded and stored on the password protected machines of the researchers to run the analysis will only contain random IDs and not the actual personal information of the participants. The following is stored on the server:

- User data: email, display name, hashed password, the teams the user belongs to, and the parameters of the avatar that was created by that user during signup
- Teams: name of the team and its members
- Status/direct messages: timestamp, content, team and user(s) the message belongs to
- Availability status: timestamp, selected availability status, user
- 1:1 Calls: start and end timestamps, call participants
- Moods: timestamp, selected mood, user

All audio/video calls are end-to-end encrypted using the WebRTC protocol and thus cannot be eavesdropped. In addition, the calls are also not recorded. It should be noted that messages (both status messages and private messages) are not encrypted, and **we strongly advise against sharing confidential data within AmbientTeams**. Also note that by sharing a status message with your team, all users who belong to that team will be able to see that message. That said, users not belonging to that team will never have access to your posted status messages.

Interview Data

If approved by you, the final interview will be audio recorded. The audio files will be deleted as soon as the interviews have been transcribed (automatically if interviews were taken in English and you give consent to use a transcription service below, manually otherwise).

Uses of the Study Data

The results of this study will potentially appear in both internal and external academic research presentations and publications, such as academic journals and conference proceedings. No findings gathered from the participation in this study will ever reveal the identity of the participants. Reference to specific participants will always be made under their pseudonym.

Contact for Information about the Study

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to the study, you may contact Dario Bugmann (dario.bugmann@uzh.ch) or Dr. André Meyer (ameyer@ifi.uzh.ch).



Consent for extended Data Uses

With your explicit consent, you can allow the researchers to transcribe the audio recording of the interview using a transcription service:

☐ I allow the use of a transcription service to transcribe my interview

With your explicit consent, you can allow the researchers to share the results or ask you to participate in future studies.

☐ The researchers might contact me in the future to share the results and/or ask me to participate in future studies.

Consent for Study Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any point during the study, without needing to provide any reason. Any information you contribute up to your withdrawal will be retained and used in this study, unless you request otherwise.

With your signature on this form, you confirm the following statements:

- An investigator explained the study and the listed conditions to me. I had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand the answers and accept them.
- I am at least 18 years old.
- I had enough time to make the decision to participate and I agree to the participation.

In no way does this waive your legal rights or release the investigators or involved institutions from their legal or professional responsibilities.

Participant's name

Location, Date

Participant's signature