

**Managing Conflict to
Improve the Effectiveness of Ad-Hoc Marketing Teams**

Kevin D. Bradford
Department of Marketing
388 Mendoza College of Business
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN 46556
(219) 631-5057
Kevin.Bradford.11@nd.edu

Anne Stringfellow
World Business Department
Thunderbird
15249 N. 59th Ave.
Glendale, AZ 85306
(602) 978-7452
stringfa@t-bird.edu

Barton A. Weitz
Department of Marketing
University of Florida
212 Bryan Hall
Gainesville, FL 32611
(352) 392-0161 x 1255
bweitz@dale.cba.ufl.edu

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MANAGING CONFLICT TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AD-HOC MARKETING TEAMS

ABSTRACT

Ad-hoc, cross-functional teams including marketers are widely used by businesses as a mechanism to incorporate cross-functional perspectives into the solution of business problems. While incorporating diverse perspectives offers the potential for novel, superior solutions, the diversity of perspectives in cross-functional teams can generate conflict that inhibits effective problem solving. This research develops and tests a framework outlining the causes and effects of conflict in ad-hoc teams and how the use of conflict management behaviors can mitigate the negative effects of the conflict inherent in ad-hoc, cross-functional teams. A study of 84 ad-hoc teams finds that diversity in team member commitment and previous social relationships between team members increases affective and task conflict. Diversity in power increases task conflict. Affective conflict in teams decreases the team member satisfaction; however, task conflict decreases task performance as well as satisfaction. The use of confrontational conflict management behaviors improves task performance, while compromise conflict management behaviors improve the creativity of the team and the satisfaction of team members. Finally, conflict management behaviors moderate the impact of task conflict on team outcomes. Confrontational conflict behaviors mitigate the effects of task conflict on task performance. Specifically, compromise and avoidance conflict management behaviors exacerbate the effects of task conflict on the team's creativity and the satisfaction of its members.

MANAGING CONFLICT TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AD-HOC MARKETING TEAMS

Today's rapidly changing markets require accelerated responses that are possible only if firms continuously monitor their environment and transfer this knowledge rapidly throughout the organization. This monitoring and adapting capability, referred to as market orientation, is associated with business profitability (Narver and Slater 1990). A critical aspect of the marketing orientation of a firm is the extent of its cross-functional coordination.

Increasingly, businesses are recognizing the strategic advantages derived from the cross-functional integration of key business processes such as new product development (Xie, Song, and Stingfellow, 1998), supply chain management (Ellinger 2000), and key account relationship selling (Weitz and Bradford 1999). Firms use a number of mechanisms to achieve this cross-functional integration, ranging from structural approaches involving assigning employees to coordinating roles to the use of cross-functional, ad-hoc teams to develop solutions for specific problems.

Since much of the knowledge of a firm's environment is tacit, rather than explicit, market information cannot be effectively transferred in formalized reports. Thus it is necessary for marketers to be directly involved in these cross-function integration activities. This integration is accomplished either by occupying coordinating positions such as product and account managers or by serving as active participants in cross-functional customer project teams (Kotler 2000). For example, to market high-technology solutions, customer service, marketing, sales, information systems, engineering, and R&D personnel are frequently assembled in an ad hoc team. The marketing and sales representatives on the ad hoc team play prominent roles because they are the most informed team members about customer issues

which provides customer focused direction for the ad hoc team. The marketing and sales representatives have the central role of representing the customer's interests to the selling organization and communicating the solution to the customer (Tjosvold and Wong 1992). In addition, marketing and sales representatives are in an ideal position to improve the market orientation of their firms and ad hoc teams by providing the necessary competitor information.

While research has examined the conditions under which teams, and other cross-functional integrating mechanisms, are effective (cf. Olsen, Walker, Ruekert 1995; Sethi 2000), the research on the effective management of ad-hoc, cross-functional teams, teams formed on an as-needed basis to solve specific problems, is limited. The research on team management has focused on long-duration teams, such as top management teams (Bantel and Jackson 1989; Wiersema and Bantel 1992); permanent selling teams (Gladstein 1984); buying centers (Barclay 1991); work teams (Jehn 1995, 1997); and long-term product development teams (Ancona and Caldwell 1992, Pelled 1999).

The research on long-duration teams has largely ignored conflict management issues – issues of critical importance in the operation of shorter-duration, ad-hoc teams. The diversity of background and goals represented on these ad-hoc cross-functional teams provide the ingredients for creative problem-solving. However, people from different functional areas operate in their own “thought worlds” (Dougherty 1992; Eisenhart, Kahwajy, and Bourgeois, 1997b) and can view the same issues through very different lenses. These different perspectives and goals can create conflict because team members have not had the time to learn about and appreciate the different perspectives of other team members. Thus conflict is a ubiquitous and important aspect of ad-hoc team dynamics.

The objective of this research is to examine how two different sources of conflict and conflict management behaviors affect ad-hoc teams' effectiveness. Building on previous research on conflict resolution (Rahim 1986; Thomas 1976, 1992) and conflict in teams (De Dreu 1999; Jehn 1995, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin 1999), in the next section, we develop a framework relating the type of conflict and how the conflict is managed to various team outcomes. The hypotheses derived from this framework are tested using 84 ad-hoc teams solving a marketing problem. After discussing the results, the paper concludes with a discussion of the limitations and directions for future research.

PROPOSED MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual framework on which this research is based is presented in Figure 1. The framework proposes that differences between ad-hoc team members, with respect to area of expertise, commitment to the team, and power as well as the previous social relationships among the team members affect team conflict, which, in turn, affects team outcomes. The team outcomes examined are task performance, creativity, and member satisfaction with the team outcomes. The two types of conflict considered in the framework are affective conflict (Amason and Schweiger 1994, Guetzkow and Gyr 1954) and task conflict (Amason 1996, Mitroff 1982). The impact of these conflict types on team outcomes is moderated by the manner in which the conflict is managed.

**** INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE ****

Team Outcomes

The three team outcomes examined in this research are task performance, creativity, and team member satisfaction. Task performance is the quality of the ad-hoc marketing team's final product (Hackman 1987). This outcome is typically assessed using an objective

performance measure capturing the degree to which the ad-hoc team achieved its intended goal. For example, the performance of an ad-hoc sales team that has the goal of making a sale is objectively judged on whether or not the customer placed the order.

The creativity of a solution to a problem is an important, subjective measure of team performance. Creativity is defined as the creation of novel and useful outcomes (Amabile 1983). In fact, one could argue that the primary reason for bring together the different perspectives represented in an ad-hoc, cross-function team is to facilitate the development of creative solutions.

Finally, satisfaction with the team is the extent to which ad-hoc team members believe that the team processes and outcomes meet their expectations. Ad-hoc team member satisfaction is an important outcome because it affects the degree to which team members will be motivated to advocate and implement the team's solution when the members return to their functional areas.

Types of Conflict

Conflict is defined as the behaviors or feelings of interdependent parties in response to potential or actual obstructions that impede one or more of the parties achieving their goals (Deutsch 1973; Gaski 1984; Stern, El-Ansary, and Coughlan 1996.) Most of the research in marketing on conflict has focussed on channel relationships; however, conflict is an ubiquitous phenomenon that pervades virtually all organizational processes (Dahrendorf 1959; Lewin 1947; Thomas 1976). While much of the marketing research has focussed on reducing the negative effects of conflict, organizational theorists emphasize that conflict can also produce positive outcomes by introducing different perspectives that produce innovative solutions (e.g. Pondy 1967).

Recent research suggests that conflict is a multi-dimensional construct (Amason et al., 1995; Jehn 1995). In this research, we consider two dimensions, or types, of conflict: (1) affective conflict and (2) task conflict.

Affective conflict. Affective conflicts are disagreements between ad-hoc team members that are based on personal incompatibilities that produce suspicion, distrust, and hostility among team members (Brehmer 1976; Guetzow and Gyr 1954; Faulk 1982). Research indicates that this type of conflict reduces team decision-making effectiveness by reducing the team's ability to reach high-quality decisions and impeding the acceptance of decisions among team members. Affective conflict limits cognitive processing of new information, gives rise to hostile attributions concerning each other's intentions and behaviors, reduces receptiveness to ideas advocated by others who are disliked, decreases willingness to tolerate opposition, and disturbs effective communication and cooperation within the team (e.g. Amason 1996, Amason and Schweiger 1994, Baron 1991, Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988, Jehn 1995). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Affective conflict in ad-hoc teams negatively affects the ad-hoc team's (a) task performance, (b) creativity, and (c) member satisfaction

Task conflict. Task conflicts are disagreements among ad-hoc team members about the team's goals and the activities that need to be undertaken to achieve these goals. This type of conflict arises from differences in perspective and training that resulting ad-hoc team members viewing problems and issues differently. Since cross-functional, ad-hoc team members come from different functional areas, they typically have different backgrounds and perspectives. Resolving these differences can distract attention from addressing the team's task. Thus,

H2: Task conflict in ad-hoc teams negatively affects ad-hoc team's (a) task performance, (b) creativity, and (c) member satisfaction

Moderating Effects of Conflict Management on Ad-hoc Team Outcomes

Research suggests that conflict can have positive as well as negative consequences. For example, conflict can prevent stagnation, stimulate interest and curiosity in a problem, and provide a medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at (Deutsch 1973, Simmel 1955, Coser 1956, Jehn 1997, Tjosvold 1985). In addition, positive outcomes of conflict include an expanded understanding of the issues for the team members, mobilization of party resources and energies toward problem resolution, and clarification of competing solutions and creative searches for alternative solutions to existing problems (Brown 1983). However, it is important for the parties in ad-hoc teams to manage conflict effectively so that the positive consequences of conflict can be realized (Robbins 1978, Tjosvold 1985, Rahim 1986).

Schweiger and colleagues (1986, 1989) found that the management of conflict, specifically the use of interaction techniques that force team members to disagree and debate the merits of different alternative perspectives, produces superior results. The potential positive effects of task conflict appears to be associated with the solution of non-routine problems (Jehn 1995). Since ad-hoc teams are usually assembled to solve non-routine problems, task conflict has the potential to improve their performance. Thus the framework in the Figure suggests that conflict management practices can mitigate the negative effects of conflict on team performance and can result in exploiting the beneficial aspects of conflict.

Conflict management behaviors. A number of taxonomies of conflict management behaviors have been developed (Blake and Mouton 1964, Hall 1969, Rahim and Bonoma 1979, Thomas 1976, Thomas 1979, Pruitt 1983). In this research, we examine the effects of

three conflict management styles discussed in these frameworks: (1) confrontation, (2) compromise, and (3) avoidance.

Compromise. The compromise conflict management behaviors involve the members of the teams making concessions to reach a mutually acceptable solution. This approach results in team members having a portion of their perspectives incorporated in the solution and thus should increase team member satisfaction. However, the impact on task performance and creativity is unclear. On one hand, compromising behaviors can signal a willingness to work together, build a cooperative atmosphere, and enhance the probability of developing an effective, creative solution. On the other hand, managing conflicts through compromise may limit the exploration of different perspectives and thus reduce the chances of developing integrative solutions. Thus, we hypothesize only that

H3: Compromise increases team member satisfaction with the ad-hoc team process.

Confrontation. The confrontation conflict management behaviors emphasize the viewpoints of one or more of the ad-hoc team members to the exclusion of other team members. Confrontational approaches for resolving conflicts can create disharmony in the team and decrease team member satisfaction; however, confrontation conflict management introduces the team members to different perspectives and thus has the potential for improving task performance and creativity of the outcome. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H4: Confrontation conflict management behaviors improve ad-hoc team (a) task performance and (b) team creativity, but reduce (c) team member satisfaction with the ad-hoc team process.

Avoidance. Avoidance conflict management behaviors involve team members ignoring or failing to consider disagreements among team members. These conflict management behaviors include physical and mental withdrawal from the ad-hoc team, such as not attending

team meetings and avoiding open discussion of underlying disagreements on fundamental topics. Extant literature suggests that the avoidance of conflict is a short-term conflict management strategy that does not allow for the successful solution to a problem; it only delays dealing with the issue. As an example, Souder (1987) identified a syndrome he termed “too good friends” in which members of different departments were so intent on maintaining friendly relationships with one another that they failed to question one another’s decisions, with negative results. If this result extends to teams, it would suggest that avoidance conflict management behaviors interact with the various sources of conflict so as to decrease the quality of task performance and to decrease creativity. Again, the effect of avoidance conflict management on team member satisfaction is unclear. Although avoidance conflict management behavior may reduce disharmony in the short term, its long-term result is likely to reduce satisfaction with the ad-hoc team.

H5: Avoidance conflict management behaviors reduces the quality of ad-hoc team (a) task performance and (b) team creativity.

Moderating Effects. While we propose that affective conflict has a negative main effect on ad-hoc team outcomes, conflict management behaviors can moderate these effects. When the compromise conflict management behaviors are used, the process of making concessions to seek mutually acceptable solutions reduces the potential for emotionally based conflict impeding the performance of the team. However, confronting these emotional sources of conflicts heightens their saliency and reduces the satisfaction of team members. Thus,

H6: Compromise conflict management behaviors have a positive moderating effect on the impact of affective conflict on team member satisfaction.

H7: Confrontation conflict management behaviors have a negative moderating effect on the impact of affective conflict on team member satisfaction.

On the other hand, the introduction of different perspectives and goals, the source of task conflict, has the potential for improving team performance when these perspectives are thoroughly presented and discussed. However, avoiding or compromising on these conflicts concerning the solutions to the task reduces the opportunity to introduce and discuss creative alternatives.

H8: Confrontation conflict management behaviors have a positive moderating effect on the impact of task conflict on (a) task performance and (b) creativity.

H9: Compromise conflict management behaviors have a negative moderating effect on the impact of task conflict on (a) task performance and (b) creativity.

H10: Avoidance conflict management behaviors have a negative moderating effect on the impact of task conflict on (a) task performance and (b) creativity

Antecedents of Conflict

Members of ad-hoc marketing teams contribute different skills and perspectives to the development of solutions for marketing problems or opportunities. Considerable research has examined the link between team composition and team performance. In the past, much of this research focused on the effect of visible demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, and ethnic background. More recently, the importance of “unobservable diversity” (Milliken and Martins 1996) and “deep level” (Harrison, Price, and Bell 1998) diversity has been recognized. Deep level attributes are invisible attributes that are central to a person’s identity, such as personality and core values (Becker 2000). Research suggests that differences at these deeper levels, such as differences in skills and perspectives, contribute to the quality of the output of teams performing tasks that involve generating plans or creative ideas, solving problems, or making decisions (Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin 1999). The term “creative abrasion” (Leonard and Rayport 1997) is used to describe team innovation that occurs when conflicts arise from

disparate ideas colliding and eventually leading to creative solutions. Thus differences in skills and perspectives lead to conflict. In this research, we consider differences in level and area of expertise and differences in power and power plus the existence of prior relationships between team members as antecedents to conflict in ad-hoc marketing teams.

Sources of Task Conflict. Three sources of task conflict are differences in areas of knowledge, power, and commitment. Expertise differences are the degree to which team members have different types and level of knowledge, skills, and abilities with respect to the problem for which the team is charged with developing a solution. Differences in expertise among team members will result in the team members proposing and advocating different approaches for solving problems and thus leading to task conflict.

Power differences are the degree to which some team members are regarded as being of higher status than others. Differences in power among the ad-hoc team members produce the same differences in perspective as differences in knowledge areas. Power difference cause task conflict because the power differences are likely to reflect differences in objectives for the performance of the task. These differences in objectives clearly arise when the team members differ in terms of their commitment to the team and its tasks.

H11: (a) Differences in the fields of knowledge among team members, (b) power, and (c) commitment increase task conflicts.

Sources of Affective Conflict. Two sources of affective conflict are power and commitment differences. Teams with high power differences experience more personal friction than teams composed of equal status members. (Dutton & Walton 1966, McCann and Galbraith 1981, Smith, et al. 1995). In addition, frictions in ad-hoc teams are created when

some members of an ad-hoc are committed to solving the problem while other members are not concerned about the issues facing the team. Thus,

H12: (a) Power and (b) commitment differences increase affective conflict.

Social relationships. Social relationship is the extent to which ad-hoc team members have personal, in addition to business, relationships. Surprisingly, research suggests that conflict increases as social relationships between team members increase (Braiker and Kelley 1979, Coser 1956. When ad-hoc team members have closer social relationships they are more likely not only to voice their position on topics of discussion but also to want to be heard. In close, interpersonal relationships, the severity of conflict increases because the rules of the relationship are held as more central and transgressions of these rules can violate the relationship more severely (Roloff and Cloven 1990. Levine and Thompson (1996) propose that the frequency of conflicts is greater in close relationships because there is less concern that conflicts will endanger the continuance of the relationship between the parties.

Thus,

H13: Social relationships amongst ad-hoc team members increases (a) task conflict and (b) affective conflict.

METHOD

This section describes the research design, sample and data collection procedure, the measure development, the final measures used in the research, and the approach taken to data analysis.

Research Design

A simulation was used to test the hypotheses proposed in the previously reviewed conceptual framework. By using a simulation, we were able to measure conflict management

behaviors used in ad-hoc teams in close time proximity to the team interactions and develop objective, as well as subjective, measures of ad-hoc team performance.

To collect the data, 84 ad-hoc teams with four MBA students on each team were created. The teams were created to maximize the diversity concerning their areas of expertise. The teams engaged in a four person, mixed motive problem solution exercise developed by Beggs, Brett and Weingart (2000). Each team member played the role of a different store owner in a hypothetical specialty shopping mall. The store owners had to discuss and come to agreement on five issues that differentially affected each of their businesses. For example, the coffee shop owner's utility increased, but the flower shop owner's utility decreased, with lowering temperatures in the mall. Team members knew their own payoffs for each decision, but not those of the other team members. The team members were motivated to consider both the team's goal and their individual perspectives by awarding prizes to all the members of the team with the best overall team performance and the best performance by the team member in each of the four roles. The setting used in the study is similar to an ad-hoc, cross-functional new product development team, in that each team member plays a specific role representing their functional area. The rewards to the team member are based on both the performance of the team and the degree to which the member effectively represents his or her functional area.

The ad-hoc team exercise began with the participants receiving instructions for the simulation, information about their role, and the utilities associated with each level of the decision variables. The participants then met with the other members of their team and reached an agreement concerning the five decision variables. Finally, each participant completed a questionnaire to assess the constructs in the conceptual framework.

Measures

Measures were developed using a framework outlined in Churchill (1979.) First, a pool of items was developed for each construct. These items were pre-tested on a convenience sample of business school faculty and graduate students. Exploratory factor analyses and an examination of the item intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations were used to purify the scales. Scale unidimensionality was verified using confirmatory factor analysis (Gerbing and Anderson 1988). The scales used to measure the constructs and reliabilities of the scales are reported in the Appendix. The means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix for the constructs are shown in Table 1.

Sources of conflict. The five items used to measure affective conflict assessed the degree to which personal friction and tension caused by personal incompatibilities occurred during the completion of the team exercise. The Cronbach alpha for the scale is .90. The six-item scale measuring task conflict assessed the extent to which members of the team had differences of opinion concerning the process for undertaking the task and the goals for completing the task. The responses for the items in these scales were collected on seven point scales anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha for the task conflict scale is .72.

Conflict management behaviors. The three conflict management behaviors were assessed on 7-point scales anchored by “never” and “very frequently”. The five items to measure avoidance conflict management behavior assessed the frequency of behaviors related to purposely ignoring or avoiding conflict. The Cronbach alpha for this scale is .73. Confrontational conflict management behavior (Cronbach alpha .72) was measuring using a six item scale to assess the frequency of behaviors in which one or more team members asserted

themselves in a conflict situation in order that their point of view might prevail. Finally, compromise conflict management behavior was measured using by six items (Cronbach alpha .83) assessing the frequency with which team members made concessions.

Performance outcomes. The three dependent measures used in this research were satisfaction, creativity, and task performance. The degree to which team members were satisfied with the process and outcome was measured using a five item scale (Cronbach alpha.84). Four items (Cronbach alpha .76) were used to measure creativity. These items assessed the extent to which the ad-hoc team explored and came up with innovative and useful approaches for accomplishing its task. Seven-point scales anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree” were used to measure satisfaction and creativity. Task performance was an objective measure based on the sum of the points earned (value of the outcome based on each team member value function) by each of the team member. The measure was developed as part of the exercise that the team performed. It was a single valid and reliable measure that assessed the how well the ad-hoc team incorporated the individual’s goals in order to come up with a group solution.

Antecedents of the sources of conflict. The four-item scale developed for power assessed the extent to which team members perceived differences in the amount of power that the team members possessed (Cronbach alpha .71). Similarly, a three-item scale was used to measure differences in commitment (Cronbach alpha .68); a three-item scale was used to measure differences in area/scope of knowledge (Cronbach alpha .71). The scale for social relationships consisted of two items, which assessed the extent to which relationships between the ad-hoc team members extended beyond the normal business relationship or task at hand.

The Cronbach alpha for the social relationship scale was .69. All of these measures were assessed using seven-point scales anchored by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.”

Formation of Team Measures

The responses obtained from multiple individual team members were to be aggregated into a single team-level response; therefore it was necessary to verify the relative magnitudes of the between-team and within-team variance. Following the procedure recommended by Georgopolous (1986) and used by Jehn (1995), a one-way ANOVA analysis was performed for each team member measure using the measure as the dependent variable and the team as the single factor. The F-ratio from the ANOVA was compared with Georgopolous’s criterion that F exceed 1.0. In addition, the eta-squared statistic was calculated for each measure. Eta-squared, or the ratio of the between-team variance to the total variance, should exceed 0.16 if data aggregation is to be appropriate (Georgopopous 1986). All the measures have F ratios that exceed 1.0. and eta-squared greater than 0.16. Multiple regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. The models involving interaction effects were estimated using mean-centered data, as recommended by Cronbach (1987) and Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1990). The results of these analyses are presented in the next section.

RESULTS

The results concerning the factors affecting team outcomes covered in the first nine hypotheses are shown in Table 2.

Main Effects of Conflict on Team Outcomes

H1 and H2 are partially supported. Affective conflict has a significant negative effect on team member satisfaction ($\beta = -0.295$, $p < .05$) but does not significantly affect task performance or creativity of the outcome. Task conflict is significantly related to task performance ($\beta = -0.343$, $p < .05$) and satisfaction ($\beta = -0.499$, $p < .01$), but is not significantly related to the creativity of the task outcome.

Main Effects of Conflict Management Behaviors on Team Outcomes

The results provide support for H3. The use of compromise conflict management behaviors is significantly related to team member satisfaction ($\beta = 0.323$, $p < .01$). In addition, the use of compromise conflict management behaviors is significantly related to the creativity of the team's solution ($\beta = -0.386$, $p < .005$). This result suggests that the positive aspects of using compromise conflict behaviors (building a cooperative environment) outweigh the potential negative aspects (restricting the presentation of different perspectives).

There are mixed results for H4. While the use of confrontation conflict management behaviors does significantly increase task performance ($\beta = 0.279$, $p < .10$), the use of these behaviors is unrelated to the creativity of the outcome or the satisfaction of team members. Finally, the use of avoidance behaviors is unrelated to the three performance outcomes.

Moderating Effects of Conflict Management Behaviors

The results indicate that the use of specific conflict management behaviors has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between task conflict and performance outcomes, providing support for H8, H9, and H10. However, conflict management behaviors have no significant moderating effects on affective conflict – performance outcome relationships and thus the results do not provide support for either H6 or H7.

As indicated previously, task conflict has a negative effect on task performance; however, the use of confrontational conflict management behaviors has a significant positive moderating effect ($\beta = 0.308$, $p < .10$) on this relationship. Thus, under some conditions, confrontational conflict management behaviors can actually have a positive impact on task performance.

While compromise and avoidance conflict management behaviors have no moderating effect on task conflict (or affective conflict) with respect to task performance, they both have a significant negative moderating effect on creativity ($\beta = -0.386$, $p < .01$ for compromise, ($\beta = -0.375$, $p < .01$ for avoidance) as well as satisfaction ($\beta = -0.450$, $p < .005$ for compromise, ($\beta = -0.306$, $p < .01$ for avoidance).

Antecedents of the Sources of Conflict

**** INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE****

The results for the hypotheses relating the antecedents to the sources of conflict (H11, H12, and H13) are partially supportive (See Table 3). The results indicate that differences among ad-hoc team members in terms of commitment ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < .005$) and power ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < .05$) have a significant effect on task conflict. However, differences in area of knowledge have no effect on task conflict. Ad-hoc team member differences in commitment also have a significant effect ($\beta = 0.277$, $p < .05$) on affective conflict, but differences in knowledge areas or power among team member have no significant effect on affective conflict. Finally, previous social relationships between ad-hoc team members significantly increase task conflict ($\beta = 0.285$, $p < .005$) and affective conflict ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < .05$) as hypothesized.

DISCUSSION

While the empirical portion of this research provides only partial support for the specific hypotheses, the data do support the following three important premises of the conceptual framework: (1) diversity in ad hoc team members increases the conflict in the team; (2) it is useful to consider conflict as a multi-dimensional construct; and (3) the conflict management behaviors used in solving the team's problem can mitigate or exacerbate the negative effects of conflict. Team diversity with respect to commitment increases affective and task conflict and diversity in power increases task conflict. The hypothesized effect of diversity in areas of knowledge on conflict was not supported. However, the lack of support for this hypothesis may be due to the nature of the problem addressed by the teams. While the problem structure involved different objectives for individual team members, it did not necessitate the integration of different areas of knowledge to solve the problem. Finally, previous social relationships between team members increases, rather than decreases, the level of conflict when the parties engage in a team problem solving context as hypothesized.

The results suggest that conflict is a multi-dimensional construct. Task and affective conflict, the two dimensions of team conflict considered in this research, have different antecedents and consequences. The presence of power differences among team members increases affective conflict but does not significantly increase task conflict. Task conflict has a negative effect on team performance and team member satisfaction, while affective conflict negatively impacts only team member satisfaction. In addition, the conflict management behaviors moderate the effects of task conflict, but not affective conflict.

The use of conflict management behaviors can either offset or exaggerate the negative impact of conflict on team outcomes. The use of confrontational conflict management

behaviors has a positive, main effect on task performance, while compromise conflict management behaviors have a positive main effect on the creativity of the team solution and the satisfaction of team members. In addition, the use of conflict management behaviors moderates the effect of task conflict on team outcomes. Specifically, confrontational conflict management behaviors have a positive moderating effect on the task conflict-task outcome relationships, while compromise and avoidance conflict management behaviors have a negative moderating effect on the task conflict-creativity and task conflict satisfaction outcomes.

Managerial Implications

Since marketers are better attuned to their markets than managers with other functional responsibilities, they play a critical role in implementing the concept of marketing orientation through their activities in ad hoc, cross functional teams. For this reason, understanding the effects of conflict on ad hoc team performance is an important issue for marketers. This research suggests that the use of appropriate conflict management behaviors can mitigate the negative effects of task conflict and even result in a condition when task conflict can have a positive impact on the performance of ad hoc teams.

Task conflict has a negative effect on task performance; however this negative effect is offset by confronting the conflict, rather than compromising or avoiding the conflict. This suggests that managers might do well to promote organizational norms that support open challenges of ideas, with the understanding that better solutions may result. In addition, the research found that the degree to which confronting conflict offsets the negative effects of task conflict increases as the task conflict increases, which suggests that bringing major conflicts to the surface is particularly important to success.

On the other hand, the results find that avoiding major task conflict in ad hoc teams negatively affects team creativity and member satisfaction. This is an important result, as it suggests that while avoidance may be effective in the short-term to get the job done, its negative effects on satisfaction may reduce both team member willingness to implement the solution and willingness to remain in the organization.

While compromising to resolve different of perspective has a positive effect on team creativity and member satisfaction, these positive effects of compromising are diminished in the presence of task conflict. This suggests that managers should use compromising sparingly. It should be reserved for minor conflicts, while major conflicts are addressed head-on.

Limitations

While the results support the basic premises of our conceptual framework, the framework was tested in only one context – a mixed-motive, problem solving exercise involving ad-hoc teams composed of MBA students. One would expect that the specific results would be different when ad-hoc teams have a different composition and are embedded in different contexts. For example, the impact of affective conflict would probably be greater for cross-functional teams assembled in a company in which there was considerable animosity and disrespect between the company's functional areas. Similarly, the main effects of task conflict on team creativity might be greater for team tasks that have the potential for truly integrating different knowledge to develop innovative solutions such as the task confronting ad-hoc, cross-functional new product development teams.

Directions for Future Research

While the results of this research support the basic premises of the conceptual framework, the framework certainly needs to be tested in different contexts. The simulation with MBA students used in this study has the advantages of enabling an objective measure of team performance and the collection of conflict management behaviors shortly after the completion of the task. However, the results from using a simulation may be biased because it does not capture the same level of task involvement that might occur in ad-hoc, cross-functional teams solving problems. However, the results are promising and suggest that additional research in the area of ad hoc team conflict management is merited.

The framework could be extended to consider moderating effects of the nature of the task. The task considered in this research is an integrative task with limited opportunities for innovative solutions. The level and nature of conflict might change and the effective management of the conflict might differ as the opportunity for innovative solutions increases. In addition, Hackman (1987) provides a taxonomy of team tasks. The effects of these different types of tasks on the nature of conflict and conflict management need to be investigated.

Effective conflict management in ad hoc, cross-functional teams is a complex phenomenon meriting additional research attention. This research presents a framework for advancing the understanding of conflict management strategies and some preliminary results supporting the framework. Further empirical investigations and conceptual extensions of the framework can potentially improve the theoretical understanding of the role and management of conflict in groups and enhance the productivity of ad-hoc, cross-functional groups used in practice.

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Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

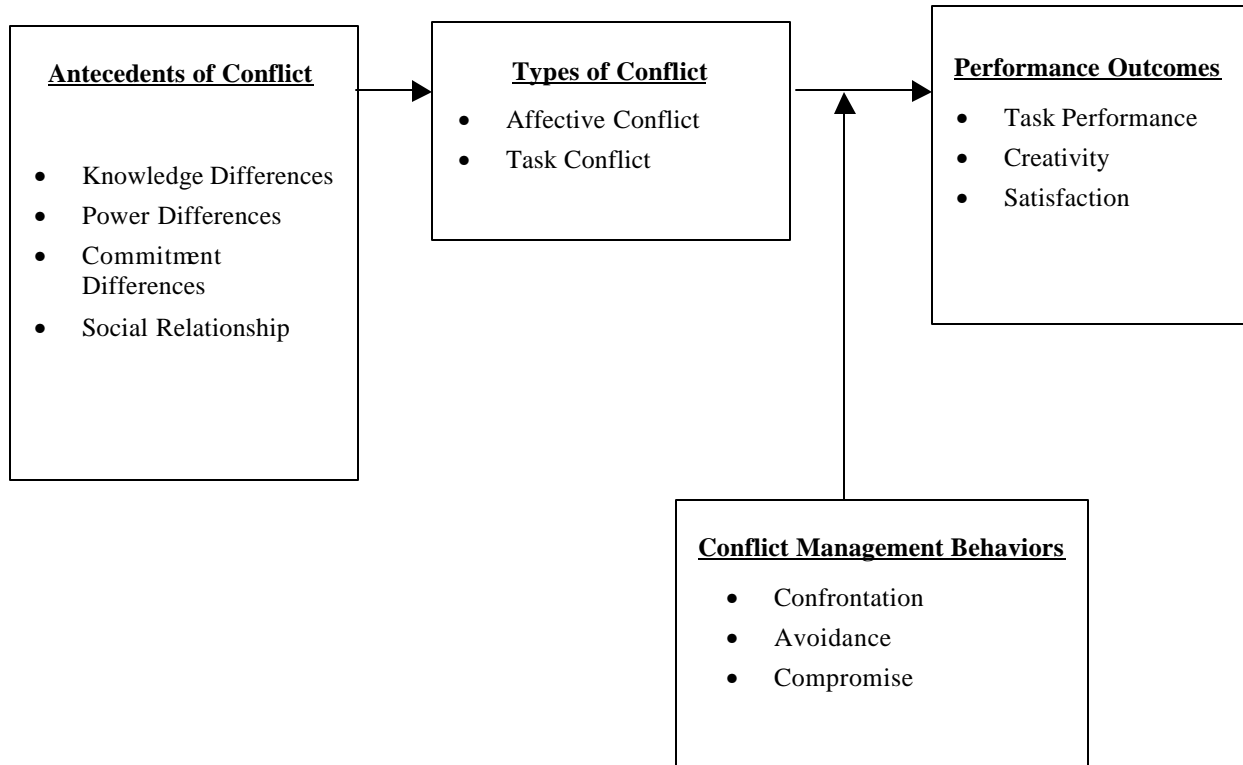


Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
1 Affective Conflict	2.39	1.02											
2 Task Conflict	3.12	.81	.577**										
3 Confrontation	3.78	.74	.646**	.494**									
4 Avoidance	2.88	.64	.157	.292**	-.067								
5 Compromise	5.62	.62	-.339**	-.537**	-.228*	-.307**							
6 Task Outcome	5.96	.59	-.071	-.156	.033	-.191	.040						
7 Creativity	5.09	.62	-.224*	-.199	-.113	-.106	.408**	.201					
8 Satisfaction	4.91	.71	-.585**	-.699**	-.390**	-.254*	.556**	.232*	.514**				
9 Knowledge Scope/Area	4.44	.61	-.063	.080	-.109	.164	.111	-.036	.265*	.103			
10 Commitment	2.16	.65	.324**	.523**	.203	.283**	-.563**	-.142	-.320**	-.548**	-.006		
11 Power	2.82	.73	.288**	.498**	.108	.296**	-.611**	-.301**	-.338**	-.516**	.099	.620**	
12 Social Relationship	2.88	.99	.266*	.360**	.104	.188	-.279*	-.047	.043	-.194	.043	.116	.165

*p<.05 (two-tailed)

** p<.01

Table 2: Team Outcomes

	Dependent Variables		
	<u>Task Performance</u>	<u>Creativity</u>	<u>Satisfaction</u>
Compromise (CM)	.072	.386****	.223***
Confrontation (CF)	.279*	.145	.143
Avoidance (AV)	-.061	.006	.007
Affective Conflict (AC)	-.195	-.139	-.295**
AC*CM	.075	-.001	.101
AC*CF	-.142	.035	.115
AC*AV	-.074	.120	.119
Task Conflict (TC)	-.343**	.045	-.499*****
TC *CM	-.039	-.386***	-.375*****
TC *CF	.308*	.054	.048
TC *AV	-.122	-.450*****	-.306*****
R ²	.302	.358	.709
Adjusted R ²	.191	.259	.664
Significance of F for Model	.006	.000	.000

*p<.1 (two-tailed)

** p<.05

*** p<.01

**** p<.005

Table 3: Antecedents of Conflict

	<u>Dependent Variable</u>	
	<u>Affective Conflict</u> (standardized coefficients)	<u>Task Conflict</u> (standardized coefficients)
Commitment	.277**	.354****
Power	.112	.248**
Knowledge Scope/Area	-.097	.018
Social Relationship	.226**	.285****
	R ² .198	.411
	Adjusted R ² .157	.381
Significance of F for Model	.001	.000

*p<.1 (two-tailed)

** p<.05

*** p<.01

**** p<.005

APPENDIX

Scale Items	Cronbach alpha
<u>Affective Conflict</u>	.90
Our personalities occasionally clashed.	
There was a lot of tension between us at times.	
At times, there were bad feelings between us.	
Sometimes we became irritated with one another.	
There was personal friction among team members.	
<u>Task Conflict</u>	.79
Group members disagreed over how to complete the project.	
Group members had differences of opinion over how to complete the task.	
We had similar goals for the project. (R)	
The group had incompatible interests for the project.	
We had different goals for the project.	
We had similar objectives for this project. (R)	
<u>Confrontative Conflict Management Behavior</u>	.72
Trying to get one's own way.	
Pushing one's own interests regardless of the effect on other team members.	
Pitting one's own viewpoint against those of other team members.	
Trying to win arguments.	
Confronting other team members with dissenting views.	
Generally being firm in pursuing one's own side of the issue.	
<u>Avoidance Conflict Management Behavior</u>	.73
Avoiding disagreements.	
Avoiding open discussion of our differences.	
Sidestepping issues that are likely to cause conflicts.	
Steering clear of areas of disagreement.	
Keeping quiet about one's views in order to avoid disagreements.	
<u>Compromise Conflict Management Behavior</u>	.83
Using give and take.	
Making mutual concessions to reach agreement	
Trying to reach a happy medium.	
Settling on an intermediate solution	
Trying to get other group members to settle for a compromise.	
Finding some middle ground where we can partly agree.	

Satisfaction with Outcome and Process .82

I was disappointed with the way the project turned out. (R).
I was very satisfied with the outcome of this project.
We could have done better on this project. (R)
I was very satisfied with the process used to complete the project.
We could have used a more effective method to accomplish our task.
I would have preferred the project to have been done differently. (R)

Creativity .76

We tried to find different ways to solve problems.
We were a creative team.
We often thought about new ways of doing things.
Our solutions were both imaginative and practical.

Differences in Area/Scope of Knowledge .71

Team members had different areas of expertise.
Team members contributed different skill sets to the project.
Team members were trained in different areas of knowledge.

Commitment Differences

The group was equally bound to completing to completing the task. (R) .68
Each group member felt equally accountable for the completion of the task. (R)
There was one group member who was not as dedicated to the project as the rest.

Power Differences .71

There was one person who dictated the direction of the project due to his or her status.
One person dictated the direction of the project due to his or her expertise.
We often deferred to the opinions of those team members with more status.

Social Relationship .69

I considered most members of the team close social friends.
Prior to the project, I had close ties that were more than just working relationships with most members of the team.