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Round Table II

“Collaborative path to innovation culture and success, Clusters”

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In the continuously changing business environment, it is not easy for enterprises, especially micro, small and medium sized enterprises and start-ups to be competitive and stay alive. Innovation is the key driver to become competitive, but not enough in so many cases. There is another magic touch, which supports both a better solution and combination, which is, cooperation. “Innovation with cooperation” which summarizes the idea, incorporates to establish an innovative ecosystem for SMEs where they cooperate and collaborate with each other, with academia and R&D institutions, government, non governmental institutions and financial institutions in order to create valuable products and services, which eventually makes them more competitive in their business environment.

All around the world every country and region are in a head to head race to become competitive.

This is a continuous cycle and since clusters are the backbone of an economy and drivers of innovation, competitiveness and entrepreneurship; it becomes increasingly vital that the ecosystem the cluster lives in is:

- able to attract creative people
- able to attract capital and investments
- capable to develop business with technology leaders
- exploit state incentives
- have better quality of life
- have ability to establish R&D institutions
- able to invest in transportation infrastructure
• have supply chain efficiency
• have modern architecture and life space

It is crucial for any region in the world to provide a competitive ecosystem both for entrepreneurs, investors, creative minds and talented people to live and work so that the region can become more innovative and have a competitive edge in the global race. Clusters role provide competitive ecosystems for the SMEs and this highly depends on the quality of the cluster development process and determination of the cluster management.

For any business to be competitive, it is of great importance to understand the market conditions; how the needs, wants and demand are changing according to changing trends in the world. Without a clear knowledge on demand and the factors effecting demand, companies are blindfolded. Designing the customer/buyer/end user experience, simulating the decision making and buying/purchasing and even consuming experience and formulating the products and services according to real and actual information will make a huge difference for SMEs. Easier said than done; for small companies having the experience, know how and resources to proliferate such a work is usually impossible.

Again, an innovative cluster ecosystem is the ideal environment for SMEs to work in a collaborative way where they can cooperate with consultants, R&D institutions and with each other to simulate and design the customer experience and create innovative solutions to harness the demand and position themselves accordingly in the supply chain.

Clusters are natural ecosystems for innovation and to better understand the opportunities and support SMEs in their efforts for innovation, a better cluster development model and cluster management plays a critical role.