

**“The use of noncoercive influence tactics in the working relationship between  
Marketing and Sales.” (IMP Ref #: 071)**

**[Competitive paper]**

(Submitted 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2007)

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## **“The use of noncoercive influence tactics in the working relationship between Marketing and Sales.” (IMP Ref #: 071)**

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### **Abstract**

Effective cross functional relationships (CFRs) between marketing and sales are important for suppliers seeking to service their business customers. However, qualitative studies from the 1980s and 1990s and anecdotal accounts suggest that the Marketing/Sales CFR is problematic and that it is characterised by mainly negative outcomes such as a lack of cohesion, distrust, and dissatisfaction. Recent research however suggests that these anecdotal reports may not accurately reflect the situation in today's firms. Given these different views on the state of this important CFR, the research reported here adds more empirical evidence to the debate and tests a structural model predicting the level of functional (as opposed to dysfunctional) conflict in the Marketing/Sales CFR. Our study links five noncoercive influence tactics – rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation, ingratiation, and collaboration – to functional conflict and we argue that noncoercive (as opposed to coercive) influence tactics are likely to promote functional conflict. In addition, we specify four exogenous variables (power of the sales unit, total interdependence, psychological distance, and the marketing managers' amount of sales experience) to predict a sales manager's use of these five influence tactics in their relationship with the focal marketing manager. Data was collected in Australia from 100 marketing managers, reporting on their CFR with their counterpart sales manager. PLS was used to estimate the measurement and structural models, and support was found for 15 of the 25 hypotheses.

### **1. Introduction**

The importance of interpersonal relationships in business-to-business marketing is well established, and twenty five years have passed since Håkansson's (1982) landmark book detailing the nature of interactions and relationships between buyers and sellers in business markets. A significant body of literature has now emerged, which establishes “relationship marketing” as a key strategic issue facing companies selling goods and services to other companies.

Concurrently, another stream of literature has emerged, one which looks at relationships between individuals in the same firm, rather than between people in separate (buying and selling) firms. Importantly, Granovetter (1985) has noted that the network of social relations within firms might be more dense and long-lasting than those existing between firms. It is the nature and determinants of these intrafirm, “cross functional relationships” (CFRs) which are the focus of this current research.

These CFRs are important to business-to-business marketers because a firm's ability to service and satisfy their external customers depends of the effectiveness of interactions and transactions between personnel from different functional units/departments. Hence, the overall effectiveness of a firm's business-to-business marketing is contingent upon

the extent to which these internal relationships (CFRs) are healthy and effective (cf. Dawes and Massey, 2006).

Effective CFRs between the marketing unit and the sales unit are particularly important for firms seeking to service their business customers. Recent research by Guenzi and Troilo (2007) highlights this importance by empirically demonstrating the positive links between the “effectiveness of Marketing/Sales relations,” and their two dependent variables “superior value creation,” and “market performance”. But despite the undoubted importance of Marketing/Sales CFRs, relatively little is known about them.

The early qualitative studies in the 1990s (e.g., Cespedes 1993, 1994) and anecdotal accounts (e.g., Carpenter, 1992) suggest that the Marketing/Sales CFR is problematic. More recently Dewsnap and Jobber’s (2000) summary of the sparse literature on this CFR noted that it is characterised by mainly negative outcomes such as a lack of cohesion, distrust, and dissatisfaction. Similar results are reported in recent empirical studies. Kotler, Rackham, and Krishnaswamy’s (2006) study of Marketing/Sales CFRs reports results consistent with the view that this CFR is fraught with difficulties, however, their sample size was small ( $n = 9$ ), leaving some doubt as to the external validity of their findings. Similarly, Guenzi and Troilo’s (2006) study identifying factors underlying the global construct “Marketing/Sales integration” adopted a qualitative research design and used a small sample ( $n = 12$ ), and again, questions of external validity arise.

In contrast, three recent large-scale empirical studies examining dysfunctional conflict and perceived relationship effectiveness in this CFR suggest that these anecdotal reports, and small sample qualitative studies, may not accurately reflect the situation in today’s firms (Dawes and Massey, 2005, 2006; Massey and Dawes, 2006).

Given these different views on the state of the Marketing/Sales CFR, the research reported here adds more empirical evidence to the debate. In short, we develop and test a structural model predicting the level of functional (as opposed to dysfunctional) conflict in the Marketing/Sales CFR. Functional conflict has rarely been examined in empirical studies, and is a form of conflict which exists when managerial decision-makers are able to question others’ assumptions and beliefs, without attracting rancour. We believe that it is important to study functional conflict because this type of conflict is thought to have beneficial effects in peer manager relationships (Amason, 1996).

Here, we examine the noncoercive influence tactics employed by sales managers in their dealings with marketing managers. We refer to these as “sales managers influence tactics” or more simply SMITs. And, as is customary in research on influence in organizational settings, we use peer reports (from marketing managers) to indicate the degree and type of influence tactics that are used by sales managers.

At the broadest level, influence tactics can be categorized into two groups: (a) coercive/hard/non-socially acceptable tactics (e.g., threats; legalistic pleas), and (b) noncoercive/soft/socially acceptable tactics (e.g., rational persuasion; consultation). Here, we focus on five noncoercive tactics and link them to functional conflict. Our basic premise is that noncoercive, as opposed to coercive influence tactics, are likely to promote functional conflict.

In addition, we specify four antecedent variables – total interdependence, power of the sales unit, and the two-related personal characteristics of psychological distance and the marketing manager’s relative level of sales experience – to predict how frequently

sales managers use the five non-coercive influence tactics. As Higgins et al. (2003) note, despite the increased attention on the topic of influence tactics over the last 20 years, research has failed to answer a fundamental question: which influence tactics are most effective in obtaining positive work outcomes? In this current research we go some way to answering this important question.

### **Influence tactics**

Influence tactics have been examined at the interorganizational level in the marketing channels literature and at the intraorganizational, person-to-person level in research on the buying centre, personal selling, and organizational behaviour. The context of our research is best placed in the last category, where the focus is on intraorganizational, person-to-person relationships in which the unit of analysis is the individual relationship between a marketing manager and a sales manager.

Past research shows that an individual manager's effectiveness is determined in part by his/her level of informal influence within the organization. A key mechanism which managers employ to increase their influence is the use of various *influence tactics*, in which an "agent" (e.g., a peer manager) seeks to influence the behaviours of "target" managers within the firm. As Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) show, the amount of influence exercised by members of an organizational decision-making unit is affected by the type of influence tactics they use. Importantly, the use of influence tactics to seek the compliance of peer managers, can differ widely. For example, they can involve promises of rewards for compliance, threats of punishment for non-compliance, appeals to the target's feelings, morality, or altruism, or debts owed to the person making the request (Rolloff, 1976).

### **Consequences of using influence tactics at the interpersonal level**

In the management literature, most research has focused on identifying the various ITs (e.g., Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson, 1980), their frequency of use (e.g., Bennebroek Gravenhorst and Boonstra, 1998), selection and sequencing (Yukl, Falbe, and Youn, 1993), directional differences (e.g., Yukl and Tracey, 1992), and the characteristics of effective users of ITs (e.g., Allen et al., 1979). Less research however has focused on the consequences of using ITs. Two examples of this latter research focus are Yukl and Tracey (1992) who linked the use of ITs to the targets' task commitment and the agent's managerial effectiveness, while Brennan, Miller, and Seltzer (1993) examined the impact of using ITs on cooperation and performance.

Overall, in the area of marketing, there has been little empirical research on the consequences of the use of ITs at the intraorganizational, person-to-person level of analysis. Not surprisingly however, the most common consequence studied has been the effect of the use of ITs on the agents' manifest influence. For example, Venkatesh, Kohli, and Zaltman (1995) examined the effects of the use of ITs on manifest influence in buying centres while McFarland et al. (2006) investigated the impact of salespersons' use of ITs on manifest influence in buyer-seller dyads. More pertinently, Dawes and Massey's (2006), study of the marketing/sales CFR, examined the effects of two coercive influence tactics – legalistic pleas and threats – on manifest influence, interpersonal trust, and perceived relationship effectiveness.

In short, little research in marketing has been directed at understanding the consequences of using ITs in intraorganizational settings and so a major motivation for our research is to add knowledge in this area. Of particular interest in the current study is the extent to which five SMITs increase functional conflict between marketing managers and sales managers. Our focus on a positive outcome is consistent with Douglas and Gardner's (2004) comment that there is evidence of both negative and positive effects from managers' use of influence tactics.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

In developing our model, we draw on two theoretical perspectives – the “interaction approach” (e.g., Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and “resource-dependence theory” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). We use these two theoretical frameworks for two main reasons. First, the interaction approach is used in many important studies of marketing's CFRs because it focuses on relational exchange (Ruekert and Walker, 1987). Second, these two approaches focus on similar aspects of CFRs, and as such, are complementary frameworks of analysis. From the interaction approach, we draw the following constructs: functional conflict, psychological distance, and the marketing manager's amount of sales experience. From resource-dependence theory we draw total interdependence, the power of the sales unit, and five noncoercive influence tactics. Though we specify these as our main theoretical bases and sources of our constructs, it should be noted that some constructs (e.g., interdependence and influence tactics) are common to both theoretical frameworks.

The logic underlying the structure of our hypothesized model is as follows. First, our ultimate endogenous variable is the level of functional conflict in the Marketing/Sales CFR. We use five different influence tactics to predict the level of functional conflict in this CFR, and propose that the use of noncoercive, socially acceptable influence tactics should help to stimulate functional conflict in this CFR. In addition our interest in this research is to identify antecedents to the choice and frequency of use of the five SMITs. We therefore specify two individual-level variables (psychological distance and the marketing managers' level of sales experience) as antecedents to the five influence tactics. We also model the effects of two contextual variables (power of the sales unit, and the total interdependence between the marketing manager and the sales manager), on these same five influence tactics.

Importantly, from a conceptual standpoint we argue that psychological distance, and the marketing manager's amount of sales experience represent two dimensions of Dougherty's (1992) cultural “thought worlds.” As noted by Beverland, Steel, and Dapiran (2006), firms are composed of functional units with different cultures, and this can lead to significant tension between these work units. Where departmental staff and their managers have quite different frames of reference, their own specific cognitive models can create “blind spots” in which members of one department cannot understand differing points of view held by members of other departments (e.g., Hitt et al., 1999).

Beverland, Steel, and Dapiran (2006) further note that there is little academic research into the cultural values of Sales as a function, and how this may affect their interactions with Marketing. There does however seem to be agreement on two key issues, first, that

Marketing and Sales do indeed have different cultures, and second, that this is likely to lead to tension between individuals in those separate work units.

Differences in culture can originate from functional specialization itself, in which each departmental group has its own shared values and understanding. Cultural differences can also emerge from the individual backgrounds of staff members. Hence our decision in this article to view both psychological distance and the level of the marketing manager's sales experience as manifestations of "thought worlds", and we therefore add to the limited empirical work in the literature which examines Marketing/Sales thought worlds.

[Insert Figure 1]

### **Endogenous variable: functional conflict**

Our ultimate endogenous variable is "functional conflict" a form of interpersonal conflict which is believed to have beneficial outcomes in working relationships. Functional conflict is typified by consultative interactions between managers, and useful give and take. If functional conflict is present in a CFR, people feel able to express their true opinions, and to challenge others' ideas, beliefs, and assumptions (e.g., Baron, 1991; Tjosvold, 1985). Importantly, functional conflict may be useful in reducing "groupthink" during group decision-making, i.e., the tendency of group members to allow feelings of solidarity and loyalty to a decision-making group override the imperative to logically and realistically evaluate all options (Filley, 1970). In this research we define functional conflict as a constructive challenging of ideas, beliefs, and assumptions, and respect for others' viewpoints even when parties disagree (Menon et al., 1996).

### **Mediating variables: SMITs**

The SMITs we examine are: rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation, ingratiation, and collaboration (Yukl, Falbe, and Youn, 1993; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). We chose these particular influence tactics for three reasons. First, these particular tactics are the most commonly used in "lateral/horizontal" relationships (Yukl and Falbe, 1990). Such relationships occur between managers at approximately the same level in the organisation's hierarchy, as is the case with marketing managers and sales managers.

In general, managers at the same level in a firm's hierarchy are unlikely to possess significantly greater power than a counterpart in another department, and will therefore be limited in their opportunities to use "harder" more coercive tactics on peer managers. Where such hard/coercive tactics are used, there is an inherent risk of damaging the working relationship, and provoking hostility from the peer manager (cf. Dawes and Massey, 2006). Given that the tactics we examine in this current study are all socially acceptable, and non-coercive, we expect that they will be more likely to generate positive outcomes in the CFR (e.g., increased functional conflict), rather than the negative task and psychosocial outcomes which are associated with the use of harder, coercive tactics.

Second, previous research indicates that these five non-coercive influence tactics are likely to be moderate to high in their effectiveness in peer manager relationships (Yukl, 2002). If this is the case, then our modeling should reveal which of these commonly used tactics are most effective in stimulating functional conflict in the Marketing/Sales CFR. Third, in contrast to Dawes and Massey (2006) who examined hard, coercive influence

tactics in the Marketing/Sales CFR, our interest here lies in the effects of non-coercive rather than coercive influence tactics. This is important, given their prevalence of use and their likely effectiveness within CFRs.

The tactics examined here are defined as follows: *rational persuasion* uses explanations, logical arguments, and factual evidence to demonstrate that a request is feasible and relevant to achieving important task objectives. *Inspirational appeals* rely on emotional or value-based appeals to stimulate the target's emotions and appeal to their needs (e.g., to feel useful), values (e.g., loyalty), hopes (e.g., self-fulfillment), and ideals (e.g., excellence). *Consultation* involves inviting the target to participate in planning how to carry out a request, or implement a change. Often this involves presenting a proposed policy or plan to someone involved in implementing it, seeking their feedback, and modifying the proposal on the basis of that feedback. *Ingratiation* involves the agent giving compliments, doing unsolicited favours, being deferential, respectful and friendly in order to make the target feel better about the agent. *Collaboration* is where the agent offers to provide the necessary resources or assistance for the target to carry out the request, and involves joint effort to accomplish tasks or achieve objectives.

### **Antecedents to SMITS**

#### *Sales unit power*

In this research we examine the power of the sales unit (e.g., Hickson et al., 1971) rather than French and Raven's (1959) five bases of interpersonal power. We define the power of the sales unit in terms of its relative importance to the organization. As Kohli (1989) argued, the resource dependency view of organizations suggests that different units have varying degrees of power because of their differential ability to obtain resources critical to the organization. Consistent with Kohli (1989), we view unit power as an individual resource which can be used by sales managers in CFRs. Recent research by Homburg, Workman, and Krohmer (1999) in the US and Germany showed that marketing had high relative influence across a range of important issues. This provides evidence supporting the argument that unit power is available as a resource for sales managers in many types of firms. Hence the greater the sales unit's control over critical resources (i.e., the greater their power within the organization), the more able they are to influence the actions of others within that organization, such as the marketing unit.

#### *Total interdependence*

A firm can divide up its key activities in various ways such as, along product, market, or functional lines. However, regardless of the organizational structure adopted by a firm, the resulting units are interdependent to a greater or lesser extent (McCann and Galbraith, 1981). So when firms are comprised of functionally specialized units, each department relies on other departments for inputs and support to carry out its tasks, and in turn, provide inputs and support for downstream activities. However, as the interdependence between departments increases, greater coordination efforts are required.

In this study, we examine total interdependence, which is the sum of both the marketing manager's and the sales manager's dependence on each other. According to Ruekert and Walker (1987), interdependence is the key internal variable affecting marketing's interaction with other functional areas. This view is consistent with a resource-based view of the firm because marketing managers do not have all the

monetary, information, or human resources necessary to do their jobs, they must seek out these resources from people in other functional areas. Moreover, such exchanges of resources are likely to occur most frequently between departments operating in similar domains, i.e., those with shared objectives, closely related tasks, and skills. Because marketing and sales operate within a similar domain, we expect interdependence to have an important effect on their CFRs in general and on the use of noncoercive influence tactics in particular.

### *Psychological distance*

It is a well accepted facet of organisations that members of separate departments are often fundamentally different from each other. Early work by Douglas (1987) suggested that departments can evolve into cultural “thought worlds” with different funds of knowledge, and systems of meaning. Dougherty (1992) extended this work and examined the effects of thought worlds during new product development. Thought worlds were found to inhibit new product development, partly because of differences in peoples’ “interpretive schemes” e.g., shared assumptions about the tasks at hand, and the issues of importance to one’s work group, and how individuals make sense of those issues. As Griffin and Hauser (1996) argue, differences in thought worlds can result in misunderstandings due to language dissimilarities, as well as conflicts in terms of goals, preferred solutions, and trade-offs.

Consistent with the literature on thought worlds, differences are believed to exist between marketing and sales. A number of studies for example, have highlighted differences in the perspectives and time frames of marketing and sales personnel in setting goals, allocating resources, and evaluating performance (e.g., Rouziès et al., 2005). Moreover, a recent exploratory study by Beverland, Steel, and Dapiran (2006) adds to this debate on thought worlds as they identified four “cultural frames” that drive sales and marketing apart. The authors gave these cultural frames the following labels: valid scope and focus of activity, time focus, valid sources of knowledge, and valid relationship to the environment.

Though the construct psychological distance is conceptually distinct, it does to some degree overlap with Douglas’s (1987) thought worlds. Drawing on Gupta, Raj, and Wilemon’s (1986) work on “socio-cultural differences,” and consistent with Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski (1997), we define psychological distance in terms of the differences in a manager’s decision-making style (e.g., time taken to make a decision, tolerance for risk, and a belief that there is always a “right” answer), and his/her orientation (i.e., whether he/she focuses more on technology or customers).

Psychological distance is included in our model because work by Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski (1997) has shown that it is an important construct in explaining outcomes in terms of the between marketing and engineering CFR. And more recently, Dawes and Massey (2005) found that this construct affected the level of dysfunctional conflict between marketing and sales. Therefore, one of the objectives of this current research is to examine the effects of psychological distance on sales managers’ use of influence tactics.

### *Marketing manager's amount of sales experience*

A key argument we advance regarding the marketing manager's level of sales experience, relates to the role of the perceived similarity of peer managers in forging effective interpersonal relationships (Byrne, 1971). The logic underlying our arguments is that the more similar two people are, the more likely they will be able to work together effectively.

However, managers from different department often widely differ in their training and work experiences, and these differences may pose problems for forging effective CFRs (Shaw and Shaw, 1998; Weinrauch and Anderson, 1982). Evidence of the importance of career paths (and training) was provided by Parry and Song (1993), who found that a manager's "business background" was an important determinant of the level of integration between marketing and R&D managers during new product development projects. More specifically in the context of marketing/sales relationships, Cespedes (1993) noted that despite their differences in training and work experience, marketing and sales personnel are still expected to work effectively together on joint projects. Furthermore, these differences can lead to a poor understanding of how the other manager operates, and to resentment on both sides of the dyad (Cespedes, 1993).

On this basis, we would therefore expect that a marketing manager with sales experience is likely to be perceived by a sales manager as being similar to him/her self. This in turn may improve the working relationship between these two managers, and lead to the emergence of functional conflict in the marketing/sales dyad. We therefore include the marketing manager's level of sales experience in our hypothesised model.

## **3. Hypotheses**

### *Effect of sales unit power on the use of SMITs*

In the generic literature on unit power, Perrow (1970) suggests that an individual's influence is positively related to the power of his/her unit. Also, as noted previously, the power of the sales unit can be viewed as a resource which a sales manager can use to increase his/her influence during a particular cross-functional project. As pointed out by Douglas and Gardner (2004, p. 48): "A manager's choice of influence tactics is the product of his or her power."

In their landmark article on intra-organisational influence tactics, Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) found that the type of influence tactics used varied with the power of the target of the influence attempt. Different tactics were used depending on whether the target was a subordinate or a superior. "Self presentation," the provision of "supporting data," and the use of "coalitions" were used most often to influence superiors, whilst "clandestine tactics," "administrative sanctions," "training," "demanding," and "explaining" were used more frequently when the target was a subordinate. In short, tactics involving administrative sanctions and personal negative actions are more likely to be used on subordinates, i.e., those with relatively low power.

While the level of analysis we employ in this current research is different (i.e., we examine Sales unit power rather than an individual's power), we believe that Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson's (1980) findings are applicable to CFRs. Specifically, the greater the power of the Sales unit, the more likely it is that sales managers will use

harder and more coercive tactics. And conversely, the less likely it is that they will use softer, non-coercive tactics such as those examined here.

Few studies however, have investigated the link between unit power and an individual's use of influence tactics within the organization. One of the few studies to examine this issue is Dawes and Massey (2006) which found that greater marketing unit power was associated with an increased use of "legalistic pleas" by marketing managers – a coercive influence tactic. In contrast, in their research into power in marketing channels, Hu and Shen (2004) found that channel members with relatively more power tended to use more noncoercive influence strategies.

Despite the sparse empirical evidence available, we believe that there is sufficient reason to expect that the greater the power of the Sales unit, the lower will be the sales managers' propensity to use the five soft, non-coercive influence tactics examined here. By virtue of their unit's power, and the influence that accrues to them as a result, sales managers are less likely to use softer, non-coercive tactics. Accordingly, we hypothesise:

**H1:** The greater the power of the Sales unit, the less frequently the sales manager will use the following noncoercive influence tactics – (a) rational persuasion, (b) inspirational appeals, (c) consultation, (d) ingratiation, and (e) collaboration.

*Effect of total interdependence on the use of SMITs*

The level of interdependence between functional units is believed to affect the choice of influence tactics used by managers of those units. In their seminal study of Marketing's CFRs, Ruekert and Walker (1987) suggest that greater one unit's dependence on resources provided by others, the greater the influence one party can wield over the other. This suggests that greater total interdependence will be positively associated with a greater use of influence tactics. Ruekert and Walker's (1987) findings broadly support this proposition, as they found positive correlations between resource dependence, and the influence of one unit over another.

More recently, Goebel, Marshall, and Locander (2006) found that resource dependence is positively associated with all influence tactics examined in their regression models, though only 3 of the 5 standardised betas were statistically significant. They found that the greater the resource dependence between marketers and a non-marketing co-worker, the greater their likelihood of using "reasoning" a constructs which is equivalent to the construct "rational persuasion" included in our hypothesized model. Similarly, resource dependence was positively associated with both "ingratiation" (which we also examine in our hypothesised model) and "bargaining." Similarly, Liden and Mitchell (1998, p. 576) argue that ingratiation behaviours within firms may occur as a result of task interdependence.

Drawing on the literature summarized above, we posit that greater interdependence is likely to be associated with greater use of managerial influence tactics. We argue this because task interdependence implies a need for managers to interact, coordinate activities, and negotiate better personal and organisational outcomes. Where there is little or no interdependence between managers or functional units, there will be little or no need for influence tactics to be employed in that CFR. In addition, the type of influence tactics used by the sales managers in our sample are likely to be soft, and non-coercive. We argue this because Dawes and Massey's (2006) study of the effects of hard, coercive

tactics found that they can lead to negative task and psychosocial outcomes. We would therefore expect sales managers to restrict themselves to the use of more socially acceptable influence tactics, such as the five investigated in this current study. As Gundlach and Cadotte (1994) note, increasing “joint interdependence” (a construct which seems identical to our construct “total interdependence”) leads to greater use of noncoercive strategies. Last, Gravenhorst and Boonstra (1998) found that four of the five influence tactics we examine in this current research – rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation, and ingratiation – are the most commonly used influence tactics in lateral influence attempts. Accordingly, we hypothesise:

**H2:** The greater the total interdependence between the marketing unit and the sales unit, the more frequently the sales manager will use the following noncoercive influence tactics: (a) rational persuasion, (b) inspirational appeals, (c) consultation, (d) ingratiation, and (e) collaboration.

*Effect of psychological distance on the use of SMITs*

The construct “psychological distance” is relatively new to the marketing literature, and has been examined in only a handful of empirical studies. Most notably, Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski (1997) examined its effects on communication between Marketing and R&D during NPD projects, while Dawes and Massey (2005) investigated its impact on dysfunctional conflict in Marketing’s CFR with Sales.

Theory does suggest however that psychological distance is likely to be negatively associated with cross-functional communication behaviours, such as the use of influence tactics examined here. It is widely accepted that different departments can represent distinct subcultures within a firm (Dougherty, 1992), and that Sales is one of the functions most entrenched in its ways (Rackham and DeVincentis, 1998). Further, these subcultures can provide contextual preconditions in which cultural tension and poor cross-functional communication may result. As noted previously, where managers have different frames of reference, their specific cognitive models can create “blind spots” in which they find it difficult to understand the differing views of other departments (Hitt et al., 1999).

It seems reasonable to assume that persons operating within one culture or “functional silo” represented by their own individual functional unit, are likely to be psychologically distant from those in another functional unit. Moreover, this psychological distance may impact on the influence tactics chosen by agent managers seeking to influence a target manager in another unit. Fisher, Maltz, and Jaworski (1997) found some indirect evidence of this, as psychological distance was negatively associated with two forms of communication: communication frequency, and bidirectionality. This suggests that the greater the psychological distance between managers, the lower the propensity of those managers to communicate with each other. In addition, Dawes and Massey (2005) found that as the psychological distance between sales managers and marketing managers increased, dysfunctional conflict also increased.

If we extend this empirical evidence to the choice/use of noncoercive influence tactics, it seems likely that psychologically distant managers will be disinclined to use such tactics on each other. We argue this because as Kelman (1961) noted, one’s membership of, and identification with a particular group (e.g., the Sales or Marketing

units), is an important determinant of one's self definition. Where the identification with a group is high, this has the potential for members of that group to confer negative attributes to people who are not perceived to be similar to them (Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquail, 1994). As a result, one would expect managers who are psychologically distant from each other will perhaps prefer to interact very little with the other manager, or if they do interact in order to secure compliance from that manager, they will use harder, more coercive tactics. Despite the paucity of theory however, and limited empirical evidence on this issue, we believe that psychological distance will be negatively associated with the use of noncoercive influence tactics. Accordingly we hypothesise:

**H3:** The greater the psychological distance between the sales manager and the marketing manager, the less frequently the sales manager will use the following noncoercive influence tactics – (a) rational persuasion, (b) inspirational appeals, (c) consultation, (d) ingratiation, and (e) collaboration.

*Effect of the marketing manager's amount of sales experience on the use of SMITs*

Consistent with our arguments above regarding the effect of psychological distance on the sales manager's choice of influence tactics, we also regard the extent of a marketing manager's sales experience as a manifestation or dimension of Dougherty's (1992) thought worlds. We argue this because a marketing manager with significant sales' experience is likely to view the world in a similar way to the sales manager. Furthermore, because the sales manager will know whether the marketing manager has lots of sales experience or has just got the job because they hold a marketing degree, this knowledge will affect the sales manager's use of influence tactics.

The effects of a marketing manager's level of sales experience on the use of influence tactics has not previously been explored in the literature, though we believe that this variable will be positively associated with the use of the five SMITs included in our research. Our arguments supporting this stem from previous research which has examined differences in managers' professional training. Shaw and Shaw (1998) for example found that differences between marketing managers' and engineering managers' vocational training could result in poor communication and an inadequate understanding of the other's functional unit. This in turn, could escalate into overt dysfunctional conflict. Importantly, one key means by which engineering managers believed that their working relationship with marketing managers could be improved was via training in the other manager's functional area.

While the evidence we cite is not direct, it does imply that marketing managers with high levels of vocational sales experience are likely to better understand the concepts, issues, and practices of their counterpart manager in sales. Where this is the case, we would expect that communication between the two managers would be more effective, and for dysfunctional conflict to be low. Consistent with this, we would also expect that sales managers are more likely to employ noncoercive tactics in preference to coercive influence tactics.

We argue this because a marketing manager with greater knowledge of the issues and priorities of sales, may be more amenable to influence tactics used by a sales manager to seek compliance with their request. Therefore, one might expect sales managers would be more likely to use rational persuasion as an influence tactic of choice, or consultation, or

collaboration when seeking the compliance of the sales manager. We therefore hypothesise:

**H4:** The greater the marketing manager's sales experience, the more frequently the sales manager will use the following noncoercive influence tactics – (a) rational persuasion, (b) inspirational appeals, (c) consultation, (d) ingratiation, and (e) collaboration.

*Effect of the use of SMITs on functional conflict*

There is little theory or direct evidence to guide our hypotheses regarding the effects of the five SMITs on functional conflict, as the links between these variables are previously untested. However, we believe there are good reasons to expect all five of the SMITs to positively affect functional conflict. First, the influence tactics we investigate are “soft” i.e., noncoercive, and socially acceptable, and hence likely to be associated with positive psychosocial outcomes such as increased functional conflict. In contrast, one might expect “hard” coercive, socially unacceptable influence tactics to lead to negative psychosocial outcomes such as increased dysfunctional conflict.

Second, CFRs involve ongoing patterns of interaction over time, and cognitive balance theory (e.g., Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958) suggests that the atmosphere of a relationship will tend to change over time. Eventually the parties will tend to hold views about each other, and behave in ways that are consistent with these self-reinforcing patterns of interaction. We would therefore expect that where sales managers have a track record of using soft, noncoercive influence tactics, the CFR would tend to evolve to a fairly stable state which is more positive in affect than would be the case if hard, coercive tactics were the norm. We would therefore expect the ongoing use of these five noncoercive influence tactics in a CFR to be associated with increased functional conflict.

Last, there is empirical evidence suggesting that there is a positive link between the five SMITs and functional conflict. Higgins et al.'s (2003) meta-analysis of the effects of five influence tactics (rationality, ingratiation, self-promotion, assertiveness, exchange, upward appeal) found that both rationality and ingratiation were positively associated with improved work outcomes. These two noncoercive tactics were found to improve others' assessments of one's performance, and led to increased extrinsic success, e.g., increased salaries, and job promotions.

Given that our dependent variable is of a similar type to those included in Higgins et al.'s (2003) meta-analysis, i.e., it is a positive work outcome, one might reasonably expect that all 5 of the noncoercive SMITs we investigate here – rather than just rational persuasion and ingratiation – might lead to increased functional conflict.

Further support is provided in the channels literature. Hu and Sheu (2004) for example, found that the more frequent use of noncoercive influence tactics facilitates the formation of a harmonious intra-channel climate. While the context of their research is different (i.e., inter- rather than intra-firm relationships), we believe their findings can be applied to the Marketing/Sales CFR context. This is because at this relatively early stage of theoretical development in CFR research, there seem to be no compelling reasons to expect fundamental differences in the causes and effects of these influence tactics in inter- or intra-firm relationships.

Given that the essence of leadership is to influence people to carry out requests, support proposals, and influence decisions (e.g., Yukl, 2002), the use of these five influence tactics should help develop functional conflict within a CFR, because functional conflict involves consultative interactions, give and take, and challenging others' beliefs and assumptions. Hence, these five influence tactics are likely to be positively related to functional conflict. Accordingly, our final hypotheses are as follows:

**H5:** When sales managers more frequently use the following noncoercive influence tactics – (a) rational persuasion, (b) inspirational appeals, (c) consultation, (d) ingratiation, and (e) collaboration – functional conflict is likely to increase.

#### **4. Method**

In order to provide a clear context for their answers, our responding marketing managers were asked to think of a single project in which they, the focal sales manager, and managers from other functional areas had jointly undertaken in the last 18 months. Most projects (55.7%) related to new product development, while the remaining 44.3% included promotion and public relations (19.6%), business development activities (10.3%), and, review of strategy and structure (5.1%). On average, 4 functional units and an average of 14 people were involved in the projects, which had a mean budget of AUS\$1.031 million.

#### **Data collection**

Data was collected from marketing managers in Australian firms using a pretested, self-administered, mailed questionnaire. The sampling frame was generated from a proprietary mailing list of firms and the criteria for inclusion in this frame were: (1) the firm should have an identified (named) marketing manager/senior marketing executive; and (2) there must also be a named sales manager/senior sales executive. Executives who had dual responsibilities were excluded from the sample. The final sampling frame consisted of 501 firms.

After a second-wave mailout, 113 questionnaires were returned but 13 were deemed unusable for this particular research topic. Also, because it was anticipated that the mailing lists may not have been as accurate as the providers claimed, a stamped, self-addressed card was attached to each follow-up questionnaire to facilitate a reply. The card required the respondent to choose one of five categories to represent their reason for not completing the questionnaire. The most commonly nominated reason for non-completion (43.4% of answers) was that "it is company policy not to fill out this type of questionnaire." In total, cards were returned from 53 firms which means that our net response rate was 25.2%.

The final sample of firms was diverse, which suggests that our findings have high external validity. Goods-producers accounted for 45% of the firms; service-providers 12%, and 44% sold both goods and services. In addition, 42% were in business markets, 27% in consumer markets while 31% sold to both types of market.

### **Evaluating the quality of the data collected**

Tests of nonresponse bias indicated no significant differences between early and late respondents in terms of five variables. Also, the marketing managers had worked with the sales manager for an average of 3.5 years, suggesting that they were knowledgeable about the issues covered in this research, and therefore competent to provide the data required.

### **Measurement**

We employed one formative multi-item measure (total interdependence) and seven reflective multi-item measures—functional conflict, power of the sales unit, psychological distance, and the five SMITs. In addition, we used one single-item measures: the marketing manager's level of vocational experience in a sales role.

Principal components analysis revealed that all the reflective multi-item constructs were unidimensional. As our sample was relatively small ( $n = 100$ ) we did not conduct confirmatory factor analysis because of the likelihood of nonconvergence and improper solutions (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). Instead we used partial least squares (PLS) to estimate our measurement and structural models.

Analysis of the PLS “outer” (measurement) models revealed that most of the items used to capture the reflective constructs were adequate indicators of those latent variables. There were however a number of exceptions, and we deleted 3 of our 6 items measuring psychological distance, 1 of our 3 inspirational appeals items, and 3 of our 6 items measuring functional conflict, in order to increased construct validity.

Reliability analysis revealed that the composite reliability for all of the scales are .78 or more. For example, the composite reliability of functional conflict = .88, while the reliabilities of the five SMITs are all above .88. The standardized factor loadings, the composite reliabilities, and amount of average variance extracted for the final set of reflective measures are depicted in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1]

Convergent validity was established, as the t-values for each item from the PLS outer models were all statistically significant (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Also, the average variance extracted (AVE) for each reflective measure were all above the recommended .50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Of particular importance was establishing discriminant validity amongst the five influence tactics, and also between all possible pairs of constructs in our model. In total, twenty eight pairs of reflective constructs were tested using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion and discriminant validity was established between all constructs in our hypothesized model. As a further test of discriminant validity, we examined the pattern of loadings and cross-loadings of the items for all the latent variables. The criterion to establish discriminant validity is that no item should load more heavily on another construct than it does on the construct it is intended to measure (Chin, 1998). All items passed this test, so discriminant validity was established between the reflective constructs in our model.

## 5. Results

### Descriptive findings

As shown in Table 2, on average, our responding marketing managers enjoy reasonably high levels of functional conflict in their relationships with their counterpart sales managers. Specifically, functional conflict is high, mean = 5.45 out of 7, where low numbers indicate low dysfunctional conflict. The standard deviation however, reveals considerable variation in the level of functional conflict (sd = 1.23). In addition, we find that the marketing and sales units are reasonably dependent upon each other (mean = 4.35, sd = 1.15), and the sales unit is fairly powerful within the organisation (mean = 4.40, sd = 1.31). In terms of individual characteristics, the marketing managers in our study were moderately psychologically different from their counterpart sales managers (mean = 3.92, sd = 1.23), and had a fairly high level of vocational experience in sales (mean = 4.56, sd = 2.16).

Last, the frequency of use of the five influence tactics varied, with the most frequently employed tactic being rational persuasion (mean = 3.78, sd = 1.56), followed by consultation (mean = 3.54, sd = 1.59), collaboration (mean = 3.40, sd = 1.52), ingratiation (mean = 2.85, sd = 1.62), and inspirational appeals (mean = 3.84, sd = 1.74). This finding concerning the frequent use of rational persuasion is consistent with Keys et al. (1987), who found that the most frequently reported method of lateral influence is through rational persuasion.

Overall, our results show that functional conflict between marketing managers and sales managers during the focal projects is fairly high, which suggests that the conventional wisdom of the 1980s/90s, as indicated in Dewsnap and Jobber's (2000) literature review, may no longer accurately reflect the current situation.

[Insert Table 2]

### Model testing

PLS was used to estimate our structural model for various reasons. Specifically, our final sample is relatively small; we use both formative and reflective measures; we make no assumptions about multivariate normality; and our primary concern is prediction of our endogenous variables (Chin, 1998; Diamantopolous and Winklhofer, 2001; Fornell and Bookstein, 1982).

In order to establish the stability and significance of our parameter estimates, we computed the t-values using 500 bootstrap samples. The  $R^2$  for functional conflict was (.457), suggesting that our model explains 45.7% of the variance in this ultimate dependent. Moreover, 15 of the 25 hypotheses were supported.

Sales unit power had mixed effects on the five SMITs. Though H1a, H1c, and H1d were supported, one unexpected result was the positive coefficient linking sales unit power to the use of inspirational appeals (H1d), suggesting that greater sales unit power is associated with greater use of this particular influence tactic. Moreover, all five hypotheses concerning total interdependence and the five SMITs – H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, and H2e – were supported.

The results for the effects of psychological distance on the use of the five SMITs were mixed. While all of the coefficients were negative, as expected, only H3a, H3c, and

H3e were supported. No relationship was found between psychological distance and the use of inspirational appeals, nor ingratiation, though the coefficient for the latter path approached statistical significance.

Turning now to the effects of the marketing manager's level of sales experience on the use of the five SMITs, only two of these hypotheses – H4d and H4e – were supported. Finally, we obtained strong support for two of the last five hypotheses – H5a and H5e – linking the five SMITs to functional conflict. These two supported hypotheses related to rational persuasion and collaboration to. None of the other three influence tactics, inspirational appeals, consultation, and ingratiation, impacted on functional conflict.

## **6. Discussion**

Our conceptual model of SMITs integrates constructs associated with the interaction, and resource-dependence approaches to examine CFRs between marketing managers and sales managers. As such, we develop and test an integrated model of power, interdependence, and influence to predict the level of functional conflict in the Marketing/Sales CFR.

As predicted, the greater the power of the sales unit, the less likely the sales manager is to use three of the five influence tactics in our model – rational persuasion, consultation, and ingratiation (the coefficient linking sales unit power to collaboration was also, negative, but only approached statistical significance). Our results suggest that sales managers in powerful units feel that it is unnecessary for them to try and convince target marketing managers via arguments, discussion, or by appealing to the marketing manager's values or emotions. The results therefore suggest a tendency for powerful sales managers to operate by executive fiat when working with less powerful marketing managers.

An interesting result which is consistent with this is the positive relationship found between sales unit power and the use of inspirational appeals. This again seems to suggest that the more powerful the departmental unit, the less inclined their manager will be to seek to convince the other manager via dialogue and discussion.

Turning now to the results regarding total interdependence, all five of our hypotheses were supported, as all were positive, and statistically significant. Our results therefore suggest that where interdependence is high, managers recognize this and act accordingly, through their increased use of noncoercive influence tactics. This is not unexpected, as interdependence is an important precondition for relationship development, and greater interdependence implies a greater need to coordinate efforts across functions, to jointly achieve goals of importance to both functions. The specific finding regarding total interdependence and ingratiation is consistent with Liden and Mitchell's (1988) proposition that ingratiation may occur as a result of external stable causes such as organizational climate or task interdependence.

McCann and Galbraith (1981) have argued that regardless of the organisational structure used by any given firm, interdependence between functional units is a fundamental principle unifying most firms. Because of the high level of interdependence between marketing and other departments, the achievement of marketing's goals, and implementation of marketing strategy within an organisation make cross-functional interaction and coordination mandatory (e.g., Hutt 1995). In order to achieve its own

functional level goals, sales must rely on input and assistance from many other functional units such as marketing, and recognising this, sales managers deem it necessary to employ the noncoercive influence tactics examined here.

Our results also reveal that the greater the psychological distance between the marketing manager and the sales manager, the greater the likelihood of the sales manager using three of the five influence tactics – rational persuasion, consultation, and collaboration. The coefficients for inspirational appeal and ingratiation were both negative as hypothesized, but of these two, only ingratiation approached statistical significance. The results therefore suggest that psychological distance can work against cross-functional integration, as it is associated with a reduced propensity to seek compliance from a peer manager using noncoercive influence tactics. Our results do not however, provide any insight into what other types of influence tactics might be employed (e.g., hard, coercive tactics), or whether communication of any type is reduced when psychological distance is high.

One explanation for our results relates to social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel, 1982), which suggests that managers derive much of their sense of social identity and self image from membership of their functional group. Such managers are therefore more likely to share common perspectives and characteristics with members of their “ingroup” (e.g., members of the Sales Department), than any “outgroup” (e.g., members of the Marketing Department), and to communicate and interact more effectively with them. Our results suggest that when these interdependent peer managers are psychologically distant from one another, they may do quite the opposite of what is required to forge an effective CFR. In particular, rather than attempting to find and use effective forms of interaction such as noncoercive influence tactics, they tend to avoid interacting with their counterpart manager.

Turning now to the effects of the marketing manager’s sales experience on the use of SMITs, only two of the five tactics were used more when the marketing manager had greater sales experience — ingratiation and collaboration. This suggests that vocational work experience alone is not a powerful driver of integrating behaviour between marketing managers and sales managers. Again, social identity theory may account for this, in that merely having work experience in a peer manager’s discipline, is an insufficient basis on which to attribute social, or psychological similarity between yourself and that peer manager.

Last, our results regarding the effects of the SMITs on the dependent variable — functional conflict, reveal that only two have significant positive effects, these are rational persuasion, and collaboration. Broadly these results suggest that the SMITs involving proactive discussion and debate (rational persuasion), and where the agent offers to provide resources, or joint efforts to help accomplish a task (collaboration) are most appropriate.

The participative, consultative nature of the collaboration tactic, especially where the agent indicates their willingness to modify their proposal, is likely to be viewed favourably by a target marketing manager. It meets the criterion of social acceptability, and is likely to be within the sales manager’s positional, or personal power to make the request, and by showing the marketing manager the professional courtesy of consulting them, the marketing manager is likely to be more amenable to having their attitude changed. Similarly, where a manager uses rational persuasion on a peer manager, this

influence tactic demonstrates the agent's willingness to explain the reasons for a request, rather than simply make an unsupported request of the other manager. Yukl (2002) argues that rational persuasion is most likely to be effective where the target person shares the same task objectives as the agent, but does not as yet recognise that the agent's proposal is the best way to achieve those objectives. Our results are therefore consistent with our expectation that functional conflict (where there is constructive discussion, and useful give and take), is most likely to emerge when influence tactics involving consultation, debate, and discussion are used.

## 7. Limitations

A key assumption of the model tested here is that the SMITs fully mediate the effects of the four chosen antecedents. Clearly, this assumption needs to be formally tested because there is research that indicates that there may be significant paths from some of the four variables to the ultimate dependent variable – functional conflict. For example, Rawwas, Vitell, and Barnes's (1997) study found that the use of power by a dominant channel member led to increased constructive conflict. Similarly, it is possible that total interdependence (and the two other exogenous variables) may have a direct, as well as an indirect impact, on functional conflict.

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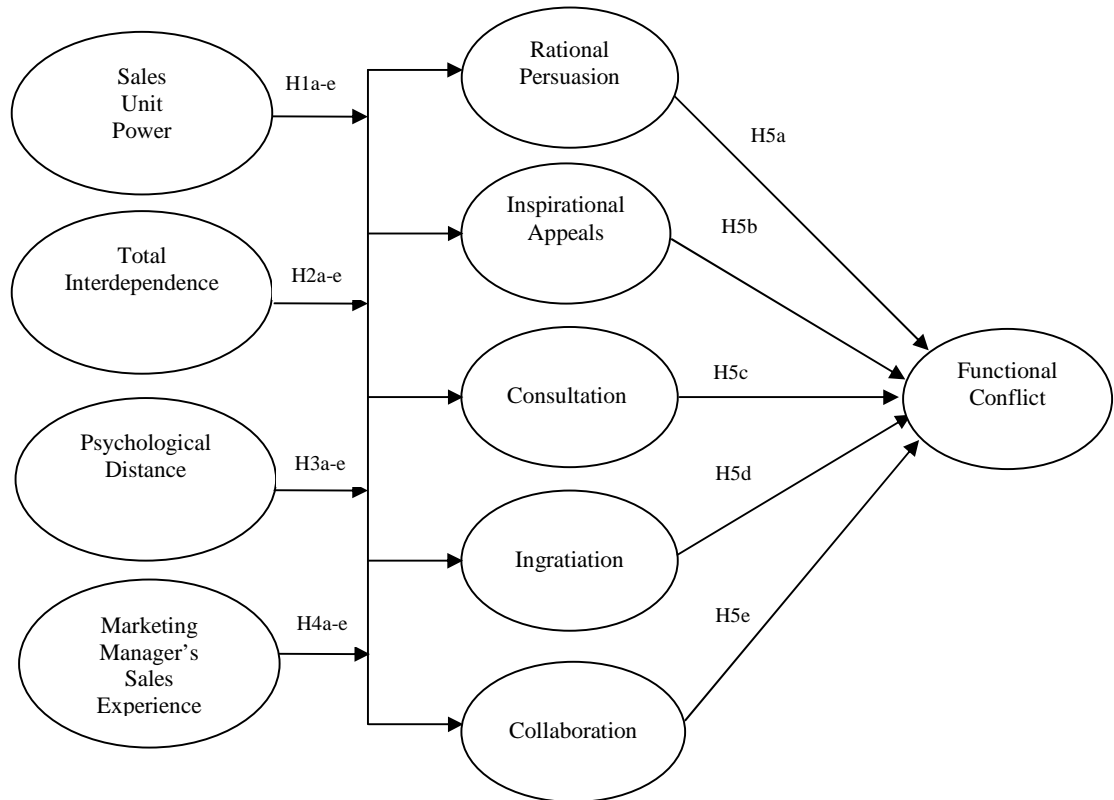
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**Figure 1**  
Hypothesised model



**Table 1**  
Assessment of measurement for reflective constructs

Construct	Indicator	Standardized factor loadings	Alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Power of sales unit	1	.677	.83	.88	.65
	2	.868			
	3	.836			
	4	.830			
Psychological distance	1	.765	.60	.78	.54
	2	.690			
	3	.756			
Rational persuasion	1	.851	.87	.92	.79
	2	.911			
	3	.909			
Inspirational appeals	1	.935	n.a.	.90	.82
	2	.879			
Consultation	1	.825	.84	.90	.76
	2	.890			
	3	.897			
Ingratiation	1	.913	.83	.90	.74
	2	.856			
	3	.810			
Collaboration	1	.888	.83	.90	.74
	2	.848			
	3	.849			
Functional conflict	1	.876	.80	.88	.70
	2	.798			
	3	.839			

**Table 2**  
Descriptive statistics and correlations

Construct	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Power of sales unit	4.40	1.31	–									
2. Total inter-dependence	4.35	1.15	-.13	–								
3. Psychological distance	3.92	1.23	.19	-.03	–							
4. MM's sales experience	4.56	2.16	.07	.22*	-.15	–						
5. Rational persuasion	3.78	1.56	-.32**	.29**	-.55**	.12	–					
6. Inspirational appeals	2.84	1.74	.25*	.14	-.02	.10	.15	–				
7. Consultation	3.54	1.59	-.22*	.32**	-.38**	.10	.61**	.35**	–			
8. Ingratiation	2.85	1.62	-.16	.28**	-.24*	.22*	.44**	.35**	.54**	–		
9. Collaboration	3.40	1.52	-.16	.29**	-.37**	.24*	.58**	.24**	.53**	.59**	–	
10. Functional conflict	5.45	1.23	-.17	.25**	-.42**	.19	.55**	.04	.31**	.39**	.54**	–

\*\* Significant at  $\leq 0.01$  level (two-tailed test)

\* Significant at  $\leq 0.05$  level (two-tailed test)