



University of Maryland University College

UMUC Working Paper Series – Number 2009-012

**Goal Conflict and Communications in Multi-Organizational Projects: A
Two Cases Comparative Study**

By

Atilio Moran-Leal

UMUC, Graduate School of Management & Technology

amoran14@sbcglobal.net

December 2008

UMUC Working Paper Series – Number 2009-012

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how the level of goal conflict among the participant organizations in a multi-organizational project influences the level of communication among project team members. Two different multi-organizational projects cases were studied. Based on the data collected for the first case, a preliminary causal model was developed. The causal model was contrasted to the data collected for the second case. An additional assessment of the possible validity of the model in other contexts was performed through questionnaires completed by a panel of experts, and by comparison of the model structures to previous research findings in related areas. The contribution of this study is a proposed causal model describing the dynamics related to team communications induced in the work system by a high level of goal conflict in a multi-organizational project. The study findings suggest that these dynamics affect the level of trust, relationship conflict, communication and then performance, in a reinforcing feedback cycle. Implications for practitioners, limitations of the study and avenues for future research are discussed.

Keywords

Multi-organizational Projects, Goal Conflict, Trust, Relationship Conflict, Communications.