

OSS DEVELOPER-COMMUNITY ROLE CONFLICT AND ORGANIZATIONAL TURNOVER

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1 Extended Abstract

Open Source Software (OSS) is usually developed by a heterogeneous group of hobbyists, professional contributors and firms (Feller and Fitzgerald 2002, Grand et al. 2004). However, while much research attention has been devoted to the group of volunteers and their motivation to participate (e.g., Bitzer and Geishecker 2010, Xu et al. 2009), or to the role of firms in OSS development (e.g., Teigland et al. 2014, Schaarschmidt and Von Kortzfleisch 2015), we lack an understanding of how employed developers behave when they work for an OSS project. In particular, employed developers may face role conflicts stemming from different social norms and beliefs inherent in both organizational and OSS cultures (Rizzo et al. 1970). For example, there might be situations where firm interests do not map with what the community finds appropriate in terms of development trajectory (O'Mahony and Bechky 2008). This research addresses the question if role conflicts are associated with increased turnover intentions toward the OSS project and the employing organization. I surveyed 185 employed OSS developers and found that (1) ideology imbalance drive role conflicts and (2) that role conflicts are indeed related to increased turnover intentions with regard to the employing organization. No such effect was found for the association between role conflict and community (i.e. OSS project) turnover intention. In addition, I tested several moderators of the significant relationship. Here, perceived supervisor support dampens the positive effect of role conflict on organizational turnover intention.

The results yield important implications for management and theory. First, the research sheds light on the notion that there are role conflicts for employed OSS developers that may have detrimental effects. Second, this research shows that role conflicts lead to increased turnover intentions towards the employing organization but not for the community. Managers must be aware of this fact as employees who feel role conflicts are likely to quit and may be hired by competitors. However, this study also shows that managerial support for OSS development may be an important mechanism to overcome the conflict-quitting intention circle.

2 References

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