coastal Collaboration Cluster

Guidelines For Facilitating The Use Of Coastal Champions In Social Networks Influencing Coastal Policy Development

A recent study by Taylor, Cocklin and Brown (2012) developed a six-step process to be used for the development of capacity building strategies/tools for fostering environmental champions. Figure 1 outlines the six-step process. Applying this six-step process to the study of coastal champions would provide a better understanding of the ways in which coastal champions can be fostered.

Figure 1: Six Steps to Develop Customised Capacity Building Strategies for Environmental Champions

Building preliminary conceptual models
- use readily available information to build preliminary conceptual models.
- Models may describe important champion attributes, champion-driven leadership processes, enabling contextual factors and/or elements that contribute to the development of champions as effective leaders.

Gathering local data
- Gather local data to test the validity of the preliminary models.
- Use data collection methods that are sensitive to context where possible (e.g., interviews within a multiple case study research design)

Refining models and building capacity building strategies/tools
- Use local data to refine the cenceptual models developed in Step 1.
- Use these models to develop customized capacity building strategies/tools (e.g., interventions to strengthen leadership skills known to be important to the target champions).

Improving the capacity building strategies/tools
- Report evaluation findings (e.g., through industry journals and conference papers), including recommended ways future tools can be improved.
- Refine models and strategies/tools (i.e., return to Step 3).

Implementing and evaluating the capacity building strategies/tools
- Test new strategies/tools (e.g., mentoring programs) within an adaptive management regime.
- Plan evaluation activities before the delivery process begins.
- Consider using methods that estimate the return on investment from using each strategy/tool.

Validating models and strategies/tools with practitioners
- Ensure the models and strategies/tools are 'reality tested' by consulting with a diverse group of industry practitioners from organizations that employ the target champions.
- Ensure the strategies/tools are practical to implement and allow for different levels of support in organizations.

Source: (Taylor, Cocklin & Brown 2012)

The study by Taylor, Cocklin and Brown (2012) notes that guidance provided by other research (Andersson & Bateman 2000; Meijerink & Huitema 2010; White 2006) into fostering champions has been limited. For example: a variety of leadership behaviours and tactics are suggested for use by champions, however the research does not establish if the approaches given are relevant or applicable to specific types of environmental champions working within particular contexts (Taylor, Cocklin & Brown 2012). The six-step process was designed to be generic to enable its use by environmental managers and researchers within differing work environments and may therefore be useful as a tool for fostering coastal champions.

Taylor, Cocklin and Brown's (2012) six-step process begins with the development of a preliminary conceptual model. The model can include details such as champion attributes, champion driven leadership processes and other information that informs the development of champions as 'effective leaders'. Findings from a study by Mumford (2012) on the role of champions in enabling science uptake into policy in the Australian coastal zone could enable a preliminary conceptual model to be developed for the fostering of this type of coastal champions.

 First, the study found that 14 key characteristics were associated with the coastal champions identified:

1. Effective communicator

2. Extensive knowledge

3. Effective Networker

4. Passionate

5. Persistent

6. Credible

7. Longevity

8. Friendly

9. Committed

10. Enthusiastic

11. Hard Working

12. Selfless

13. Innovative

14. Determined

Second, the study identified the motivations of coastal champions as having a connection with the coast, possessing a sense of altruism and being driven by passion.

Third, the study determined a number of strategies used by coastal champions that contribute to their ability to be successful influencers of science uptake into Australian coastal policy:

1. Maintain integrity and credibility

2. Be persistent

3. Understand different motivations and views

4. Build and maintain relationships

5. Disseminate information

6. Communicate effectively

7. Identify and attend forums for developing relationships/networking – workshops, symposiums, conferences

8. Communicate indirectly – through the media

9. Communicate widely – publish in journals with wide readerships, attend conferences that are multi-disciplinary

While Mumford's (2012) study provides the background needed to initiate Taylor, Cocklin and Brown's six-step process, the scope of the study did not allow for the model to be tested. Further research in this area is needed in order to gain a better understanding of champions in Australian coastal management and how they can be fostered, in particular for their strategic use in influencing the use of science by decision-makers (Mumford 2012).

References

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