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What motivates management consulting leaders to collaborate with competitors?

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WHAT MOTIVATES MANAGEMENT CONSULTING LEADERS

TO COLLABORATE WITH COMPETITORS?

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Abstract

The multi-vendor consulting model is a transorganizational development topic that has gained importance as more organizations strategically source professional services, such as management consulting. Multi-vendor consulting models often require competitors to collaborate on service delivery, fostering coopetitive relationships. This research study acknowledged the paradoxical nature of coopetition and aimed to understand more fully the frequency of coopetition in the management consulting industry, the perceived benefits and risks of coopetition, and the key factors that motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with their competitors on client engagements. The study revealed that there is a deeper level of motivation for management consulting leaders who chose to collaborate with competitors: the fear of missing out on current and future opportunities and the desire to develop stronger relationships in both their vertical and horizontal networks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"No one can whistle a symphony," said Yale professor Halford E. Luccock, "It takes an orchestra to play it" ("Quotes by Halford E. Luccock," n.d.). The same can be said about organizational systems. In today's global economy, organizations are frequently teaming up to support a common mission and co-create value far beyond their individual contributions. These relationships between and among organizations are known as inter-organizational relationships (Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Ring, 2010). Moreover, a group of organizations that are related to a particular issue or domain and serve a common purpose are defined by Cummings and Worley (2008) as transorganizational systems. Inter-organizational entities and transorganizational systems have many aliases but are commonly identified as alliances, partnerships, or collaborations. Over 50% of alliances, partnership, and collaborative relationships occur between firms within the same industry or among competitors and frequently occur in the professional services industry (Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Mention, 2011).

Background

Over the past two decades, global management consulting firms have started to collaborate with competitors who specialize in systems integration in order to lead clients through global Enterprise Resource Planning implementations. While the competing management consulting firms could feasibly lead the implementations independently, they are more frequently working together in order to serve their clients' business requirements. Even when competing consulting firms are not eager to collaborate, the client's vendor selection process often leads to a multi-vendor consulting model which requires a collaborative relationship to form between competitors.

Jones, Fladmoe-Lindquist, and Borgatti defined multi-vendor consulting models as inter-firm project teams formed from specialists whose combined expertise extends beyond the boundaries of one particular firm. Multi-vendor consulting models are "used extensively in professional services to provide highly complex and customized services that involve a great deal of uncertainty and risk for clients" (1998, p. 396). These complex tasks require the integration of a diverse set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that is represented across the various management consulting firms in the industry. Clients that select multi-vendor consulting models intend to leverage the best qualities and capabilities from each consulting firm in order to achieve their desired outcome.

Purpose and Significance

Cooperative relationships are described as a situation where compatible goals result in joint action between two firms with the goal of achieving mutual benefits. Organizations that participate in cooperative relationships hope to work together to increase or maintain the value they jointly create. Conversely, competition is usually said to occur when two parties strive for something only one can attain—or perceive that only one can attain (Wilhelm & Kohlbacher, 2011). Competitors aim to sustain their portion or capture a bigger portion of the value created with no intention of sharing.

Multi-vendor consulting models require competing management consulting firms to cooperate in order to perform services for the client in situations where competition is usually the norm. Therefore, management consulting firms that participate in multi-vendor consulting models will simultaneously attempt to create and capture value, regardless of the cooperative relationship that is required.

Considering the tension that exists while creating and capturing value, a new wave of research aims to understand the drivers, dynamics, and management of collaborative relationships between and among competitors, defined as "coopetition." "Coopetitive relationships are complex as they consist of two diametrically different logics of interaction" (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000, p. 412).

This research acknowledges the paradoxical nature of coopetition and aims to understand more fully why management consulting firms choose to interact with their competitors in ways that may seem counterintuitive to the industry norm of competition. The purpose of this research is to understand what motivates competitors in the professional services industry, specifically management consulting firms, to collaborate with one another by answering the following research questions:

1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?

The multi-vendor consulting model is a transorganizational topic that will continue to gain importance as more organizations strategically source professional services, such as management consulting, to support organizational transformation and operational effectiveness. This research study aimed to offer insight on the current state of the management consulting competitive landscape and the complexity of multi-vendor consulting models used frequently by clients around the world.

Overview

The purpose of this introduction was to express the unique value in exploring the factors that motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements.

Chapter 2 reviews existing research and relevant literature on inter-organizational network relationships and focuses on horizontal network relationships in particular. In addition, this chapter reviews literature on the benefits and risks of coopetition and common motivational bases for collaboration.

Chapter 3 outlines the study's purpose and relevance of the research methods as well as the research and design specifics, such as participant selection, interview protocol, and data analysis procedures.

In the final two chapters, the research is completed and the implications for practitioners and researchers are explored. In chapter 4, the qualitative findings aligned to each research question are described. In chapter 5, the conclusions of the study are presented, restating the original purpose and reviewing the key findings and the assumed meanings of these findings. Recommendations, study limitations, and implications for further research are also discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing literature on the topic of coopetition, defined as simultaneous cooperation and competition between two firms (Gnyawali & Park, 2011). This chapter includes existing research on inter-organizational networks and the types of horizontal network relationships that exist among competitors. Additionally, this chapter summarizes the benefits and risks associated with participating in coopetitive relationships. Finally, this chapter reviews literature on the factors that motivate organizations to interact or collaborate. This chapter supports the following research questions:

1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?

Inter-organizational Network Relationships

Inter-organizational network models are used to analyze interdependent relationships involving multiple organizations. Research on inter-organizational networks indicates that companies can simultaneously participate in several different types of relationships, both vertically and horizontally within their network (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996). Vertical network relationships involve interactions between organizations within the same value chain. For example, a raw materials supplier and a product manufacturer might be part of the same vertical network, where the manufacturing sources from the supplier. However, horizontal network relationships refer to interactions across firms within the same industry, including interactions between competitors (Gellynck & Kühne, 2010). For example, two raw material suppliers that sell to the same product manufacturer are part of a common horizontal network. The suppliers might leverage their horizontal network relationship by pooling their resources in order to meet the demands of the manufacturer in a more effective and efficient manner.

Prahalad (1995) explained that organizations play multiple roles within and across networks and that the functions of the organizations in the network are becoming increasingly more difficult to define. Both vertical and horizontal relationships can include elements of competition and cooperation (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999), and organizations must understand how to navigate the inter-organizational network in ways that not only create value, but also capture value. Gnyawali and Park believe that creating value is a cooperative process, while capturing value or "dividing up the pie" is inherently competitive (2009, p. 319). For the purpose of this research topic, the researcher has focused the literature review on the types of horizontal network relationships that exist across transorganizational systems and the degree of competition and cooperation involved with each type.

Horizontal Network Relationship Types

The following analysis is based on Bengtsson and Kock's 1999 analysis of business networks between competitors. There are four different types of horizontal network relationships which take into account the tradeoff between cooperation and competition: coexistence, cooperation, competition, and coopetition. Table 1 provides a summary of the four horizontal network relationship types, defined by Bengtsson and Kock, using seven key criteria including exchanges, bonds, power, proximity, trust, norms, and goals.

Table 1. Horizontal Network Relationship Types

	Coexistence	Cooperation	Competition	Coopetition
Exchanges	• No exchange	• Business • Information • Social	• Reactive	• Information • Social
Bonds	• No bonds	• Social • Knowledge • Economic	• No bonds	• Social • Knowledge
Power	• Based on industry position	• Managed through formal agreements	• Based on industry position	• Managed through formal agreements • Based on industry position
Proximity	• Psychological distance	• Psychological • Physical	• Psychological • Physical	• Psychological • Physical
Trust	• Informal trust	• Informal trust • Formal trust	• No trust	• Informal trust • Formal trust
Norms	• Strong informal norms and assumptions	• Strong formal and informal norms and assumptions	• Industry rules	• Strong formal and informal norms and assumptions
Goals	• Developed separately	• Developed together	• Developed separately	• Developed together • Developed separately

Note. Created from material in “Cooperation and Competition in Relationships Between Competitors in Business Networks,” by M. Bengtsson and S. Kock, 1999, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, 14*(3), pp. 180-182.

First, an exchange is the act of giving one thing and receiving another in return. Organizations that participate in horizontal network relationships perform business (products or services) exchanges, information exchanges, or social exchanges. The types of exchanges that organizations engage in will be based on the degree of collaboration or competition that exists between them. Second, organizations involved in horizontal network relationships generate social bonds, knowledge bonds, and economic bonds. Bonds are considered the “glue” that holds relationships together. The types of bonds that are created between organizations will also vary based on the collaborative or competitive nature of the network relationship. Third, the degree of organizational power is often based on an organization’s industry position, but power distribution can also managed through formal relationship agreements. Horizontal network power distribution will be managed differently based on the relationship type. Fourth, organizational proximity is considered to be physical or psychological. The organizational proximity within a horizontal network relationship will vary based on the degree of collaboration or competition that exists across the organizations. Fifth, organizational trust can either be established through formal agreements or developed informally through ongoing interactions. Sixth and similarly, organizational norms can be developed formally or informally but often stem from unspoken industry norms. In both instances, the level of trust and the established norms will vary based on the level of collaboration or competition that exists between organizations. Seventh and finally, organizational goals will be developed jointly or separately depending on the collaborative or competitive nature of the network relationship (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999).

Coexistence. In a relationship where competitors coexist, each organization is aware of one another, but they do not interact with one another. Therefore, no real inter-organizational bonds develop between competitors. Additionally, no economic exchanges take place, but the relationship may involve information and social exchanges between organizations. The organizations gain power in the industry through their position in the market. Smaller organizations are often dependent on stronger, more dominant organizations. A level of distance exists between organizations, but this is driven by physiological factors. There is some degree of informal trust because organizations with less power must trust that the more dominant organization will not interfere with their goals. There are strong norms and unspoken assumptions that guide the relationship, but the norms are informal and are never openly discussed by the organizations in the network. The organizations' goals are developed separately from one another and do not coincide (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999).

Cooperation. In a cooperative relationship, there are frequent exchanges of business, information, and social interactions. Not only are the competing organizations aware of one another, but there are frequent exchanges that create social, knowledge, and economic bonds. While cooperation takes place between the organizations, there is still a level of competition which can influence the level of trust. Formal agreements are in place to govern cooperative efforts, but informal agreements still guide the social norms of the relationship. Through formal agreements and informal norms, the distribution of power is intentionally altered to mitigate any tension or conflict. The power distance is based on psychological and physical elements, but competitors have shared goals that support a common vision (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999).

An example of a cooperative relationship would be an organization such as WIPO Re:Search, a consortium that consists of pharmaceutical companies, research institutions, and nongovernmental organizations. WIPO Re:Search members frequently exchange business, information, and social interactions and are connected through social and economic bonds. Formal agreements are in place to govern the inter-organizational relationship, manage economic investments, and establish cooperative norms. Members of the consortium also have a common vision and have developed a common goal to "accelerate the discovery and development of medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics for neglected tropical diseases" through a cooperative relationship (Research Consortium, n.d.).

Competition. In a competitive relationship, interactions between competing organizations are straightforward, as competitors follow one another's lead in the market. For example, if one organization makes a move, the competing organization will follow. Power and dependence are distributed based on the organizations' positions in the industry. The power distance between competing organizations is based on psychological and physical elements. Norms are based on unspoken assumptions about industry rules. While goals are structured similarly, organizational goals are developed and achieved independent from one another (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999).

An example of a competitive relationship would be the interactions between global technology companies like Microsoft, Apple, and Google. These types of technology companies are constantly developing innovative products or services in hopes of beating the competition to the finish line. When Apple makes a move, Microsoft will not be very far behind. In the technology industry, the "rules of the game" are widely known and competitors keep their distance. While technology companies may have similar types of goals in mind, their strategic intent is developed behind closed doors as this is the key to beating the competition.

Coopetition. In a coopetitive relationship, there are frequent exchanges of business, information, and social interactions. When cooperating, power is based on how an organization's functional expertise can best support value creation. When competing, power is based on an organization's strength or position in the market. When cooperating, an organization's dependency is often driven by a formal agreement, but it is also based on trust. However, when competing, dependency is based on an organization's strength or position in the network. Conflict is based on whether the activities or functions being performed are more cooperative or competitive. Norms are typically clearly defined in the formal contracts and agreements, but underlying assumptions or "ground rules" exist as well. When competing, organizations are guided by unspoken norms that exist in the industry. The power distance is based on physical and psychological elements. While common goals are developed for the cooperative relationship, competitive goals are developed individually (Bengtsson & Kock, 1999).

An example of a coopetitive relationship would be when competitive steel suppliers decide to form a strategic partnership and effectively leverage their manufacturing facilities and capabilities in order to create more value for a particular customer. For example, the steel suppliers may compete against one another to win bids with Ford Motor Company, but they have established a formal agreement to collectively bid on General Motors orders. In this scenario, the steel suppliers are selectively choosing when to leverage one another's resources and when to compete. When the steel suppliers choose to collaborate, formal agreements are in place that identify the common goal and govern the interaction.

Coopetition Considerations

Based on the criteria presented in Bengtsson and Kock's (1999) research, a multi-vendor consulting model would be described as a cooperative relationship between the client and consulting firms, while at the same time a coopetitive relationship would exist between the competing consulting firms that are collaborating on the client engagement. Alternatively, when the competing consulting firms are not participating in a coopetitive network relationship, they are part of the competitive network relationship that exists between the broader groups of competing consulting firms.

Building further upon the analysis of horizontal network relationships, the following sections review literature on the benefits and risks associated with coopetition in order to gain insight on the different elements that management consulting firms might consider prior to collaborating (or not collaborating) with a competing consulting firm on a client engagement.

Benefits of coopetition. Organizations must assess the benefits of coopetition to determine whether or not the value created from the relationship will exceed the risk associated with collaborating with a competitor. Existing literature on coopetition reveals that there are benefits attributed to coopetitive relationships, including shared costs and risks, shared resources and capabilities, knowledge sharing, and innovation.

Share costs and risks. The development of a coopetitive relationship is motivated by organizations' willingness to share risks and costs and pool resources together to realize synergies (Das & Teng, 2000; Huang, Chung, & Lin, 2009). Through collaborative endeavors, competitors can engage in markets that involve high risks and require heavy investments. Soekijad and Andriessen (2003) found that competitors often build coopetitive relationships when the problem at hand is too complicated to manage on their own. Additionally, organizations often choose to cooperate with their competitors to strategically break into new markets, products, or services (Luo, 2004).

Share resources and capabilities. Because competitors are part of the same industry, they frequently face similar challenges and possess resources and capabilities that are directly relevant to each other (Chen, 1996; Gnyawali & Park, 2009). This level of industry commonality can be an advantage for competitors that choose to collaborate with one another because they can leverage similar resources and realize synergies to solve common problems. Complementary resources can also be a source of effective collaboration because organizations gain access to capabilities they may not have had otherwise and can solve complex problems more effectively (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991; Harrigan, 1985). In addition, heterogeneous resources enhance coopetitive relationships because unique resources stimulate both cooperation and competition

(Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). For example, a company might agree to collaborate with a competitor who is willing to support weak business functions in hopes that they will gain efficiency they could not achieve on their own (Zhang & Frazier, 2011).

While Khanna, Gulati, and Nohira (1998) cautioned that focusing on core competencies increases organizational dependency, firms can also learn from one another and further develop capabilities they lacked before. Mention believes the term “capabilities” emphasizes the need of constantly adapting and developing resources while exploiting existing resources, both within the firm and beyond its boundaries. “Only this joint exploitation of resources and capabilities and the development of new ones or their renewal can provide a sustainable competitive advantage to the firm evolving in a changing environment” (2011, p. 45).

Share knowledge. Collaboration creates an opportunity for knowledge sharing that is otherwise unavailable in a competitive environment. When competitors gain access to knowledge and resources that are typically unavailable, organizations can combine each other’s resources and pursue innovative projects that would be impossible individually (Gnyawali & Park, 2011). Over time, organizations begin to internalize the skills or capabilities of the competitors they collaborate with (Hamel, 1991). “Collaboration with direct competitors is important not only to acquire new technological knowledge and skills from the partner,” stated Quintana-Garcia and Benavides-Velasco, “but also to create and access other capabilities based on intensive exploitation of existing ones” (2004, p. 934).

In this case, knowledge is power. Companies leverage their knowledge and insight in coopetitive relationships to gain power in horizontal and vertical business networks. Firms are often motivated to collaborate with some competitors in order to increase their bargaining power against other competitors (Mudambi & Navarra, 2004).

Drive innovation. Concentrating only on cooperative practices does not explain the source of the "creative tension" necessary to stimulate innovation (Wilhelm & Kohlbacher, 2011). Bengtsson and Kock (2000) explained that intense competition can drive innovation. When competitors work closely through coopetitive relationships, they push one another to compete in an effort to create something better than they could individually. Coopetitive relationships can feed off the tension that exists within the competitive relationship and motivate one another to continuously improve their methods and resources while at the same time cooperate on finding ways to do so.

The advantage of a coopetitive relationship is having the combination of competitive market pressure while at the same time having access to resources through collaboration to achieve competitive goals (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000). Quintana-Garcia and Benavides-Velasco (2004) found that when organizations chose to simultaneously collaborate and compete with partners, they achieved a greater capacity for innovation than firms that followed an exclusively cooperative or competitive strategy. By connecting with horizontal networks, organizations gain access to knowledge and resources that help them discover new possibilities. Most importantly, competitors that share knowledge and resources not only improve their competitive advantage, but their discoveries and innovations ultimately enhance the entire industry (Gee, 2000). For example, Gee explained that coopetitive efforts "establish universal procedures, reduce complexity, increase understanding, and develop user-friendly terminology and understanding" (p. 360).

Risks of coopetition. Evidence of simultaneous cooperation and competition among companies implies that organizations no longer view competition as a barrier for cooperation (Kuhn, 1996). Although coopetition dissolves the barrier between cooperation and competition, coopetitive relationships are nonetheless unstable and dynamic in nature (Luo, 2007; Park &

Russo, 1996). Porter and Fuller (1986) explained that when an organization collaborates with competitors, it assumes certain risks in order to reap benefits.

Competition in the truest sense of the word can be cutthroat. However, in a coopetitive relationship, competition can have both negative and positive impacts on value creation. While attempting to balance the risks and benefits of a coopetitive relationship, organizations still struggle with the tension between creating value through cooperation and the temptation to be opportunistic and take a greater share of the value created through the relationship (Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Lavie, 2007; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). Though the selection of a capable partner is often based on resource requirements, the selection of a trusting partner (who may not be the most capable partner) is necessary to avoid technological leakage and opportunistic behavior by the partner (Gnyawali & Park, 2009).

Sometimes the coopetitive relationship may become more competitive when members attempt to build close client relationships in order to maintain face when problems arise during the project life cycle. Competition also picks up when a competitor continues to build client relationships by working on additional projects outside of the coopetitive relationship scope of work. Alternatively, collusion may occur when members jointly act in their own interest rather than supporting the client’s goals (Jones et al., 1998).

Dowling, Roering, Carlin, and Wisnieski (1996) believe that an organization’s decision regarding which activities will be dominated by cooperation and which activities will be competitive in nature can be a challenging dynamic. To ease this tension, cooperative and competitive activities can be separated between different business units. Alternatively, competitors might cooperate in some markets and compete in others (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000).

Motivational Bases for Collaboration

The following analysis in based on Cummings (1984) model of motivational bases that influence transorganizational systems interaction. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of three types of motivation bases that influence an organization to interact with other organizations: resource dependency, commitment to problem-solving, and mandate. The table identifies the three motivational bases, provides a definition, and describes the characteristics of each motivational base.

Table 2. Motivational Bases for Transorganizational Collaboration

Motivational Bases	**Definition**	**Characteristics**
Resource Dependency	Organizations cannot internally generate all needed resources and must relate with elements in the environment, such as other organizations, in order to obtain those resources	• Extent each organization is aware of each other's potential resources • Extent that there is consensus regarding their respective domains • Extent each organization is assured its respective autonomy will not be threatened • Extent to which there is moderate goal similarity
Commitment to Problem-solving	Organizations encounter problems and areas of uncertainty that they cannot cope with alone; jointly solve problems that are too extensive for single organizations to resolve	• Greater frequency of communication; greater awareness of commitment • Recognition of the scale and complexity of shared problems • Awareness of common interests and interdependence • Financial incentives • Prestige of belonging to the network
Mandate	Some higher authority, law, or regulation mandates that organizations collaborate	• Governed by rules • Controlled through central planning and avoidance of domain overlap • More intense than other types of exchange • Proposed interactions are seen as threatening to organizations

Note. Created from material in "Transorganizational Development," in B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in Organizational Behavior* (Vol. 6, pp. 377-380), by T. G. Cummings, 1984, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Resource dependency. The first motivational base identified by Cummings (1984) is resource dependency, described in terms of an organization's inability to internally generate all the resources needed to solve a problem, thereby triggering the organization's motivation to interact with elements in the external environment, such as other organizations, in order to obtain those resources. "Vulnerability does not necessarily mean the firm has no resources or capabilities, but instead suggests that the firm feels challenged and needs to do something in response to the challenge and therefore looks for opportunities" (Gnyawali & Park, 2009, p. 321). In a resource-dependent scenario, an organization's willingness to interact is based on its assessment of the other organization's available resources. Gnyawali and Park (2009) explained that coopetition is an attractive scenario because competitors can pool their resources and capabilities to pursue common projects they typically cannot pursue alone. Additionally, resource-dependent organizations will be more likely to interact if there is consensus on their corresponding domains and their autonomy is not likely to be threatened by the relationship. For example, Luhmann (1984) said that partners with complementary resources are less likely to be opportunistic with each other and will learn more from the relationship. Finally, organizations that are dependent on external resources are motivated to interact if they plan to achieve similar goals.

An example of a resource-dependent interaction would be the relationship that developed in 2007 between Apple and AT&T for the launch of Apple's iPhone product line. In order to maximize the benefits of an Apple iPhone, customers required access to cellular services. AT&T was a leading provider of cellular services throughout North America, but in order for AT&T customers to use their cellular services, they needed a cellular phone device. Both Apple and AT&T recognized their dependency on one another's products and services. By strategically partnering with AT&T, Apple gained access to a distribution channel that also offered the cellular services. Alternatively, by partnering with Apple in 2007, AT&T became the sole distribution channel for a highly sought-after product which increased its customer base.

Commitment to problem-solving. The second motivation base mentioned by Cummings (1984) is a commitment to problem-solving, described as situations where the problem is too large or complex for a single organization to resolve alone. In this scenario, organizations choose to interact because they recognize the scale and complexity of a problem they share. For example, Gnyawali and Park (2009) explained that collaboration with competitors that have complementary resources and skills will help firms mutually reduce risks and uncertainties. In addition, organizations that combine their resources and capabilities are able to collectively manage external threats (Das & Teng, 2000; Dussage, Garrette, & Mitchell, 2000; Gomes-Casseres, 2004; Khanna et al., 1998). Organizations that are committed to problem-solving understand the interdependencies that exist within the network and are aware of the common interests and concerns which trigger their motivation to interact frequently. Gnyawali and Park (2009) believe that this provides the necessary common ground to realize the potential and to communicate with each other. That being said, organizations committed to problem-solving are more likely to communicate openly and share information that will support their common goals. In some cases, there might be a level of prestige associated with belonging to a network dedicated to solving particular problems.

One example of a transorganizational system committed to problem-solving is Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger-relief charity. The mission of Feeding America, to “feed America’s hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger,” is clearly supported by a strong network of 200 food banks that serve all 50 states and supply food to more than 25 million Americans each year (Feeding America, n.d.).

Mandate. The final motivational base mentioned by Cummings (1984) refers to scenarios when a higher authority, law, or regulation mandates that organizations collaborate to solve problems. Organizations are motived to collaborate because they are required to interact. Typically, mandated relationships are governed by rules and are controlled through a centralized group. This can include the creation of new entities within the network, the redesign of inter-organizational boundaries, and the specification of formalized rules for interaction (Benson, 1975).

Mandated relationships are often seen as threatening to the organizations involved and can involve intense interactions. Goold, Campbell, and Alexander (1994) explained that partners may feel forced into relationships that appear suboptimal. However, competitors will agree to cooperate with one another in order to meet the demands of a third party. For example, a government organization might require that competing organizations work together to collectively solve a social issue that one organization cannot take on alone. In this example, complex tasks require the integration of many different specialists and resources to complete a service (Jones et al., 1998). The mandate stimulates a perception of interdependence among organizations in a network that may have not previously existed (Benson, 1975).

One example of a mandated relationship would be the mandated collaborative relationships among public healthcare organizations associated with the major reorganization of the healthcare industry beginning in 2010. The government began changing the way healthcare is delivered, measured, and compensated. These changes included how healthcare providers are expected to interact with one another. In addition, healthcare providers are measured and compensated based on their ability to collaborate effectively. Edifecs, a healthcare solutions provider specializing in information management and compliance technology, viewed these mandated relationships as a transorganizational development opportunity, hosting a Healthcare

Mandate Summit for representatives from the nation's top health plans in 2013 (*Edifecs ICD-10 Summit*, 2012).

Summary

While researchers have identified common motivational factors that influence transorganizational collaboration, very few have looked at the motivational factors most relevant to transorganizational collaboration in the management consulting industry, specifically between competing management consulting firms. This research aims to provide further insight into the most common types of motivational factors that influence management consulting leaders to collaborate with competitors and form coopetitive relationships.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this research is to understand what factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. This chapter describes the research design including participants and selection criteria, data collection, and data analysis procedures used in the study.

Research Design

This research involved three clearly defined questions to be explored collaboratively by the researcher with research participants:

1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?

This research began with a comprehensive review of coopetition, including literature from the past three decades on the characteristics, dynamics, benefits, and consequences of collaborating with competitors. The interview protocol design and the analysis procedures used to code and categorize the data were built upon the relevant findings of the literature review.

Participants. Interviews were conducted with five partners and three senior managers from one global management consulting firm. These participants were selected because they were responsible for the overall performance and growth of the consulting organization. In their role as management consulting leaders, these individuals were responsible for building relationships with clients, pitching engagement proposals, developing engagement contracts (including coopetitive arrangements), and managing service delivery on sold engagements.

Therefore, the leaders had direct experience with and knowledge of the competitive landscape for management consulting and, therefore, an awareness of their competitors.

Selection criteria. "Purposive sampling" was used in the selection process; interviewees were intentionally chosen because their experience and position in the organization were relevant to the research question. Participants were required to meet several criteria to participate in the study (Table 3). The "role and responsibility" criterion provides the definition of a management consulting leader for the purposes of this research study.

Table 3. Interview Participant Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria	**Definition**
Organizational Rank	• Partner or Senior Manager
Years of Experience	• At least 10 years of experience
Role and Responsibility	• Responsible for business development • Responsible for client relationship management • Responsible for responding to Requests for Proposals from client • Responsible for defining contractual terms for service delivery (including the decision to collaborate with competitors) • Responsible for service delivery on client engagements

In addition, six questions created by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) were used as a checklist to ensure an effective qualitative sample was used in the study. The questions helped to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and feasibility of the research. An effective sample required that the researcher answered "yes" to every question in the checklist. The checklist included the following questions:

1. Is the sampling *relevant* to your conceptual frame and research question?
2. Will the phenomena you are interested in *appear*? In principle, *can* they appear?
3. Does your plan enhance the *generalizability* of your findings . . . either through conceptual power or through representativeness?
4. Can *believable* descriptions and explanations be produced, ones that are true to real life?

5. Is the sampling plan *feasible*, in terms of time, money, access to people, and your own work style?
6. Is the sampling plan *ethical*, in terms of issues such as informed consent, the potential benefits and risks, and the relationship with participants? (p. 37)

Data Collection

Based on the literature review conducted in this study, an interview protocol (Appendix A) was constructed to examine what influences management consulting leaders to collaborate with their competitors on client engagements. Table 4 illustrates the correlation between research questions and interview questions.

Table 4. Correlation Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Question	**Interview Question(s)**
1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?	1
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?	2, 5, 6, 7
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8

First, the interviews focused on understanding how frequently management consulting leaders partner with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Next, the interviews inquired on the potential benefits and risks associated with entering into collaborative relationships with competitors. Finally, the interviews aimed to understand what factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements.

Informed consent and confidentiality. An initial communication (Appendix B) was sent by email to a select list of leaders within one management consulting organization, explaining the purpose of the research and inviting them to participate in the study. To adequately address confidentiality issues, key details about the nature of the research were provided to participants through both written and verbal communication.

The initial communication included the following disclaimer: “Please note, your responses will be recorded. However, your responses will be confidential and your name and organization will not be mentioned in the analysis.” The invitation responses from each leader were saved for future reference to show that the research participants had granted permission to conduct and record the phone interviews.

Furthermore, each phone interview began by reminding the participants that the call was being recorded and would be transcribed and analyzed for key themes. In addition, interview participants were informed that any quotes included in the research study would be anonymous. Upon communicating this information to the interview participants, verbal consent was granted before administering the research interview. Recorded phone interviews were saved which included the verbal consent from the interview participants.

Interview recording and transcription. Each semi-structured verbal interview was administered to each leader individually. The one-hour phone interviews were recorded using the Call Recorder iPhone application, and the interview recordings were transcribed using the TranscribeMe online transcription service platform. The final transcripts were from 7 to16 pages in length and resulted in 94 pages of data for analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

The transcript data was analyzed using Miles’ (1979) framework for qualitative data analysis. Using the transcendental realism approach, the key drivers of coopetition were developed using the following inductive analysis: (a) excerpting text containing key concepts, (b) deriving categories and themes, (c) collecting expert feedback, (d) compiling criteria,

(e) coding items and assessing coding reliability, (f) calculating frequency, and (g) validating the results. The elements of the analysis approach are described in detail below.

Excerpting text. The text from each transcribed file was read line by line, and key comments were marked with an initial theme to synthesize the data for further review. For the purpose of this study, a comment was considered a word, phrase, sentence, or multiple lines relating to an idea or theme. The highlighted comments were transferred into an Excel database, consisting of 575 rows of initial key findings.

Deriving categories and themes. Further data reduction was conducted on the Excel database of key comments excerpted from the transcribed files. This allowed investigation of the frequency of coopetition, the risks and benefits associated with coopetition, and the factors that motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with their competitors on consulting engagements.

First, the Excel database was reviewed and the data coded row by row with descriptive codes. Coding is the process of aligning tags, names, or labels to a piece of data (Punch, 2005, p. 199). Descriptive codes are used for summarizing segments of data (Punch, 2005, p. 200). Many codes were identified and recurring patterns and themes began to emerge in the data set. A code taxonomy structure was developed by the researcher with categories and sub-categories for the codes. Memos also were used to capture initial thoughts that pointed toward patterns, themes, or trends. The memos were stored on a separate tab in the Excel file, referencing specific cells in the coded database.

Next, the categories that were defined in the database were analyzed for interconnected themes, using axial coding. While initial coding activities separate ideas into categories, axial coding connects the themes again but in a conceptually different way (Punch, 2005, p. 210). The categories identified during coding were synthesized into the themes (Table 5), including tradeoffs, motivation, and coopetition. The theme "tradeoffs" is within the context of the benefits and risks associated with coopetition. The theme "motivation" was defined as the different types of motivational factors that influence coopetition. The motivational factors included resource-dependent, client-driven, and a commitment to problem-solving. The theme "coopetition" was defined as the frequency with which management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms.

Table 5. Initial Themes and Categories

Theme	**Category**
Tradeoffs	Benefits Risks
Motivation	Resource-dependent Client-driven Commitment to problem-solving
Coopetition	Frequency

Collecting feedback. After the research interviews, three interview participants assisted the researcher by reviewing the initial themes and categories identified during the data analysis process and provided feedback and insights on the validity of the findings. The feedback from the three interview participants helped to make further refinements in the analysis and develop additional categories and sub-categories. In particular, the three motivational categories (resource-dependent, client-driven, and a commitment to problem-solving) were further defined with sub-categories.

Compiling the data analysis criteria. In the next stage of analysis, the researcher performed a selective coding process, noting the possible relationships between categories and refining the focus of the interview findings. The interview data that did not align to the criteria identified in the guiding principles was coded nonetheless and pulled into a separate file titled

"Secondary Findings." The researcher acknowledged that while a portion of the interview data did not answer these particular research questions, the themes and categories identified could be very valuable for future research. For example, some of the interview data focused on the dynamics or management of coopetitive relationships. While this interview data was interesting, the themes did not answer the question of what motivates consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements, but focused more on what happens after leaders have already decided to collaborate with competitors. Guiding principles were developed (Appendix C) to identify the themes and categories relevant to the research topic as opposed to themes and categories that supported secondary findings.

The original data from the transcribed interviews, comprised of 575 rows of initial key findings in Excel, was refined through the selective coding process. The final data set used for data analysis resulted in 186 rows of relevant key findings, across 3 themes, 5 categories, and 15 sub-categories.

Coding items and assessing reliability. After defining the data analysis criteria, the primary researcher solicited the help of a research analyst to review the Excel database and classify each row of data from the interviews into a criteria, theme, and category. Figure 1 illustrates the consistency on the coding classification, comparing the frequency of categories coded by the researcher to the frequency of categories coded by the research analyst.

Both the researcher and the research analyst applied the same category codes to 98% of the interview data. The remaining 2% of the interview data was coded differently by the research analyst related to sub-categories within the commitment to problem-solving category and the resource dependency category. Typically, the disagreements on coding were due to insufficient context provided by the researcher to the research analyst. To improve the reliability of the

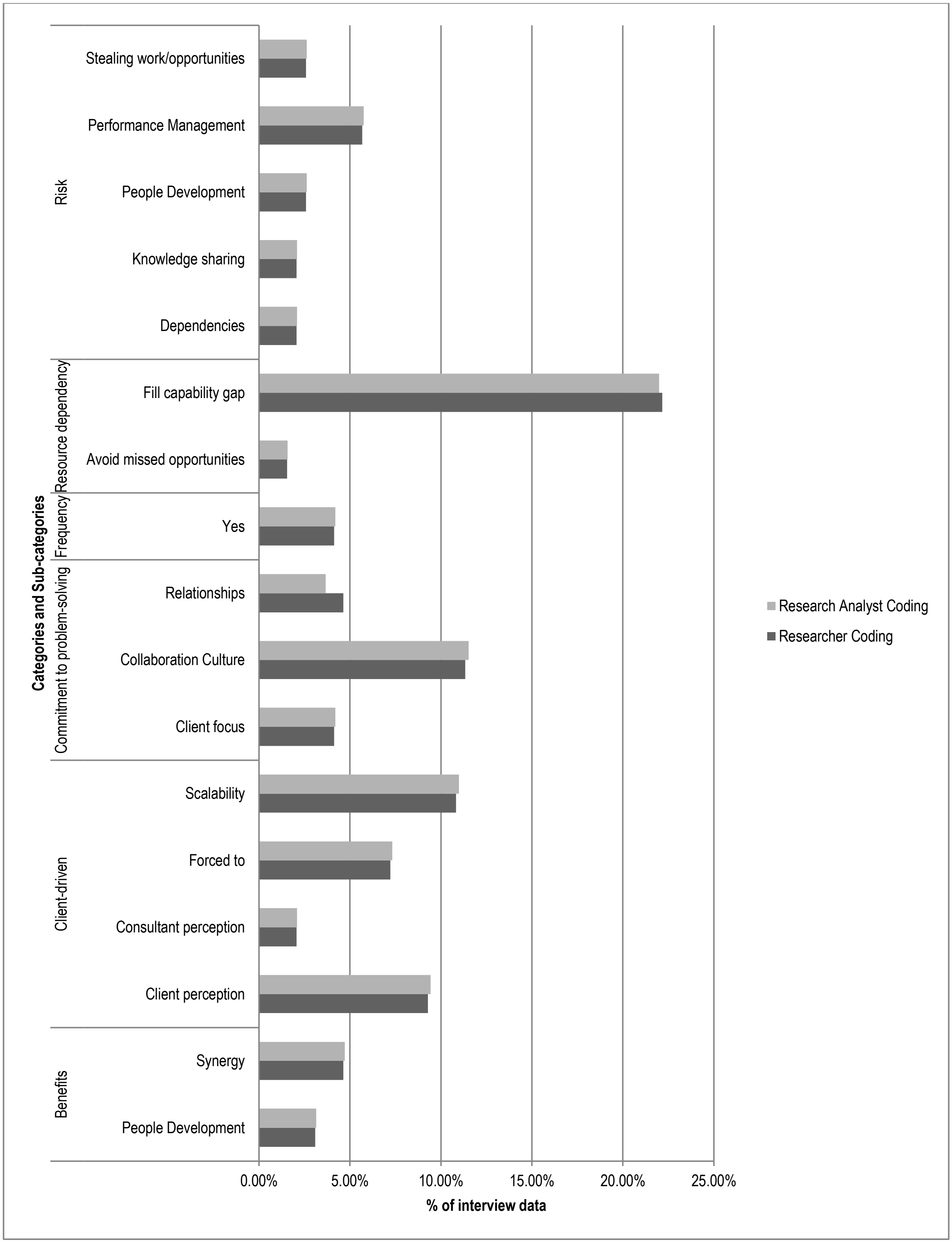

Figure 1. Coding Reliability by Sub-category

codes, the researcher and the research analyst reviewed each disparity row by row and discussed the appropriate coding for the excerpt.

Calculating frequency. The finalized taxonomy was used to calculate the relative frequency of each theme, category, and sub-category defined during coding to identify the categories and sub-categories that were commonly discussed by interview participants. Categories and sub-categories with the highest frequency were determined to be most relevant in supporting the findings.

The relative frequency of each theme, category, and sub-category was calculated based on the total number of times the theme, category, or sub-category was mentioned in the interview data, divided by the 186 rows of interview data in the sample. Figure 2 summarizes the relative frequency of each theme, category, and sub-category found within the interview data across all themes. The researcher also calculated the respondent rate based on the number of interview participants who spoke about each theme, category, or sub-category, divided by the total number of eight interview participants in the study. Figure 3 summarizes the respondent rate for each theme, category, and sub-category found within the interview data.

To further refine the analysis, the researcher calculated the relative frequency of each sub-category within an individual category. This approach helped to focus in on comparing the frequency of sub-categories within a particular category as opposed to comparing the frequency of sub-categories across all themes. Working with a subset of category data helped the researcher to clearly understand the key findings of each category individually. The researcher considered the sub-categories with the highest frequency to be most relevant key findings for that specific category. For this analysis, the relative frequency of each sub-category was calculated based on the total number of times the sub-category was mentioned in the interview data, divided by the

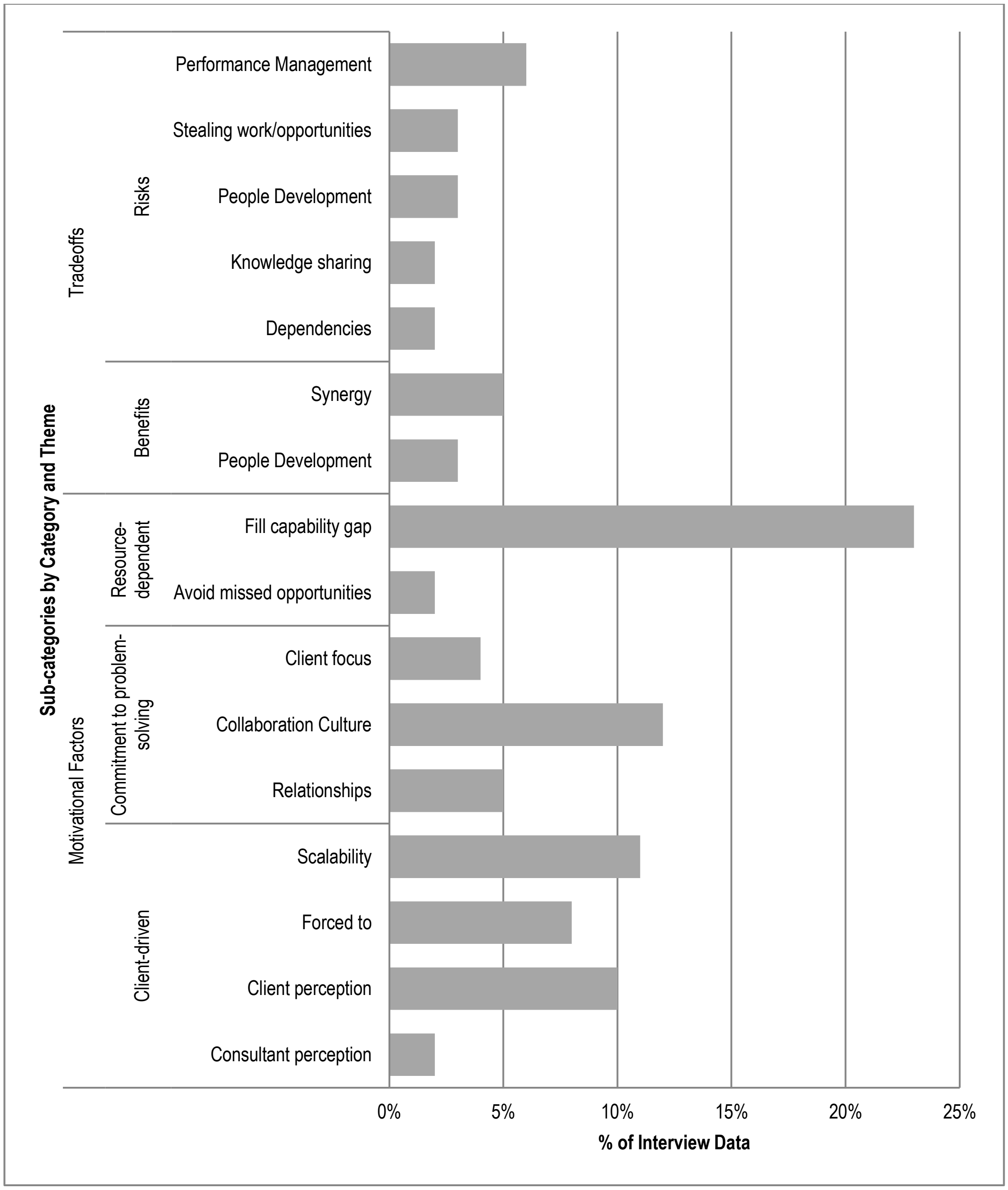

Figure 2. Relative Frequency by Theme, Category, and Sub-category

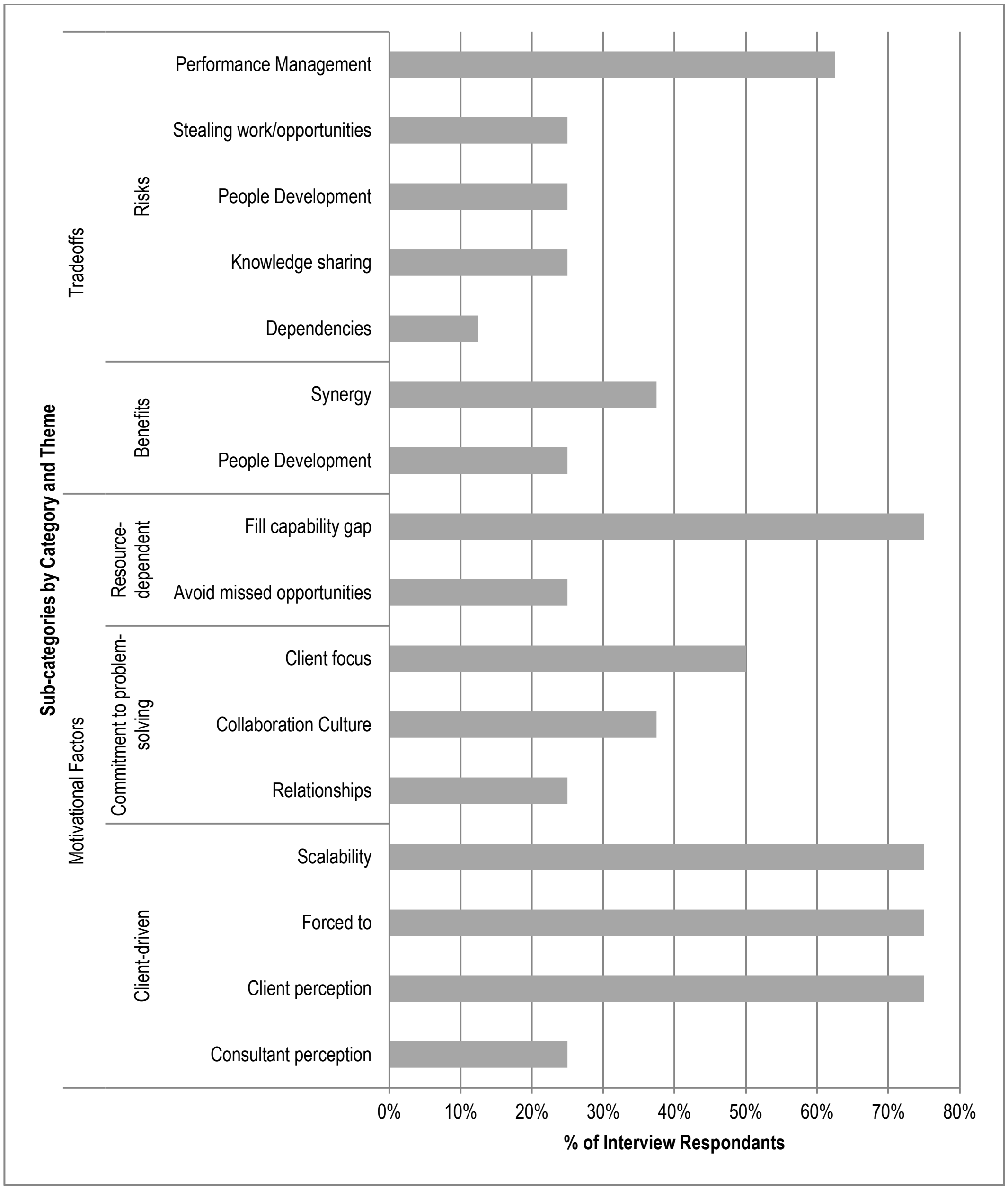

Figure 3. Respondent Rate by Theme, Category, and Sub-category

total number of rows associated with the corresponding category. The coopetition risk sub-categories were divided by 29 rows of interview data to determine the relative frequency (Figure 4). The coopetition benefit sub-categories were divided by 15 rows of interview data to determine the relative frequency (Figure 5). Considering this research study focused on what motivates management consulting leaders to collaborate with competitors, the researcher expected a majority of the interview data to fall within categories associated with the motivation theme. The client-driven motivation sub-categories were divided by 57 rows of data to calculate the relative frequency (Figure 6). The resource-dependent motivation sub-categories were divided by 46 rows of data to calculate the relative frequency (Figure 7). Finally, the commitment to problem-solving motivation sub-categories were divided by 39 rows of interview data to calculate the relative frequency (Figure 8).

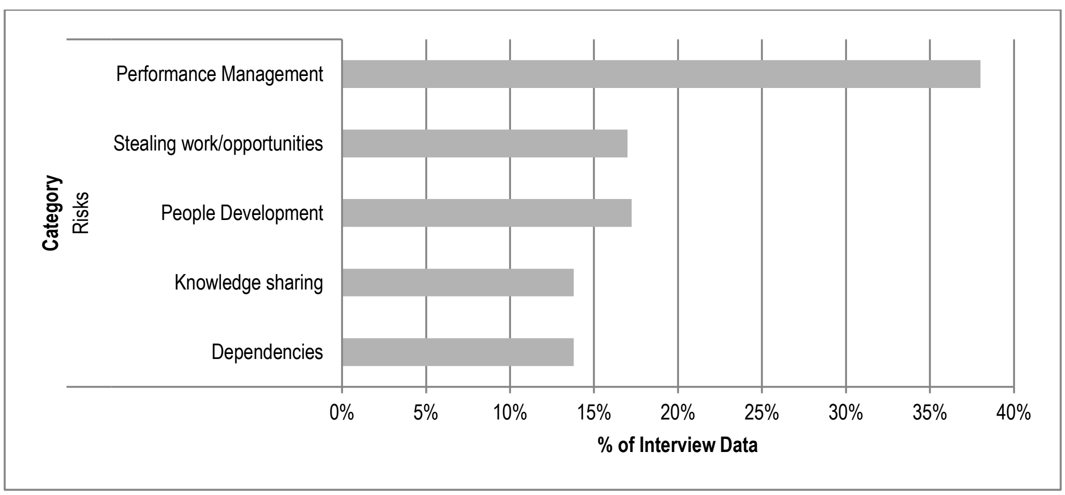

Figure 4. Frequency of Sub-categories within the Coopetition Risks Category

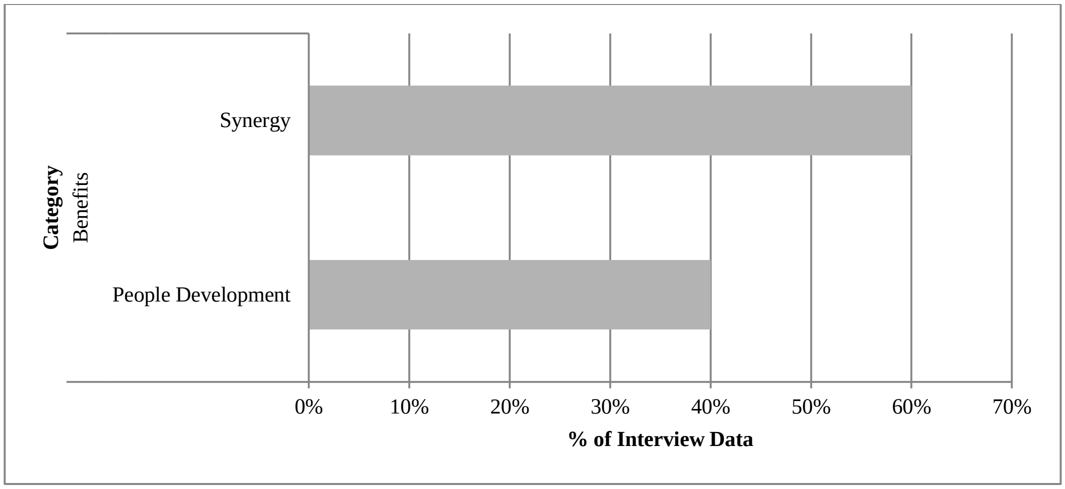

Figure 5. Frequency of Sub-categories within the Coopetition Benefits Category

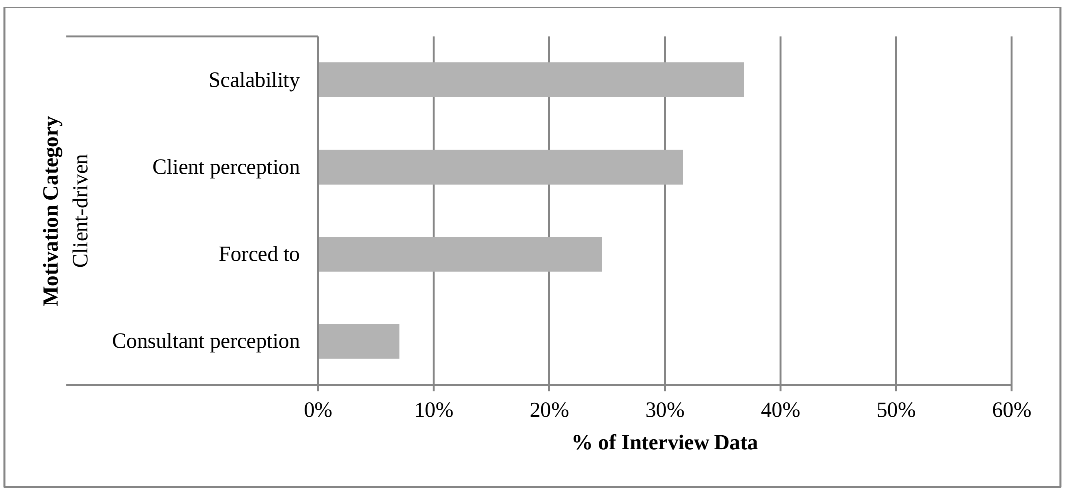

Figure 6. Frequency of Sub-categories within the Client-driven Motivation Category

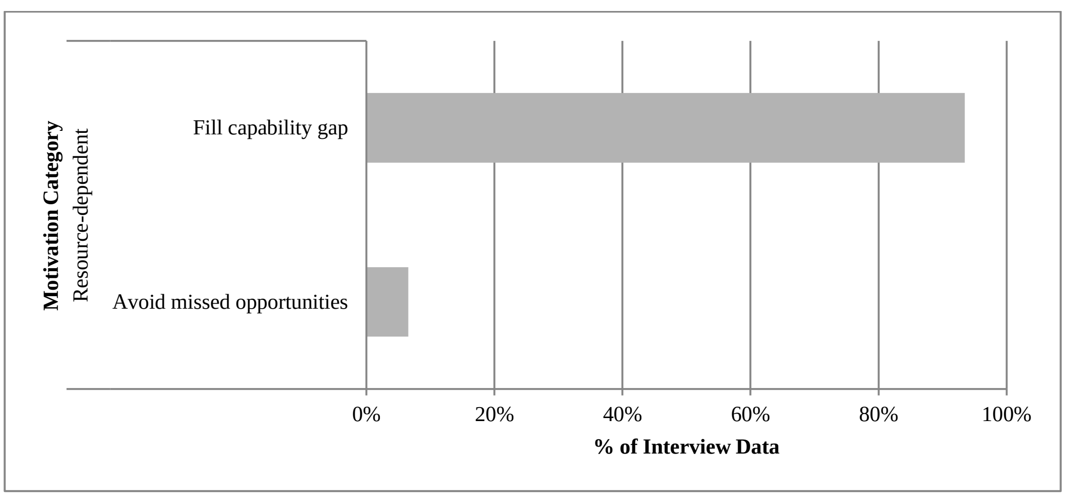

Figure 7. Frequency of Sub-categories within the Resource-dependent Motivation Category

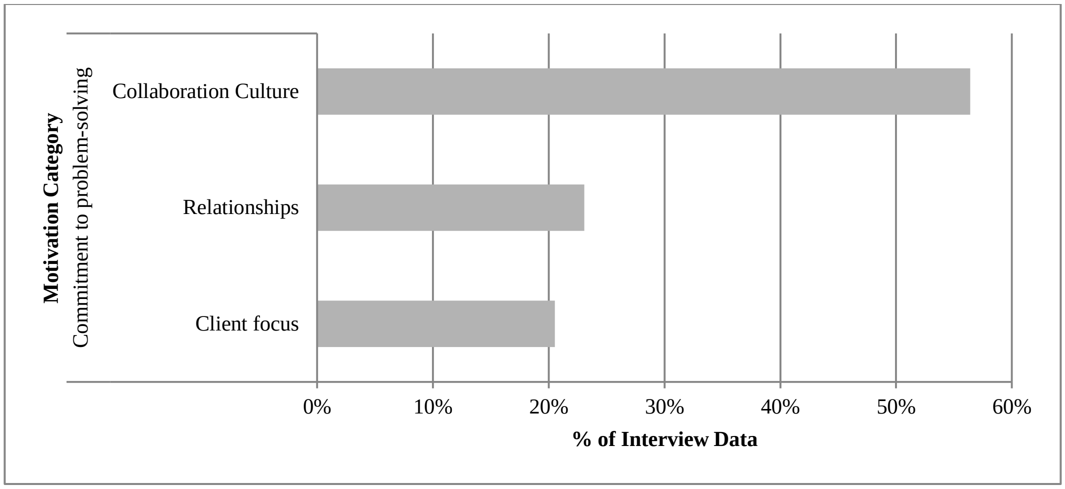

Figure 8. Frequency of Sub-categories within the Commitment to Problem-solving Motivation Category

Validating the results. The researcher validated the synthesized interview results using three approaches which included reviewing personal journal reflections recorded after each interview, conducting validation sessions with interview participants, and referencing existing literature on coopetition and motivation bases for collaboration.

First, data was collected through unstructured naturalistic observation, personal reflection, and journaling (Punch, 2005, p. 179) to apply real-life experiences and enhance the themes uncovered during interviews. Observations were documented through personal journal reflections after each phone interview. The unstructured observation approach did not require predetermined categories and classification but made observations in a more natural, open-ended way (Punch, 2005, p. 179). Emotions attached to certain responses also were noted. For example, when asked why management consulting leaders choose to collaborate with their competitors, interview participants exhibited a variety of emotions, ranging from frustration and negativity to hope and excitement. In addition, when the interview dialog triggered new insights or “ah-ha!” moments for the interview participants themselves, these were noted. The data collected through ethnographic observations was less formal and helped to confirm themes discussed during the interviews.

Second, the synthesized interview results were shared with the three interview participants who had initially reviewed the themes and provided feedback. The interview participants validated that the research findings were relevant to the professional services industry, specifically management consulting. In addition, the three interview participants helped discover emergent connections and themes across the key findings. The initial analysis and key findings of the study resulted in further synthesis of themes that emerged across the three types of motivational factors. Insights as well as stories told by interview participants were leveraged to make further connections across key findings and uncover deeper motivational factors. These emergent themes are presented in the study as a supplement to the key findings and analysis.

Third and finally, key themes identified from the literature review were assessed, and it was found that many of the themes from the existing literature on coopetition were consistent with the themes that emerged from the interview data. Additionally, validity was gauged based on two types of research themes, including general coopetition themes versus industry-specific themes. For the purpose of this study, general themes related to common coopetition themes that were applicable across industries, while specific themes related to the coopetition themes mostly relevant to the management consulting industry.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the research methodology for this study, including research design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The intent of this research study was to discover possible drivers of coopetition based on the frequency of themes mentioned in various interviews with management consulting leaders. The upcoming chapter is a report of the results and an analysis of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

This research project was a study on collaboration, intended to further understand the motivational factors that drive competing management consulting firms to collaborate. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?

This chapter shares the findings of the study and reviews the qualitative data collection results gathered during phone interviews conducted with eight management consulting leaders. The interview response rates and interview data frequency by category (Figures 4-8) were referenced to develop the analysis results tables found throughout this chapter. The analysis results tables include the top three to four categories and supporting sub-categories found most frequently in the interview data. The analysis results tables also include direct quotations from the interviews to provide examples of the category details. In addition, the analysis results tables include the interview response rate (*N*) and the interview data frequency (%).

Coopetition Frequency

The first research question asked how frequently consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. During the data analysis phase of this study, the data from Interview Question 1 (Appendix A) was used to answer this research question. Table 6 presents the responses related to Interview Question 1.

Table 6. Coopetition Frequency

Interview Respondent	Collaborate with Competitors? (Yes/No)	Response
1	Yes	"Yes, but not unless I have to"
2	Yes	"I have in the past"
3	Yes	"Yes"
4	Yes	"I've had a couple of experiences"
5	Yes	"From 2003 to today, nearly over 90% of my engagements have been with competitors"
6	Yes	"Yes"
7	Yes	"Many times"
8	Yes	"Past and currently"

All eight, or 100%, of the consulting leaders interviewed shared that they had previously collaborated or currently collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Respondents' comments ranged from "a couple of experiences" to "many times." One leader stated that he frequently collaborates with competing firms and "out of 13 years of consulting, 11 years have been working alongside competitors." In addition, one consulting leader mentioned that 90% of client engagements throughout his career have required collaboration with competing firms.

Coopetition Tradeoffs

The second research question asked what benefits and risks, described as tradeoffs in this context, are considered by respondents before collaborating with competing consulting firms on client engagements and participating in coopetitive relationships. Data from Interview Questions 2, 5, 6, and 7 was analyzed to answer this research question.

Table 7 presents the categories and sub-categories that emerged from the interview data related to the tradeoffs that consulting leaders consider before participating in coopetitive relationships and collaborating with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Comments about coopetition tradeoffs cited risks and benefits associated with coopetition.

Risks. The most common category identified by respondents, representing 66% of the interview data related to the tradeoffs of coopetition, concerned the risks of coopetition.

Performance management. The most common risk associated with coopetition was the loss of control over performance management, making up 38% of the interview data associated with coopetition risks. For example, one respondent explained that when consulting leaders become distracted by the competitive nature of the partnership, “people are not focusing 100% on execution, they’re focused on commercials, they’re focused on auditioning, and they’re focused on winning.” Another respondent said, “We spend more time managing the politics than actually delivering on what we need to.” In addition, many respondents explained that the increased level of interdependency across organizations adds complexity and interferes with quality and performance. For example, one respondent said, “When we collaborate with our competitors, the outputs they produce often become our inputs . . . we lose the natural integration that comes with all being part of one firm.”

Stealing work. The second most common risk identified by respondents, represented in 17% of the research data related to coopetition risks, involves competitors stealing work away from them. For example, one respondent said competitors start to “form their own relationships” with the client and are “happy to take work away.” However, some of the respondents admitted that they, too, look for opportunities to replace the competition. For example, one respondent

Table 7. Coopetition Tradeoffs

Category	**Sub-Category**	**Comments**	***N***	**%**
Risks of Coopetition	• Performance Management • Stealing Work/ Opportunities • People Development	• But for the teams themselves, working in the environment can be hard • Happy to take work away • I give them knowledge, then they can use that against me • I don't know that I've had an experience where there isn't—at some time, based on some situation— some finger-pointing • More of a focus on positioning a firm • Lose the natural integration that comes with us all being part of one firm • People are not focusing 100% on execution, they're focused on commercials, they're focused on auditioning, they're focused on winning • Developing our own people when they lose opportunities to be on projects	5	66%
Benefits of Coopetition	• Synergy • People Development	• Different ways of doing things, different strengths when they come together • Truly focus on the synergy that you can bring to the client • When there is a sense of cooperation, you can get something better or something really good • Power of both competitors coming together • Right level of depth with all the positions • Hard situations help people grow • Learning how to go above and beyond from a collaboration • Different perspective than what they may have ever had with just a single-vendor project • You get to see exactly how they think about how it works, and then you sort of assimilate that	4	34%

$N = 8$

shared, "I'll play nice, get into a situation where we are all, day one, sitting around a table . . . but as soon as I'm in, I'm incentivized to get you [the competitor] out, because I want your revenue."

People development. The third most common risk, representing 17% of the interview data associated with coopetition risks, concerned people development, described in this context as a missed opportunity for internal resources. For example, one respondent said, "By collaborating with our competitors, we miss the opportunity to develop our own people because they lose opportunities to be staffed on projects." In addition, respondents shared that a coopetitive environment can be "tough on teams" and can create a stressful work environment. For example, "We [as an organization] hold ourselves to a high standard and I hold my team to a high standard. So, when my team sees their counterparts not held to that same standard, we know we have to pick up the slack." Many respondents shared that "picking up the slack" often means helping a competitor complete their scope of the work in order to successfully deliver quality work products to the client on time and within budget. For example, one respondent shared:

> I was recently working with a competing consulting firm on an IT software implementation. My team was relying on my competitor to produce quality work products that were major dependencies for us. Unfortunately, the competing firm did not have the capability or resources available to complete the deliverables they were responsible for. Instead of pointing fingers and crying to the client, my team offered to lend a hand. This allowed us to manage the quality of the work product end-to-end and make sure we hit major project milestones. However, my team put in plenty of long nights and weekends, working on the competing firm's work in addition to their own.

Benefits. The second category identified by respondents, representing 34% of the data related to coopetition tradeoffs, focused on the benefits of coopetition.

Synergy. The most common benefit of coopetition that emerged from interview responses related to the synergies gained through collaboration, representing 60% of the interview data associated with coopetition benefits. Comments related to synergy included, "The power of both competitors coming together" or "truly focused on the synergy that you can bring." One respondent said, "Collaboration looks better for you individually as well as collectively." A few respondents explained that coopetition "drives efficiencies" and "brings the right level of depth in all positions" to provide more value to the client. Another respondent said, "When there is a sense of cooperation, you can get something better, something really good."

People development. The second coopetition benefit that respondents identified, representing 40% of the interview data related to coopetition benefits, concerned people development, described in this context as the exposure to new and different opportunities for internal resources. For example, "Our resources get exposure to different cultures, tools, and templates as well as methodologies from other companies." Another respondent agreed, saying, "People get exposure to something they wouldn't have had exposure to if they just worked on a dedicated component within a project." In addition, one respondent shared, "Hard situations help people grow. . . . Our teams learn how to go above and beyond [from a collaboration perspective] what they may have ever had to do with a project supported by only one team."

Motivational Factors

The third research question asked what factors motivate the respondents to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Data analysis focused on Interview Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8. Table 8 represents the three categories associated with this research question. Interview respondents' comments cited client-driven motivation, resource-dependent motivation, and a commitment to problem-solving.

Client-driven motivation. Client-driven motivation was most frequently discussed by all eight interview participants as the main driver for coopetition, representing 42% of the interview data related to motivational factors. Respondents' comments about client-driven motivation cited scalability, client motives, and no motivation to collaborate.

Table 8. Motivational Factors

Category	**Sub-Category**	**Comments**	***N***	**%**
Client-driven Motivation	• Scalability • Client motives • No motivation to collaborate	• As we develop and have more capabilities and we've declared ourselves as a full-service consulting firm, I think we will choose to collaborate only because the client asks us to • Client propositions you with collaboration because they have in their own mind, rightly or wrongly, determined what your competitor is good at and what you are good at • There is a difference between being able to collaborate and wanting to collaborate	8	42%
Resource-dependent Motivation	• Fill competency gaps • Avoid missed opportunities	• Seek out partners for the pursuit because it makes us stronger • If there's more opportunity, then therefore I don't have enough people and I haven't got enough talented people. I'm going to have to work with competitors to deliver • A chance that we were actually going to lose the whole client engagement • Chose to collaborate because we could not offer a full service	6	32%
Commitment to Problem-Solving	• Collaborative culture • Relationships • Client focus	• Individual perspective of how do I, as an individual, as a consultant, relate to this bigger network of consulting • Open to ideas, to different ways of thinking, different experiences, different perspective • Built on a personal relationship of figuring out that it was better working together rather than competing against each other • If a collaborative relationship is the best thing for the client, then that's what we'll do	5	26%

Scalability. The most common client-driven motivation sub-category identified was scalability, described in terms of a consulting firm's ability to offer and perform a full spectrum of consulting services. This sub-category was represented in 37% of the research data associated with client-driven motivation. Many interview respondents explained that as large-scale consulting firms continue to develop organizational capabilities organically as well as inorganically, they are less motivated to collaborate with other consulting firms on client engagements. For example, one respondent explained that there is "more consolidation within the consulting environment" as larger consulting firms acquire small boutique consulting firms. Another interview respondent shared, "There will be fewer of those [collaborative] occasions than there might have been previously as we have built up our inner key capabilities." Another explained, "As we develop and have more capabilities and we declare ourselves as a full-service consulting firm, . . . I think we will choose to collaborate only because the client asks us to." Finally, another respondent said, "There is increasing pressure to justify why we would ever partner with a competitor."

Client motives. The second most common sub-category, represented in 32% of the data associated with client-driven motivation, focused on what influences the client's decision to select multi-vendor service delivery models. The respondents viewed client influences to include past experiences with consultants as well as the client's perception of a consulting firm's credentials, ability to perform, and cost savings. For example, one stated: "A client propositions you with collaboration because they have in their own mind, rightly or wrongly, determined what your competitor is good at and what you are good at."

Another respondent explained, "By having a couple of different vendors, the client can actually force consultants to keep reasonable rates for them." In addition it was believed that clients choose multi-vendor service delivery models to mitigate risk or manage internal and external politics. For example, “Multi-vendor models are very popular with certain clients because they believe it creates a healthy tension in the delivery setup.”

No motivation to collaborate. The third sub-category, represented in 25% of the interview data associated with client-driven motivation, revealed that consulting leaders choose to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements because the relationship is mandated by the client. For example, one responded explained, “I’ve never had a choice [in choosing to collaborate]” while another respondent said, “I do not collaborate unless I have to.” In addition, another respondent explained that she will collaborate with her competitor in order to meet a particular request from the client. In response to Interview Questions 3 and 8, one interviewee shared a personal experience with client-driven coopetition:

> I was working for a consulting firm, providing services to a client. When I decided to leave this consulting firm and go work at a competing consulting firm, the client specifically requested that I be brought back, subcontracted from my new firm, to support the same project. I had to work alongside my old team which had become my new competitor. Imagine how my previous employer felt seeing me there, stealing their work and taking revenue that was once theirs.

After deep reflection on this question, a final respondent shared, “There is a difference between being able to collaborate and wanting to collaborate . . . it sounds like you and I can certainly collaborate, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that that’s our preferred thing to do.”

Resource-dependent motivation. Six of the eight interview participants referenced resource-dependent motivation as a motivational factor. Resource-dependent motivation represented 32% of the interview data related to motivation factors. Respondents’ comments about resource-dependent motivation cited filling competency gaps and avoiding missed opportunities.

Fill competency gaps. The most common sub-category, represented in 97% of the interview data associated with resource-dependent motivation, concerned the ability to fill competency gaps including subject matter expertise, functional or technical credentials, diversity requirements, geographic presence, or cost reduction. For example, one respondent said he collaborated with competing firms on client engagements in the past because his firm "simply didn't have the capabilities" and collaborating with competing consulting firms provides "consultancy breadth and depth" or can "reduce cost to lower the overall price."

Avoid missed opportunities. A category closely related to filling competency gaps relates to missed opportunities. One respondent said, "If there's an opportunity and I don't have enough people or enough talented people, I'm going to have to work with competitors to deliver." Another respondent shared, "We seek out partners for the pursuit because it makes us stronger."

Commitment to problem-solving. A commitment to problem-solving was mentioned by over one half of the interview participants, representing 26% of the data. Respondents' comments about the commitment to problem-solving cited collaborative culture, relationships, and a client focus.

Collaborative culture. The most common theme, represented in 56% of the data associated with the commitment to problem-solving, focused on cultural influences that drive collaboration, including country culture and organizational culture. A key finding was that two of the eight management consulting leaders were originally based in Europe and expressed that they collaborated more frequently with competitors during their time in Europe than more recently in the United States. One respondent revealed that the consulting market is smaller in Europe and "there's an incentive to maintain relationships across consultancies because you never know who you're going to be working with in the future." Another respondent from Europe said, "We will be working with these individuals for the next 20 years. . . . Even though they may be across a different company, you may end up working with that company at some point." Finally, one respondent said she often asks herself, "How do I as, an individual, as a consultant, relate to this bigger network of consulting?"

Another key finding related to cultural influences on collaboration relates to organizational culture. For example, one respondent said, "As an organization we are open to ideas, to different ways of thinking, different experiences, and different perspectives. We feel strongly about diversity—diversity of thought and diversity of background. Our willingness to collaborate is a natural extension of our internal organizational view." Another respondent explained that working with competitors has allowed them to "look at benchmarking and see what other people at other companies have experienced."

Relationships. The second most common theme, represented in 23% of the data associated with a commitment to problem-solving, concerned relationships, described as building consulting network relationships, balancing the tension between collaboration and competition, and team health. For example, one respondent said, "The decision to collaborate was built on a personal relationship . . . figuring out that it was better working together rather than competing against each other." One leader explained, "I am very client centric and team centric. . . . I make sure our teams have what they need to be successful." However, another respondent expressed that while they appreciate the synergies of collaboration, "not all of our leadership team feels the same way," and their role is to balance the tension between collaboration and competition on client engagements.

The initial analysis and key findings of the study resulted in further synthesis of themes that emerged across the three types of motivational factors. Participants' insights and stories were leveraged to make further connections across key findings to uncover deeper motivational factors. These emergent themes are presented in the study as a supplement to the key findings and analysis.

Client focus. The third and final theme, represented in 21% of the data associated with a commitment to problem-solving, concerned client focus, described as providing the best overall solution to the client. For example, one respondent explained, “We will co-suggest to the client that we’ll work together on this to get the client the right answer.” Another respondent said, “If a collaborative relationship is the best thing for the client, then that’s what we’ll do.” Five of the eight respondents (63%), said they are committed to doing what is best for their clients. For example, one respondent expressed, “I believe that we want to give the best possible solution.” Another respondent said, “Regardless of contractual roles and responsibilities, what’s best for the client is still the most important thing . . . we have to be flexible.”

Synthesis of Emergent Themes

The initial analysis and key findings of the study resulted in further synthesis of themes that emerged across the three types of motivational factors. These emergent themes are presented in the study as a supplement to the key findings and analysis related to motivational factors. This synthesis is illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9. Emergent Themes by Coopetitive Motivation Type

Sub-categories	Client-driven	Resource-dependent	Problem-solving
Motivation to collaborate		O	O
Avoiding missed opportunities	O	O	O
Developing future opportunities	O	O	O
Filling competency gaps		O	O
Building relationships	O	O	O
Providing best solution for client		O	O
Knowledge sharing		O	O
Stealing work	O		

Four sub-categories, including the motivation to collaborate, filling competency gaps, providing the best solution for the client, and knowledge sharing, were mentioned as elements of both resource-dependent motivation and a commitment to problem-solving but were not mentioned in relation to client-driven motivation. These emergent themes reveal that interview respondents are willing to collaborate, leverage resources, and share knowledge when they are committed to providing the best solution to the client and recognize the benefits that can be realized when competitors pool knowledge and skills across organizations.

Three themes, including avoiding missed opportunities, developing future opportunities, and building relationships, were mentioned across all three coopetitive motivation types. Interviewees indicated that these factors motivate them to initiate a collaborative relationship with a competitor or agree to collaborate with a competitor to meet a client request.

For example, one respondent shared, “The client plays a big role [in vendor selection] and you don’t want to lose.” Another respondent shared that she chose to collaborate because the firm could not offer the full service alone and invited a competitor to collaborate on a client engagement because there was a chance the firm would lose the work otherwise. Partnering with a competitor made the consulting firm a more attractive option for the client and increased the firm’s ability to effectively meet the client’s requirements.

In addition, many interviewees stated that saying “no” to the proposed coopetitive relationship often means losing the client work altogether. Some leaders explained they will agree to participate in coopetitive relationships to get their “foot in the door” with hopes of gaining visibility to future opportunities with clients. One respondent said, “If I don’t have a good position with the client and I don’t get his or her ear . . . even if I have good advice, they’re not hearing it. They’re only hearing from my competitor that I’m supposed to be working with.” Another respondent said, “I don’t see great benefit in taking the all-or-nothing stand.” Finally, one respondent explained his rationale, “You don’t want to be sitting at home when you could have been playing the game.” Interviewees agreed with one another that coopetition may not be the ideal consulting environment, but they will participate in coopetitive relationships in order to build relationships with clients and create future opportunities.

This emergent theme revealed that there is a deeper level of motivation for management consulting leaders who chose to collaborate with competitors: the fear of missing out. This includes the fear of missing out on current opportunities, missing out on future opportunities, and not developing stronger relationships in both their vertical and horizontal networks. These emergent themes, described as motivational factors for coopetition in the management consulting industry, include

1. Desire to seize current business opportunities.
2. Desire to develop future business opportunities.
3. Desire to expand and deepen inter-organizational network relationships (vertically and horizontally).

Summary

This chapter reviewed the findings of the qualitative analysis used to provide answers to the study’s three research questions introduced in chapter 1. The research questions sought to understand coopetition in the management consulting industry in the context of what factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with their competitors on client engagements. The research data explains the tradeoffs that management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with competitors and the factors that motivate them to choose to take part in a coopetitive relationship, typically in the form of a multi-vendor consulting model.

One common theme was established by the data analysis in answer to Research Question 1 which sought to understand how frequently management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. The data analysis revealed that management consulting leaders frequently participate in coopetitive relationship and have collaborated with competing consulting firms on client engagements for at least the past two decades.

Research Question 2 sought to explore the tradeoffs, described as the benefits and risks of coopetition, that management consulting leaders must consider before collaborating with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Two common sub-categories were identified as benefits of coopetition: synergies realized and people development opportunities. The associated risks of coopetition included three sub-categories: a negative impact on performance management, competitors stealing opportunities, and missed opportunities to develop people.

Research Question 3 established three categories in terms of the types of motivation that drive management consulting leaders to participate in a coopetitive relationship and collaborate with competitors on client engagements: client-driven motivation, resource-dependent motivation, and a commitment to problem-solving. Client-driven motivation included three sub-categories: scalability, client motives, and no motivation to collaborate. Resource-dependent motivation included two sub-categories: fill competency gaps and avoid missed opportunities. Finally, a commitment to problem-solving included three sub-categories: collaborative culture, relationships, and client focus.

Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on the key themes of each research question and will explore the interpretation and implications of the factors that motivate management consulting leaders to participate in coopetitive relationships and collaborate with competitors on client engagements. Chapter 5 also will discuss the limitations of the research findings and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to understand what factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. Three research questions supported this study of coopetition in management consulting:

1. How frequently do management consulting leaders collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?
2. What benefits and risks do management consulting leaders consider before collaborating with a competing consulting firm on client engagements?
3. What factors motivate management consulting leaders to collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements?

This chapter reviews the key findings and interpretations of this study as well as how the research data compares to existing literature. In addition, this chapter provides insight on the implications of this research to the field of organization development. Finally, this chapter discusses the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research on coopetition.

Interpretations and Conclusions

Analysis of interview data and personal experiences with multi-vendor consulting models were used to interpret the findings of this study and form several conclusions. The following interpretations and conclusions are presented based on the major themes first introduced during the literature review in chapter 2. The themes include coopetition tradeoffs and motivational factors.

Coopetition tradeoffs. The literature review conducted for this study discussed the benefits and risks of coopetitive relationships. Benefits of coopetition included the ability to share cost, risks, resources, and knowledge. In addition, the benefits of coopetition described in existing literature discuss the synergy and innovation that can be realized when competitors collaborate. Alternatively, the risks of coopetition included competitors' opportunistic behavior, such as stealing work or building separate client relationships.

While the literature review conducted for this study provided general benefits and risks of coopetition, the results of this study revealed specific benefits and risks associated with coopetition in the management consulting industry. Specific tradeoffs that management consulting leaders consider before engaging in a coopetitive relationship were discovered. It was concluded that management consulting leaders classify coopetitive relationships as more risky than beneficial.

Coopetition benefits. The results of this research study are consistent with the existing literature on the benefits of coopetition, specifically related to coopetition synergies. For example, one interview respondent expressed, "Each consulting firm has different ways of doing things, and they provide different strengths when they come together." Gnyawali and Park (2009) shared that competitors frequently face similar industry challenges and possess resources and capabilities that are directly relevant to each other. By collaborating with competitors, management consultants get "immediate access" to resources and capabilities they would not have otherwise. The results of this study also reveal that management consulting leaders recognize the potential benefit of joining forces with another large-scale consulting firm in order to pool common resources and create value far beyond their individual contributions.

The development of people was mentioned less frequently in existing literature on coopetition, but many of the interview respondents shared this element as one of the key benefits of collaborating with competitors in the management consulting industry. Interview respondents revealed that coopetition gives their employees access to new methods, tools, knowledge, and experiences they may not have had otherwise. In support of this finding, Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) believe that only through joint exploration and development of resources and capabilities can organizations gain a sustainable competitive advantage in an ever-changing environment.

Coopetition risks. The literature on coopetition risks focuses mainly on the opportunistic behavior between competitors. Similarly, this study reveals that management consulting firms struggle with the tension between creating value through cooperation and the temptation to be opportunistic and take a greater share of the value created through collaboration (Gnyawali & Park, 2009; Lavie, 2007; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2009). For example, interview respondents explained that their competitors attempt to build close client relationships and find additional projects outside of the coopetitive relationship or find ways to cut them out of the next phase of project work. When competing consulting firms work together on client engagements, they constantly look for ways to outshine one another and win the next opportunity. This behavior often gets in the way of the overall project performance and can have a negative impact on the project environment.

While opportunistic behavior was mentioned quite often by the management consulting leaders as a coopetition risk, the interview data uncovered additional risks associated with coopetition in the management consulting industry, including performance management and the development of people.

The increased dependency on the competitor's resources and capabilities impacts management consulting leaders' ability to manage the quality and performance of the overall project. If the competitor makes a mistake, this will impact the other consulting firm's work. However, from the client's perspective, the competing consulting firms are one team, committed to one goal, and providing one integrated solution. Therefore, clients are not interested in knowing who messed up a certain deliverable that impacts another deliverable. Clients want a seamless and collaborative solution provided by "one team," with no excuses or finger-pointing.

Management consulting leaders ultimately have no control over the performance management of their competitor's team unless the client has specified otherwise. Therefore, the natural integration and quality that can be realized through one consulting firm may be jeopardized when a coopetition relationship is at play.

Although the development of people was mentioned by management consulting leaders as a benefit of coopetition, this aspect was also identified as a risk of coopetitive relationships. Many management consulting leaders explained that when they share opportunities with competitors, their employees must compete again the competitor's employees for positions on client projects. In some cases, many people will not get staffed on the project because the competitor's resources were a better fit for the positions. Therefore, people can miss out on career development opportunities that they would have experienced if the consulting firm were not collaborating with a competitor.

Motivational factors. Cummings' (1984) study on transorganizational collaboration presented three main motivational factors that trigger collaboration between organizations, including a commitment to problem-solving, resource dependency, and mandated transorganizational collaboration. However, this study focused on the types of motivational factors specifically related to the management consulting industry and particularly in relation to coopetition.

Client-driven motivation. The most common motivational base for management consulting leaders identified in this study was client-driven motivation, defined by Cummings (1984) as mandated transorganizational collaboration. Cummings described mandated collaboration as scenarios when a higher authority, law, or regulation mandates that organizations collaborate to solve problems. For the purposes of this research, the higher authority is the client who has selected a multi-vendor consulting model. The management consulting firms are motivated to collaborate because they are required to interact.

Although management consultants may not be eager to collaborate with their competitors on client engagements, the study uncovered a few motivational factors that drive coopetition at a deeper level. Overall, management consultants have a strong desire to seize current business opportunities and gain visibility to future business opportunities as well. In addition, management consultants have a strong desire to expand and strengthen their inter-organizational network relationships, both vertically and horizontally.

Resource-dependent motivation. The results of this study demonstrate that a dependency on resources is the second most common motivational factor for management consulting leaders who decide to form coopetitive relationships. Cummings (1984) described resource dependency in terms of an organization's inability to internally generate all the resources needed to solve a problem, thereby triggering the organization's motivation to interact with elements in the external environment, such as other organizations, in order to obtain those resources. In a resource-dependent scenario, an organization's willingness to interact is based on its assessment of the other organization's available resources. As previously mentioned, large management consulting firms are continuing to develop their capabilities and will become less dependent on external resources going forward. However, boutique consulting firms that specialize in niche markets often have the credentials that larger management consulting firms simply cannot realize. For example, boutique consulting firms that have an industry specialization, such as hospitality or fashion, will add the depth and value that a large management consulting firm cannot provide.

Commitment to problem-solving. Based on the findings from this study, management consultants are least motivated to collaborate with competitors in relation to a commitment to problem-solving. Cummings (1984) described the commitment to problem-solving as situations where the problem is too large or complex for a single organization to resolve alone, and Soekijad and Andriessen (2003) reported that competitors often build coopetitive relationships when the problem at hand is too complicated to manage on their own. However, based on the interview findings, management consulting leaders are not intimidated by the scale and complexity of their clients' problems. As one respondent mentioned, "We have turned a corner in management consulting. The bigger management consulting firms continue to build out their capabilities internally as well as inorganically through acquisitions. There is increasing pressure to justify why any of us would ever partner with a competitor." While one certainly cannot "whistle a symphony" alone, management consulting firms believe they can provide the entire orchestra to their clients. In this analogy, a management consulting team is the orchestra, and management consulting leaders are the conductors of the symphony. Management consulting leaders may be committed to problem-solving, but they would prefer to solve the problem without involving a competing firm.

Overall, the researcher concluded that management consulting leaders frequently collaborate with competing consulting firms on client engagements. However, a coopetitive relationship is not their preferred service delivery model. While management consultants appreciate the synergy that can be realized through transorganizational collaboration, the risks associated with coopetition often outweigh the benefits. Thus, a coopetitive relationship is rarely initiated by management consulting leaders; coopetition is client-driven, typically in the form of a multi-vendor consulting model.

Implications

The results of this research study do not provide definite answers but are meant to offer insight into the current state of the management consulting competitive landscape and the complexity of the multi-vendor consulting models used frequently by clients around the world. The multi-vendor consulting model is a transorganizational topic that will continue to gain importance as more companies strategically source professional services, such as management consulting, in order to support organizational transformation.

The results of this research study shed light on the powerful dynamic that exists between management consulting firms and the clients they serve. Despite the breadth and depth of large-scale management consulting firms, companies are intentionally selecting multi-vendor consulting models as a way to mitigate risk and maximize value creation. What companies do not realize is that the "healthy tension" they are attempting to create through a multi-vendor consulting model can often backfire when competing management consulting firms are opportunistic and do not align around common goals.

In addition, the results of this research also revealed that large-scale management consulting firms are frequently entering into risky collaborative relationships with their competitors in order to provide services to their clients. This research shared insight on the unique motivational factors that influence management consulting firms to collaborate with their competitors: While management consulting firms prefer to win entire projects on their own, they would rather win a portion of the work than win no work at all. This complex web of motivational factors requires both clients and management consulting firms to constantly assess opportunities and identify relationships that they should invest in, as opposed to those coopetitive relationships they should avoid. This dilemma presents many opportunities for transorganizational development practitioners.

Recommendations to Transorganizational Development Practitioners

Transorganizational development practitioners can conduct stakeholder assessments with clients and consulting firms as part of the due diligence process prior to the vendor selection for a multi-vendor consulting model. The stakeholder assessment can include assessments at the organizational level, industry domain level, and interorganizational network web level to ensure that the client and consulting firms fully understand the complexity, including the benefits and risks, surrounding the coopetitive dynamics of a multi-vendor consulting model. These types of holistic stakeholder assessments can help clients and consulting firms develop an understanding of the impact a mandated collaborative relationship can have on their project environment and outcomes.

Also, there are opportunities for transorganizational development practitioners to assess group dynamics and assist in developing high-performing transorganizational teams for the client. Transorganizational development practitioners can facilitate the “convening” of competitors on behalf of the client as they kick off a multi-vendor consulting model for a project. Transorganizational development practitioners can help to facilitate conversations between competing consulting firms on how to organize for task performance and define performance evaluation criteria for the project.

In addition to identifying potential coopetition risks, transorganizational development practitioners can assist management consulting firms by assessing coopetitive scenarios and developing risk mitigation plans that prepare the firms for risks that might surface throughout the relationship. Transorganizational development practitioners can help management consulting firms to assess their “portfolio” of horizontal network relationships. Similar to the stock market, management consulting firms need help managing their horizontal relationship investments. Transorganizational development practitioners can act as strategic relationship planners and help management consultants plan for and invest in the right coopetitive relationships at the right time.

Study Limitations

Although this study provides valuable new insights to the field of transorganizational development, there are a few limitations that should be highlighted.

First, the study took place with leaders from only one management consulting firm. If this study were to be conducted at a different management consulting firm, or across various consulting firms, the research might result in new or contradictory findings. Also, some of the management consulting leaders shared experiences from previous consulting firms, but their stories did not always reflect current situations. This could impact the data collected on the "frequency of coopetition" in management consulting.

Second, the sample population for this study was small and limited to two functions. It was conducted with only eight management consulting leaders, meaning a sample population of this size may not reflect the perspectives of the larger population of management consulting leaders that exist in the industry. Next, a majority of the sample population came from two key functional areas within the organization which could add a bias to the data based on the participant functional background (e.g., some functional areas naturally collaborate more than other functional areas).

Third and finally, the fact that all of the management consulting leaders that were interviewed have frequently collaborated with competitors may have influenced their perspectives on coopetition. For example, management consulting leaders who have never collaborated with competitors on client engagements might have answered the interview questions in a completely different way.

Future Research

As a result of this study, many new topics were identified as suggested future research. The researcher suggests that further research be conducted on transorganizational development frameworks for the multi-vendor consulting model. A transorganizational development framework for multi-vendor consulting would help transorganizational development practitioners gain further insight on transorganizational design, transorganizational dynamics, and transorganizational transformation specifically related to the management consulting industry. The researcher suggests that further research be conducted on the motivational factors that drive companies to select multi-vendor consulting models, as clients are a major catalyst for coopetitive relationships in the management consulting industry. Another suggested topic for future research would be the concept of transorganizational stakeholder analysis and a review of the vendor selection process for multi-vendor consulting models. Further research can be conducted on the dynamics of multi-vendor consulting models and the key qualities of high-performing multi-vendor consulting teams. Finally, an important aspect of future research should be dedicated to the management of transorganizational systems, specifically related to multi-vendor consulting models. This research may include a review of the coordination of effort, or integration mechanisms, used by competing consulting firms to manage shared tasks or problems on projects. This research also may include an analysis of the performance strategies management consultants leverage to identify common goals and define how to collaboratively achieve them with their competitors.

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Appendix A: Research Interview Questions

Research Interview Questions

1. Do you collaborate or partner with other consulting firms on client engagements?
2. Is there a qualification process or assessment that takes place prior to the collaboration or partnership?
    a. What qualities do you typically look for in a partner?
3. Why do you choose to collaborate or partner with competitors on client engagements?
4. Overall, why do you think your organization chooses to collaborate or partner with various competing firms on client engagements?
5. In your opinion, what opportunities are gained by collaborating or partnering with this firm?
6. In your opinion, what opportunities are lost by collaborating or partnering with this firm?
7. Do you feel that collaborating with other consulting firms on client engagements is risky?
    a. If yes, why?
    b. If no, why?
8. How do(es) the client(s) influence the collaborative relationship with this firm?

Appendix B: Action Research Invitation—Initial Communication

Action Research Invitation—Initial Communication

Good afternoon—

As you may know, I am currently studying to receive my Master's in Organization Development (MSOD) from Pepperdine University. One requirement of the MSOD program is to complete a thesis on a current organization development issue and conduct research.

I have decided to address transorganizational collaboration by asking the following question:

"What variables drive management consulting leaders to collaborate or partner with competing consulting firms on client engagements?"

Based on previous consulting experiences and my recent literature review on co-coopetition*, I feel that I have an overall point of view on what influences an organization's decision to collaborate with other firms. However, for the purpose of my thesis, I would like to uncover key themes and trends specifically related to leaders.

I am writing to you today with an invitation to participate in my study. I value your opinion as an organizational leader and I would enjoy hearing your thoughts on my research topic. I believe your perspective will add value and depth to my overall study and final analysis.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me by January 3rd, 2014 and we can coordinate a location and time that will work best for your schedule in the month of January.

RESEARCH DETAILS

When: January 2014
Format: Phone interview
Duration: 1 hour

Please note, your responses will be recorded. However, your responses will be **confidential** and your name and organization will not be mentioned in the analysis.

Thank you for your consideration and support. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

*Co-coopetition occurs when companies interact with partial congruence of interests. They cooperate with each other to reach a higher value creation if compared to the value created without interaction.

Co-coopetition often takes place when companies that are in the same market work together in the exploration of knowledge and research of new products/services, at the same time that they compete for market share of their products/services and in the exploitation of the knowledge created. In this case, the interactions occur simultaneously and in different levels in the value chain.

Appendix C: Guiding Principles for Coding

Guiding Principles for Coding

1. Does the interview data relate to whether or not management consulting leaders collaborate with competitors?
2. Does the interview data relate to a benefit of coopetition?
3. Does the interview data relate to a risk of coopetition?
4. Does the interview data relate to what motivates management consulting leaders to collaborate with competitors?