

## The Cluster Manager

Advice to a cluster manager



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Catalysing a cluster requires a  
change agent ... **the cluster manager**

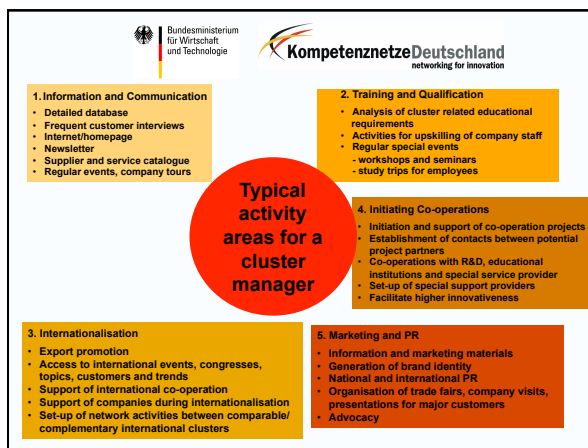


## The Cluster Manager

A cornerstone role

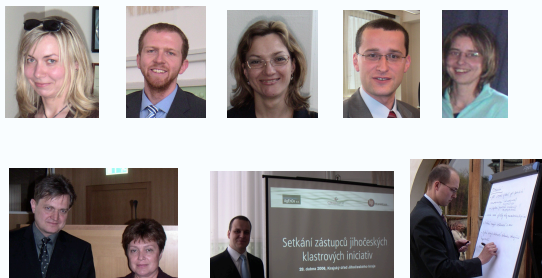


- Role not easy! The Clustering Initiator
- A change agent, catalyst
  - Continual re-inventor of the initiative
- Networker, relationship builder
  - From isolation to collective action
  - Significant 1-on-1 contact...**the** building block
  - Carefully establishing cluster's Board
  - Keeping momentum with Task Forces
- Ideally **not** the cluster's Project Manager



## The Czech Cluster Development Team

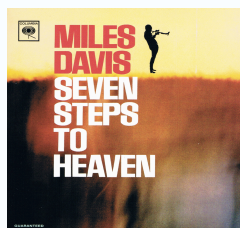
Some frontline cluster managers



## Uppsala BIO Cluster, Sweden



## Advice to front line Cluster Managers



### 1. Listen!



- **Listen** carefully to the needs of your cluster's stakeholders. Understand their situation, their opportunities, their constraints.
- Converse, don't interrogate.
- What are the cross-cutting themes?
- Respond with demand orientated services, collaborative projects.

### 2. Build relationships

#### Make connections



- Cluster development centers on active relationships.
- Start with what requires low trust.
- **Build your softpower** ... results come through persuasion not coercion.
- Build wide external networks to help you scan the cluster's horizon and support new connections.

### 3. Find the cluster champions that others trust

#### Energise others



- Find and empower your cluster's talent. Understand their agendas.
- Ensure the clustering initiative is not dominated by an elite few.
- Open the dialogue; welcome a diversity of views.
- Keep attracting new people into the process; deepen the pool from which new leaders can emerge.

### 4. Anticipate!



- **The direction for your cluster is unlikely to be straight ahead.**
- Look for game-changing information at the edge of your cluster ... those who are on the periphery... exploring new markets, new technologies.
- But don't be too far ahead of the crowd!

### 5. Act as a venture capitalist

#### Build a portfolio of projects



- Spread the benefits ... and risks.
- Address opportunities, not problems.
- Explore new opportunities at the fringes.
- New agendas with passion are tested, not debated. Generate multiple options.
- Be comfortable with knowing without reasoning, your intuitive understanding.
- **If there are no failures you are taking it too easy.** Learn by doing.

## 6. Ignore the title on your business card!



- It's irrelevant to your cluster's insiders.
- The right to engage with your cluster comes from **how you personally bring value** to each stakeholder and earn their confidence and respect.

## 7. Ride with the highs; Be prepared for the lows



- Celebrate the successes, the good times.
- But setbacks are integral to working on the edge ... and a source of learning.
- Be prepared for stakeholders that are infuriated with your activities. You are a change agent.
- **Keep your flak jacket handy!**

## Would you like a job that offers...

- No formal authority? No regular hours?
- A high degree of uncertainty?
- Breaking patterns; Crossing boundaries
- Finding heroes; uncovering talent

And you will need to:

- Earn respect from skeptics
- Be proactive when the limelight fades
- Work with energy drainers; Lead from behind

What  
skills,  
qualities,  
knowledge,  
attributes does a  
cluster manager require?

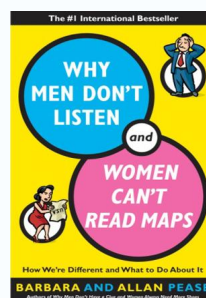
## And the Cluster Manager needs to...

... fight the fear of change, fight inertia  
... share the workload  
... create an ongoing learning process  
with flexible teams  
... use shoe leather



## Cluster Managers

The gender issue



'Boys compete;  
Girls cooperate'

'Boys like things;  
Girls like people'

'Women multi-track'

### Cluster Manager's Role Caution!



- Find early benefits
  - Move at speed of business
- Don't let any one person/firm dominate
- Open communications, transparency
  - Retain confidences
- Share workload; empower
  - Don't end up with all the 'To-Do' lists!

### A Reminder!

Cluster development is about building internationally competitive firms



#### Marel, Iceland

- Grown out of Reykjavik's fishing cluster
- World's largest manufacturer of portion control equipment
- From fish to poultry and red meats
- In operation 20 years; 500+ staff
- **98% exported**



### Cluster Development Handbook

Published October 2012  
22 Chapters, 260 pages



Available from  
[www.clusternavigators.com](http://www.clusternavigators.com)



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