



Shaping the Future of Educational Research: Collaboration between Academics and Project Managers

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Why does the collaboration matter?

If research wants to thrive in the new knowledge economy, then academics need to collaborate with their project managers in order to enhance not only the outputs of research, but also the process by which the outputs are created.

With the growing complexity of research funded projects, research management and administration (RMA) has become essential in a successful project. Therefore academics and project managers need to work together to achieve excellence in research management, to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of the research undertaken

Some issues with Research Management and Administration

“The work of research administrators is wide-ranging and some of it is not even always visible to academics, as it covers everything from technology transfer to stimulating entrepreneurial activity”

Deem (2010)

“Administrators may also have access to other forms of economic and cultural capital that most academics do not have, such as, for example, the ability to facilitate a research grant application’s progress in a myriad ways aside from the academic content of the bid; the capacity to assist with patenting or other intellectual property matters; expertise in research ethics; and a network of contacts in grant-awarding bodies, as well as industrial and commercial contacts for the purposes of knowledge or technology transfer or applied research funding”

Deem (2010)

“Research management and administration (RMA) arose from the need to manage growth in the number and complexity of research awards over the last fifty years, and is an activity and profession that continues to mature. It has grown in parallel with the increasing complexity of research funding, which is often larger in scale, milestone driven, multi-partner, multi-discipline, required to demonstrate impact, and subject to more audit, and arguably, greater governance and bureaucracy”

Langley (2012)

European funding Erasmus+

The European Commission's new EU Erasmus Plus programme is not just looking at the research, but excellence in research management; the nature of the partnership and the expertise it brings in the area of dissemination and sustainability (Erasmus+ Programme guide 2014), so a key driver for any organisation applying for funding needs an experienced project/research manager on board.

<http://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/>

Content of the presentation

- Overview of the SAS project
- Focus on roles and responsibilities: from complicated to complex systems
- Crossing lines of professional demarcation: towards an entrepreneurial outlook

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF COLLABORATION

The Success at School Project

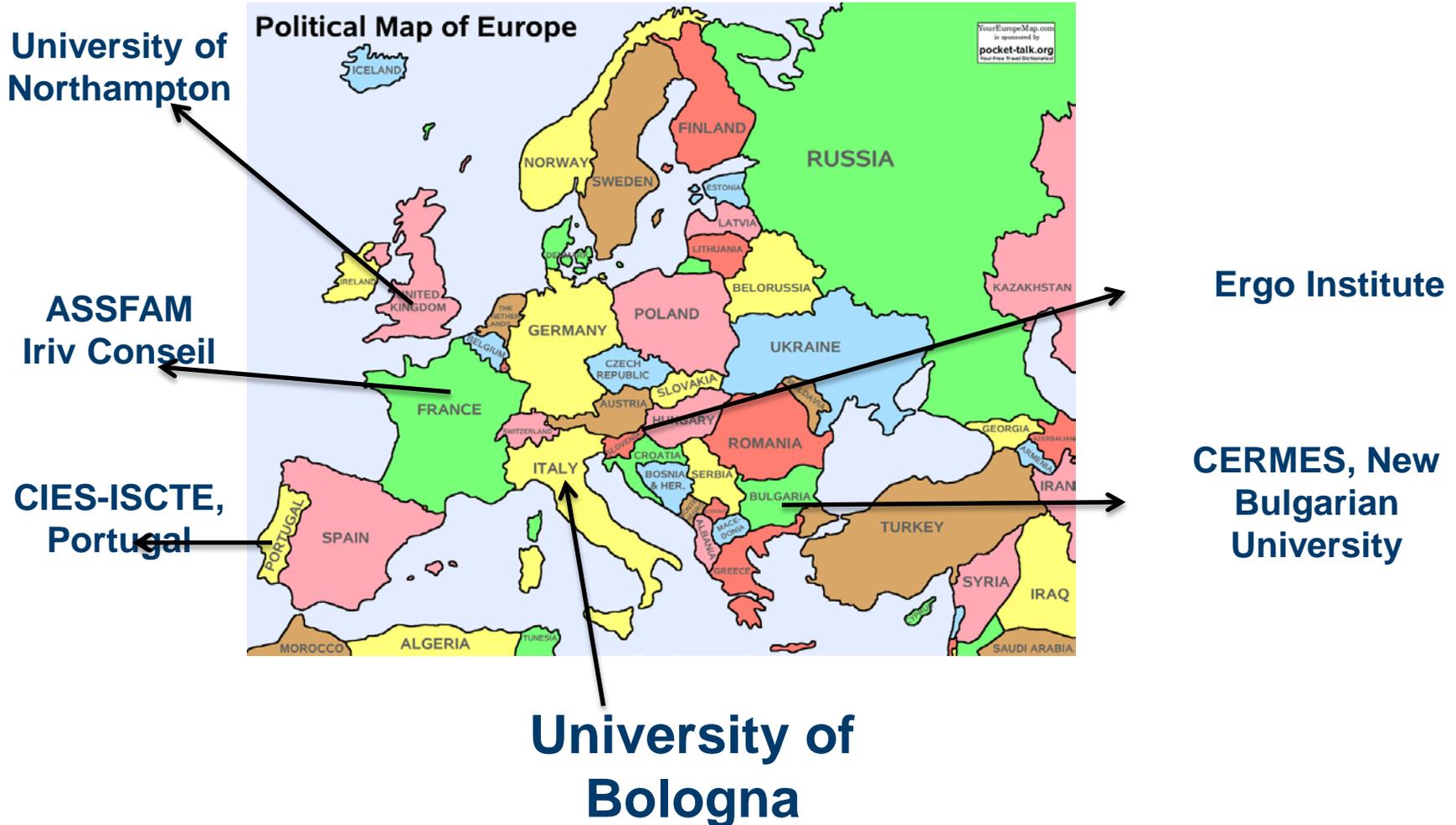
What is 'Success at School' (SAS)?

- **Two year project** (December 2012 – November 2014)

SAS aims to:

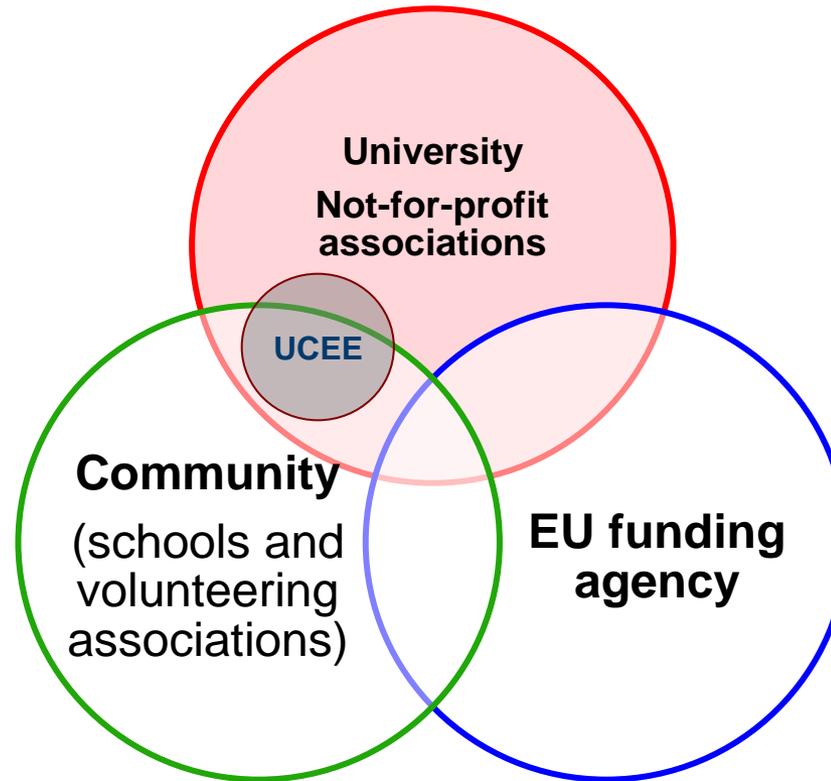
- help young people (ages 14-19) who have left school or are at risk of leaving school to keep being engaged with education
- Use **volunteering** as an alternative approach to engage young people and provide them with skills and competences useful to their education or future training or employment
- Support young people through the use of **mentors** and develop a mentoring programme

Who are the project partners?



An extended view of partnership: stakeholders' engagement at the University of Northampton

Triple helix

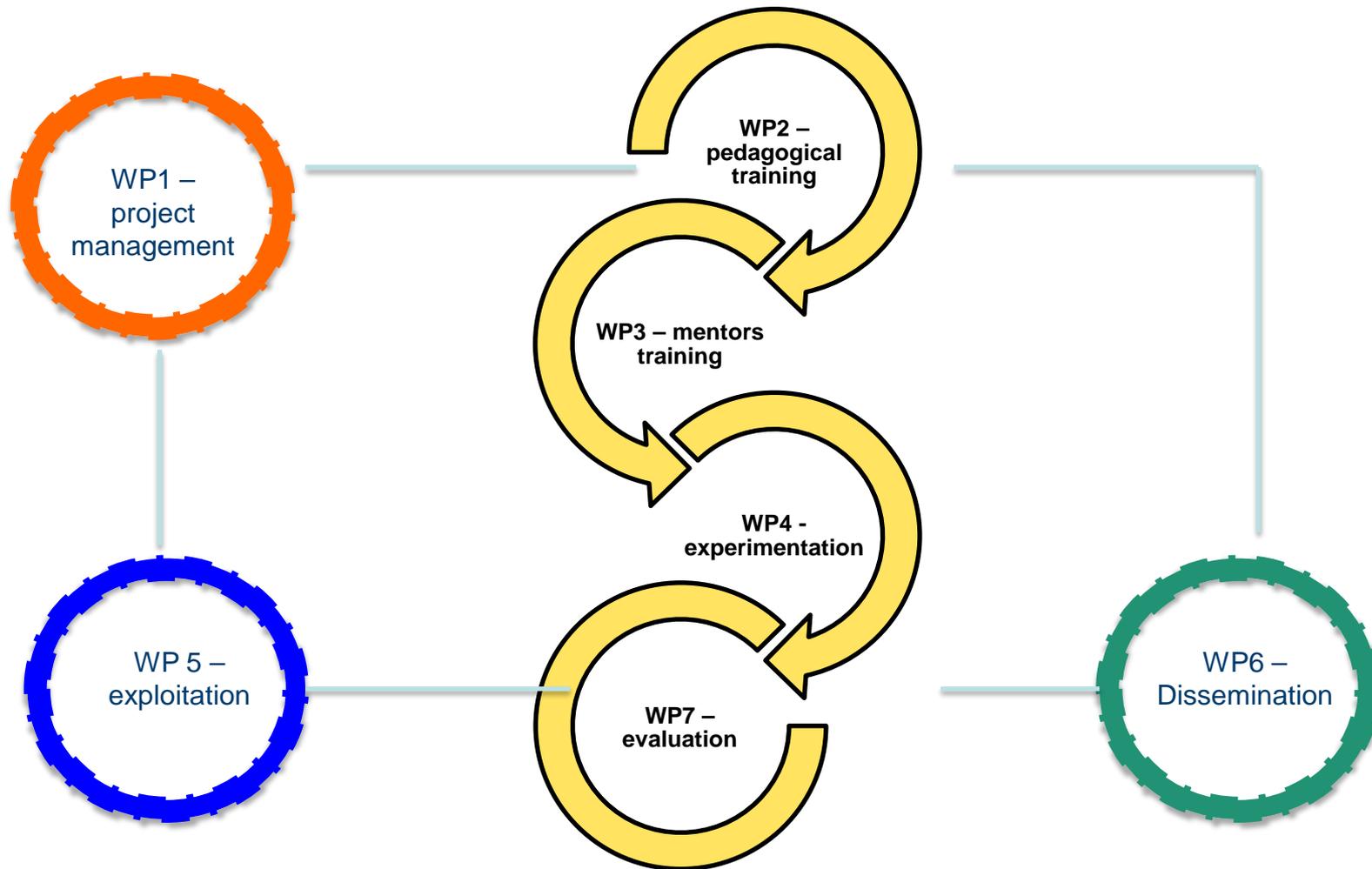


SAS project extended partners

Project organisation: 7 workpackages

W/ P	Task
1	Management, administrative and financial data, interim and final report; coordination of the team and 5 European meetings.
2	Building the pedagogical method, proposing different sessions to early school leavers to enhance a voluntary involvement to encourage young people back into education.
3	Proposing a mentoring support to professionals working with young people
4	Experimentation: experimenting the pedagogical method and mentoring ; testing the method among the partners ; organising the pedagogical sessions among early school leavers/youngsters facing difficulties at school and professionals working with them
5	Exploitation: creating a network of stakeholders (young people, professionals working with young people, volunteering associations and secondary schools) ; organising national advisory groups in each of the 5 countries
6	Dissemination: developing content for the project website, a weblog ; articles written by each of the partners on the basis of the experimentation
7	Evaluation: evaluating the European meetings, the pedagogical method & mentoring, the experimentation (questionnaires among the target groups and partners

Project overview: 4 key workpackages



THE PRACTICE OF RESEARCH

The changing landscape of roles and responsibilities:
redefining professional boundaries

The attributes of a project manager

- People person, good communicator, mediator, motivator
- Knowing your partners strengths and weaknesses
- Technical knowledge
- Finance and contracts
- 'business' focussed
- Dissemination and sustainability – marketing & PR
- Strategies: Risk, communication, dissemination, financial
- Being accepted admin vs academics
- Internal and external forces

Effective responsibilities

Coordinator responsibilities

Overall responsibility for every part of the project, including the following:

- preparation, conduct, and administration of a research grant
- Ongoing management and leadership in relation to the project
- Responsible for the effective teamwork amongst partners
- Responsible for the timeliness and quality of the research and its outputs
- Participating in the devise of the methodology, research design, data collection and analysis
- Responsible for communicating with the agency and ensuring the timely submission of interim and final report and all other matters required by the funding agency

Project manager responsibilities

- Managing and leading the partners
- Managing co-ordination of the partners
- Managing project deliverables in line with the project plan
- Managing the budget
- Liaising/updating progress to, university research team, academic project lead and project partners
- Ensuring the dissemination (internal and external communication) and sustainability
- Working/communicating with stakeholders
- Manages data security
- Technical input
- Assisting with the production of user documentation

The future for the Project manager?

Changing landscape

Increasingly the role of project managers is becoming pivotal in supporting those aspects of research which are not strictly academic in nature.

As funding environments are continually changing, research designs are becoming more complex, for example Erasmus+ and the role of project managers has, and is, changing.

Distinctive roles

The PM for research has become more of a specialist role, a project 'research' manager.

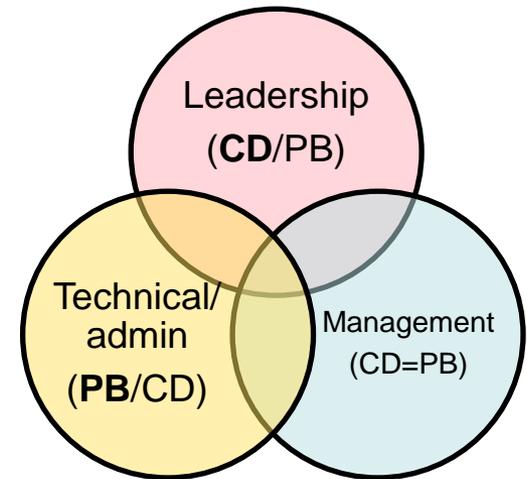
Kirkland (2009) and Langley (2012)

Working together: crossing professional borders

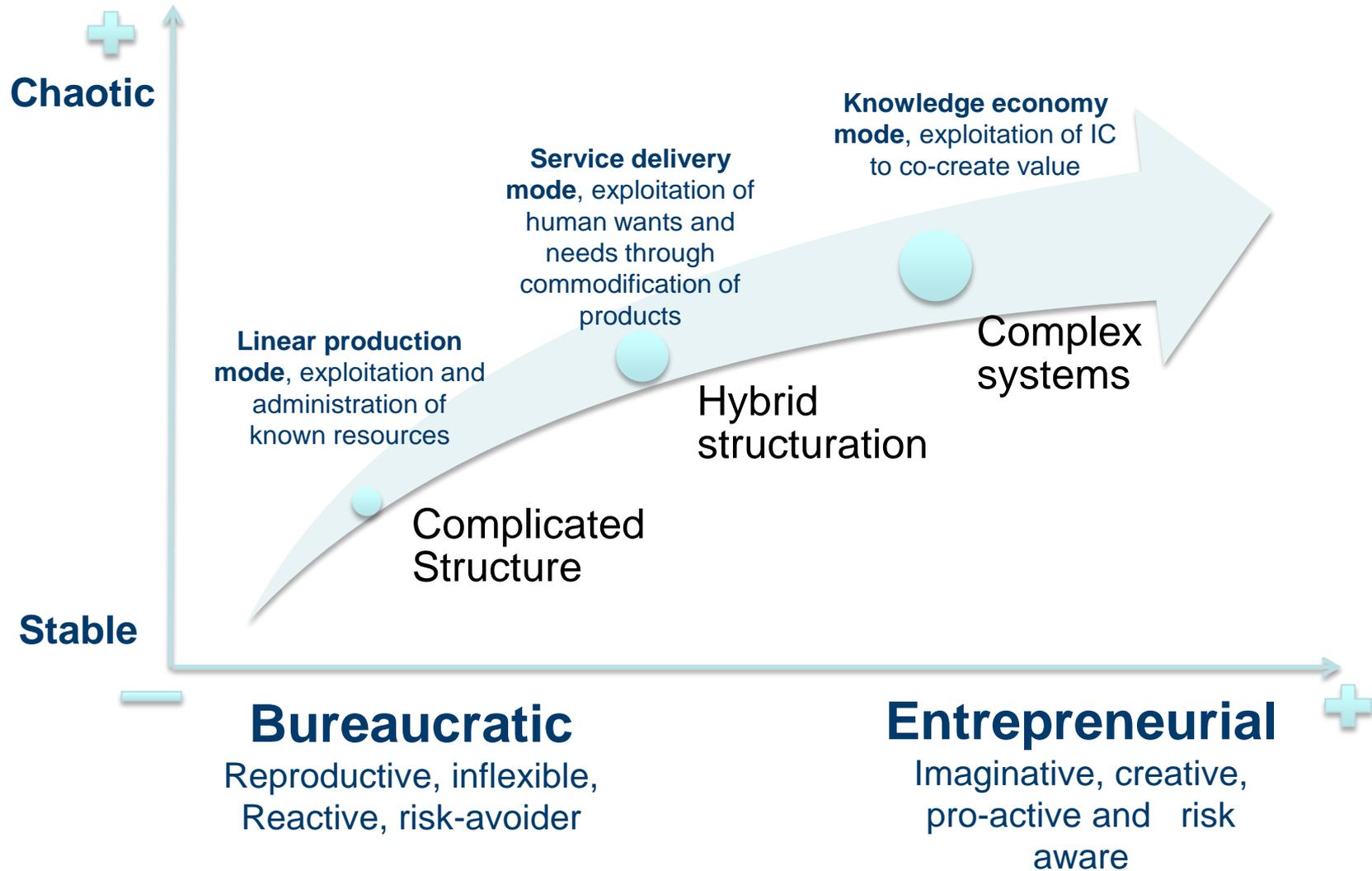
Project managers vs. Academic researchers

Relationships are highlighted as important and understanding what each other does and expects is beneficial when undertaking any research (Deem 2010).

I believe a project manager needs to show a genuine interest in the subject, not necessarily in-depth and respectively the lead researcher needs to appreciate the experience and value the project manager brings to a project, this will ensure both sides can gain mutually respect each other.



IC & Knowledge : from complicated administration to complex systems management



The third space

- *“Third space working may also be suggestive of future trends, whereby professional identities increasingly coalesce with those of academic colleagues who undertake project- and management-oriented roles, to create a generic form of ‘higher education manager’. It may also be that the concept of the generalist manager in higher education is being supplemented, if not replaced, by that of the project manager, who is concerned to maintain an up-to-the-minute portfolio of experience rather than a fixed body of knowledge... individuals may increasingly see themselves as building third space identities, rather than as being associated with a specific function or organisational location”*

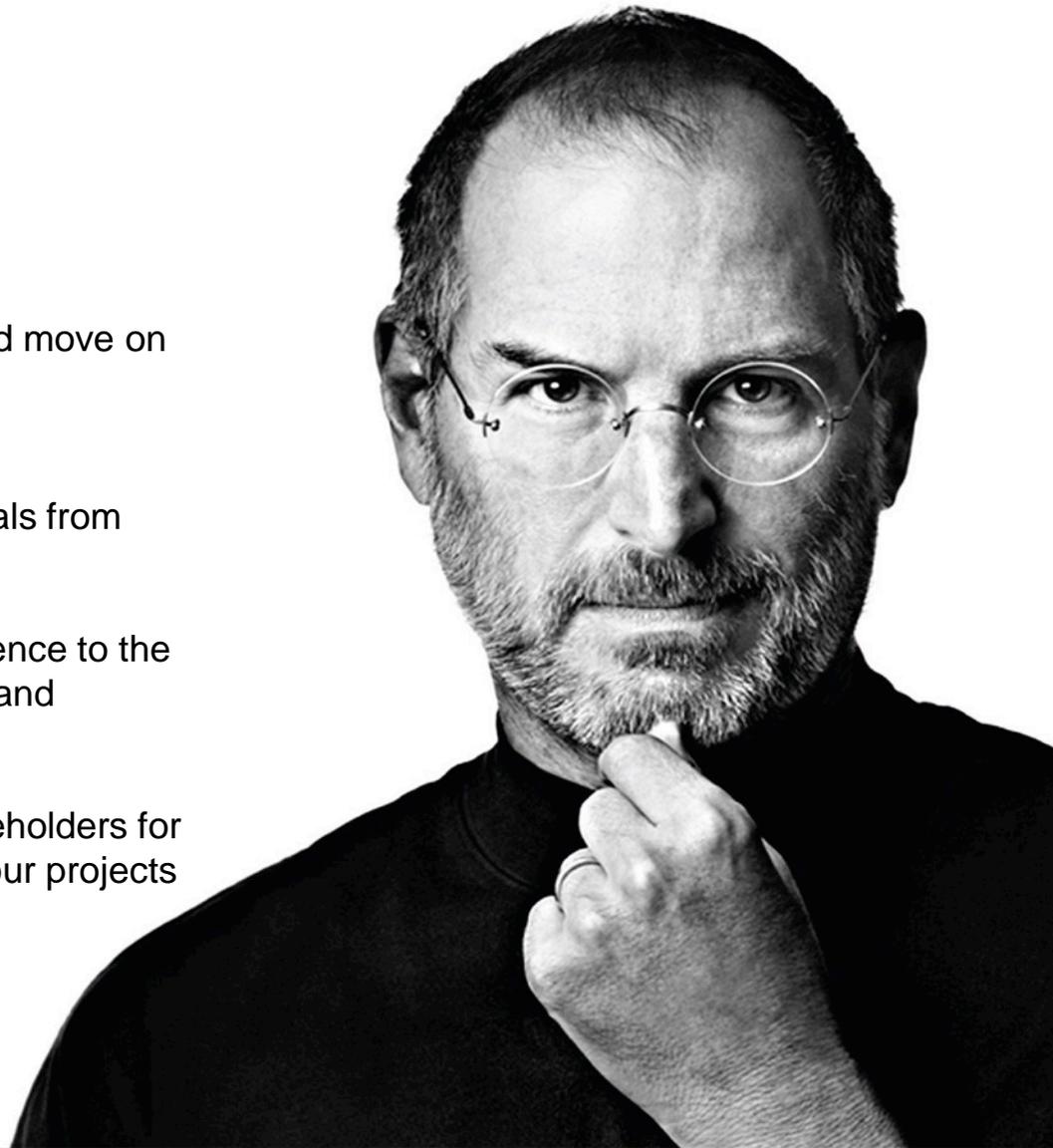
- Whitchurch (2008)

“Given the complexity and inconsistency in many aspects of research management, it is unsurprising that the community of research managers are unlike other core administrative functions, not comparable in terms of job roles, responsibilities, functions and, so, skills”

Green & Langley (2010)

Steve Jobs on Project Managers

- Being able to learn from past mistakes and move on
- Be passionate about what you do
- Surround yourself with brilliant professionals from diverse backgrounds
- Focus on delivering a good overall experience to the customer from a product, communication and expectation management perspective
- Being able to secure and retain your stakeholders for the ongoing sponsorship and funding for our projects



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*Thank you
for listening*

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