



CONA Case Study:

Identifying potential Communities of Practice (CoP) leaders for IT development

Client:

A medium-sized construction firm embarking on an IT development project.

Business Need:

The firm was particularly interested in identifying individuals within the firm who can act as communities of practice (CoP) leaders to support the implementation of a challenging new IT project.

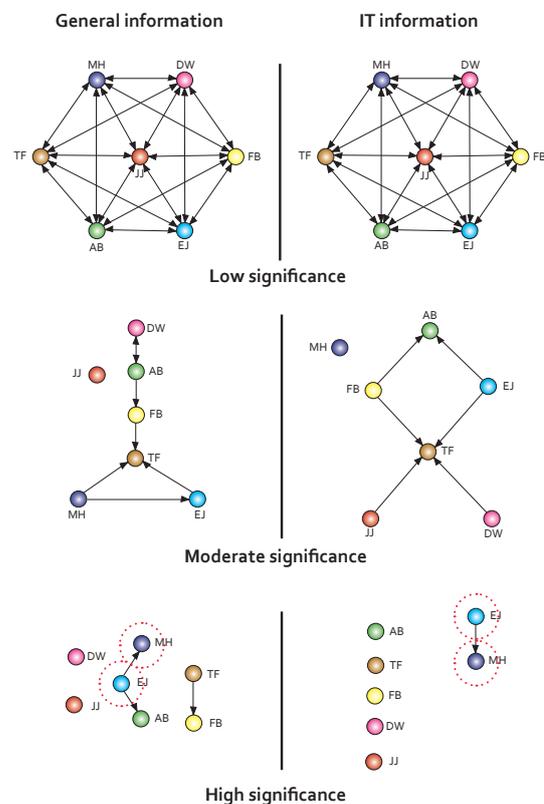
How We Helped:

The research focused on 7 project managers within the firm. Those project managers are often the first employees required to learn new technologies or teach others about IT related tools and software programs. Each project manager in the group was questioned on the frequency and importance of their information exchange with fellow project managers. The data collected was categorised into two groups, IT related information and general information. IT information was described as any exchange related to the operation of software or use of personal computers and related equipment. General information was broader in scope and basically related to all information exchange events other than IT.

ONA was used to map, visualise and evaluate the network relationships among the group of project

managers. Figure 1 identifies the results of this evaluation, classifying the network relationships as having low, medium, or high significance. Each node

Figure 1: Information Exchange Networks



represents an actor in the potential CoP with arrows indicating communication channels.

At the low significance level of information exchange, the level of communication appears to be high in both IT and general categories. High levels of connectivity exist here, and this is an optimum network configuration for effective communication. At the medium level of exchange, there is reduced connectivity with both types of communication and isolates emerge. To a degree, a protective or secretive information exchange exists at this level, and participants may be forming alliances in which they confide in only one or two members of the network when exchanging information. In the high significance category, network communication dissipates even further. Within the general exchange category, connectivity falls to two participants, and in regard to IT, almost all members are shown as isolates, virtually no communication exists at this level revealing signs of competitiveness, secrecy, or a general lack of knowledge to share. Figure 1 show that JJ receives more low significance information than others but is totally isolated at the medium level of significance. TF shows importance in collecting information at the medium level for both types of information flows. EJ and MH bridge both general and IT information exchanges at the highest level of importance, thus showing the most potential as community coordinators.

Business Benefits:

The most valuable benefit of performing ONA was its ability to identify community leaders, being EJ and MH.

* Findings of this case study were originally published in Roy, M. (2004), Communities of practice: engaging IT and project management in the construction industry, MSc thesis, Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, UCL, UK.

For more information please contact:

Dr Stephen Pryke
Director
Centre for Organisational Network Analysis (CONA@UCL)
University College London

+44 (0) 207 679 5904 (ext: 45904)
s.pryke@ucl.ac.uk
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cona>

Room 250, 2nd Floor
1 – 19 Torrington Place
London, WC1E 7HB

Dr Sulafa Badi
Research Manager
Centre for Organisational Network Analysis (CONA@UCL)
University College London

+44 (0) 207 679 5685 (ext: 45685)
s.badi@ucl.ac.uk
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/cona>

Room 249, 2nd Floor
1 – 19 Torrington Place
London, WC1E 7HB