



THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

TOCEMA europe
Town Centre Management

North East South West
INTERREG III C



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1 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER ?

The role of a town centre manager is complex, multi-faceted, and requires flexibility. The role will depend on the partnership and the town centre.

The core activities of a town centre manager are the following:

Practical advice

The town centre manager should always:

spotlight the partnership,

inform the partners before the media,

not answer questions that could hurt one of the partners,

be positive.

1. Developing the partnership

Developing and reinforcing the partnership in order to ensure solid and permanent financing as well as a balance between the public and private partners is one of the key tasks of a town centre manager.

2. Realising projects and leading actions

The town centre manager is responsible for initiating and undertaking many of the projects and actions that are in the action plan. To do this, the town centre manager will often establish a working group that will take responsibility for delivering the action as well as for mobilizing the partners and such other tasks as are necessary for success.

The town centre manager may also have responsibility for development or refinement of the strategic plan, working alongside the steering group or board of the partnership. A town centre manager should make decisions and take the necessary steps for the accomplishment of a project but must ensure that there is specific approval from the board of directors if taking a financial risk. During the action, the role also consists of encouraging cooperation among the various partners, evaluating the progress of the action and informing the board of directors of the results.

3. Representing the partnership

The town centre manager is a full time advocate and champion for the town centre and must be seen as neutral or independent of other interests. The town centre manager represents the partnership and has to defend the interests of the town centre as well as ensure its promotion. To succeed in her/his mission, the manager is responsible for liaison with the media and promoting the town centre management partnership and its activities.

Media liaison requires skill and the town centre manager has to be careful not to reveal strategic information before it is approved for release.

4. Looking for investors

A town centre manager should look to use the information held on the town to encourage investments in the city centre. This will involve working with both existing businesses in the centre and with potential inward investors. The town centre manager needs to work in the context of the commercial development strategy agreed by the partnership board and work alongside skilled partners in this field.



The town centre manager needs to be aware of the commercial sensitivity of this work and always respect the need for confidentiality.

5. Understanding the centre

The town centre manager needs to keep him/herself informed about the centre. This involves regular communication with stakeholders and interest groups, analysing feedback from the public, whether direct or through the local media, ensuring awareness of surveys and research undertaken by others, undertaking or commissioning original research, and then making use of this information to identify trends, changes or problems that may need attention. This way the town centre manager can keep the partnership informed of how the centre is performing, review the effect of actions undertaken and can ensure that future actions are prioritised and targeted as required.

6. Managing the town centre structure day to day

The town centre manager may also have responsibility for managing and motivating a team. There is a need to organise their work and ensure its effectiveness. Reports on progress will need to be made regularly to the partnership board.

2

WHAT IS THE PROFILE OF A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER ?

A town centre manager has to be able:

- **to gather people around a common goal and lead others to achieve objectives,**
 - ➔ To do so, they have to build and maintain a network; be innovative; be open-minded.
- **to motivate and communicate with people,**
 - ➔ To do so, they have to be enthusiastic; proactive; able to seize the opportunity to speed up a project; be positive when facing a conflict and able to generate a consensus.
- **to organize a project. A town centre manager is a co-ordinator and an achiever,**
 - ➔ To do so, they have to identify the resources of each partner; analyze and understand the different interests in the town; plan and launch the action plan.



It is sometimes difficult to move projects forward. There are two main reasons why this can happen.

- It may be an organisational issue - the structure established to take an action forward is not proving effective.
Looking at what structures were adopted to resolve similar problems in other centres may be a helpful way forward and the partnership may then need to change the way it is undertaking the project.
- It may be a communication issue - potential partners have not yet gained a full understanding of the issue.
Using best practice from other centres to demonstrate the effectiveness of what is being proposed can help explain the idea more clearly.

3 *SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER*

Given the partnership nature of town centre management, the recruitment process needs to be an inclusive one. A model that has proved effective is:

1. All partners or stakeholders work together to agree a detailed requirement profile for the post. ATCM provide specimen job descriptions and person specifications on their websites (www.atcm.org).
2. Experience shows that town centre managers are often recruited from outside the immediate area. Hence there is a need to advertise more widely than just in the local media.

Successful recruitment techniques include:

- advertising in a national newspaper
- advertising in specialist papers or magazines (retail, tourism, marketing, property for example)
- using internet job finder networks
- advertising on the national or regional town centre management website
- retaining a specialist agency to identify people.

3. Assessment of all written applications to produce a short list of candidates.
4. A preliminary interview may then take place or else candidates are invited to attend the final interview.
5. Final hearing with the best candidates (usually 3-5 but perhaps more). This may involve a variety of elements including a formal interview, a presentation by each candidate to a wider group of partners and stakeholders, other tests and opportunities for the candidates to understand the town.



In Spain, AGECEU has taken an active part in the development of a Training Course for Town Centre Managers that has been run in Valencia since 1999 with the support of the Generalitat Valenciana - based on the formation programme of the European Social Fund that it manages - the Valencian Trade League (COVACO), the Council of Chambers of Commerce of the Valencian Community and Valencia University.

The seventh edition of the course was run in 2006 and it has now trained more than 150 professional people in town centre management based on an innovative formative programme (275h) that combines theoretical and practical aspects, and introduces multi-disciplinarity through topics such as urbanism, sociology, marketing, geography, planning, town economy, direction and management techniques, cultural and patrimonial management, tourism, etc. Through the course, representatives of 11 Spanish regions as well as several Latin American countries have already been set up as specialists in town centre management.

Town centre managers may come from a wide variety of backgrounds. It is important to recognise the skills they bring to the job from their previous experience but also to encourage them to develop any important skills or knowledge that they are missing as early as possible.

Salaries: these vary considerably depending on experience and the exact nature of the role. The national or regional association will often be able to provide guidance on current salary levels.

4 HOW TO INTRODUCE A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

When a town centre manager is hired, it is important to introduce them to the partnership and to all the city centre actors and users. An induction programme should be set up.

As it can increase the reputation of the partnership and attract new partners, an event is often organized for the occasion. It is very important for the town centre manager to be recognisable and for the role to be understood. Local media has a key role to play.

When to organise the event ?

Within three months after the arrival of the new manager.

Where to hold the event ?

In a symbolic place that will preserve the neutral status of the town centre manager.



Who is invited ?

Local media, the partners, potential stakeholders and key interests.

An invitation can also be sent to the directors and chairmen of the largest 50 companies in the city.

5 *WHAT ARE THE FIRST STEPS OF A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER ?*

When starting, the town centre manager's priorities are:

- establishing contact with the different stakeholders,
- explaining the concept of town centre management,
- clarifying her/his role to make sure that it is embraced by the influencers of the city,
- defining her/his core tasks with the partners ,
- understanding the nature of the interest and influence of each partner,
- reading existing research and studies available about the city.

But above all:

- knowing the point of view of each collaborator,
- identifying key influencers,
- understanding the dynamics of the city,
- seeking the collaboration of local authorities, retailers, associations.

Finally, the town centre manager should:

- identify the opportunities for financial support,
- get in contact with the town centre managers from nearby cities,
- maintain the contacts being made,
- join the relevant regional or national association or where these do not yet exist, one in another European country.

6 *HOW TO EVALUATE A TOWN CENTRE MANAGER*

When the core tasks are defined, it is crucial to set indicators in order to evaluate regularly the town centre manager.

In Neuville sur Saône (Lyon), an evaluation tool has been implemented. It focuses on 10 essential or discriminating criteria. These criteria are not technical but relate on the "savoir-être" of the manager and her/his personal potential.



The criteria are the following:

1. SELF-CONFIDENCE (Discriminating)
2. TENACITY AND PERSEVERANCE (Discriminating)
3. ORIENTATION TOWARDS RESULTS (Essential)
4. METHODOLOGICAL RIGOUR (Essential)
5. INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY (Essential)
6. SEARCH FOR INFORMATION AND MOBILIZATION OF NETWORKS (Discriminating)
7. MOBILIZATION AND TRANSFER OF EXPERTISE (Essential)
8. COMPREHENSION OF THE NEEDS OF PARTNERS (Essential)
9. INDUCTION AND SYNTHESIS (Essential)
10. LEADERSHIP (Discriminating)

For each of these criteria, a card is developed and contains:

- the definition of the criteria,
- the methods and circumstances of its application,
- a scale of progression on which the manager must be able to be located and define her/his axis of progression.

How to apply the evaluation tool ?

- ➔ From these descriptive cards, each partner and the manager fills an evaluation grid on the manager;
- ➔ At a meeting of evaluation technical committee, the partners and the manager review the evaluation grids;
- ➔ From the synthesis, the partners and the manager define the axes and objectives of progression and their methods (formation, coaching, etc).

Example of a card:

1 - SELF-CONFIDENCE

Definition

This competence reflects usually a feature of character (it is often more difficult to develop than another), it translates the certainty of the manager regarding his capacity to achieve a project or a mission. It is expressed by the aptitude to make choices or to face potential conflicts or dissension from others.

When and why this is important?

This competence is desirable to support its convictions in spite of the opposition, to show courage in difficult situations and to move forward. It is motivating for the other people and creates a positive and constructive climate. It supports to other essential competences.



Scale	1 : Presents himself with determination and calm, shows himself confident even facing dissatisfied person.
Threshold	2 : Maintains his positions and acts without awaiting possible agreement of others, confident in his autonomy. 3 : Affirms his confidence in his judgement facing his interlocutors see himself as the initiator and the person responsible for the engaged actions, learns lessons from errors or possible failures.
Excellence	4 : Affirms his point of view with force when he is confronted with conflicts, argues, supports, assumes his position, either with shopkeepers, or the town and commune partners.



APPENDIXE

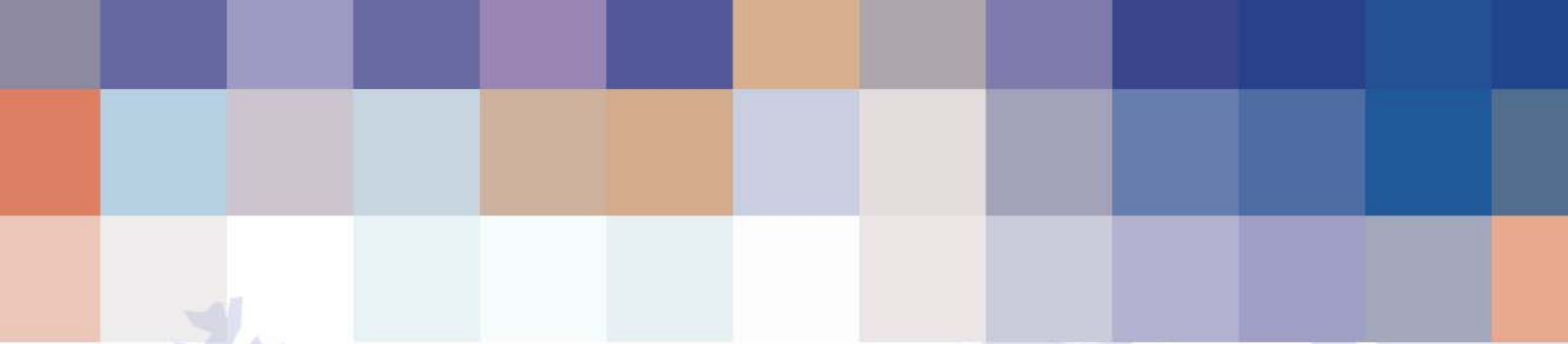
Example of job ad for a town centre manager:

A town centre manager is looked for at Saint-Priest in order to proceed to the installation of various projects aiming to the development of the town centre.

Under the responsibility of a public-private partnership, you ensure the links between the various partners and take care of the coordination of the activities relating to the development of Saint-Priest's centre envisaged by the partnership.

You are a leader, you are proactive and analyze the environment in which you act easily. Recognized for your organizational skills, you are also endowed with great communication skills.

You have a university degree and, you have a professional experience. Knowledge of the municipal world and of retail trade is an asset.



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