

The journey towards Meetovation



Denmark benefits from a tradition of innovation and knowledge-sharing. Especially our innovative meeting concepts are one of the country's great assets. These are focused on team building, learning and knowledge-sharing.

No more boring meetings! Back in 2003, the first steps were taken in Denmark towards a change in the old fashioned and traditional way of conducting meetings and conferences. Today, Meetovation shows how.

The Need for Change: The Meeting Concept of the Future

While everything else in and around us has changed dramatically over the past couple of decades, nothing has happened to the way we meet. Apart from PowerPoint presentations, we run meetings today in the same way we did a hundred years ago! Something has to change.

This was the conclusion of a brainstorm done by a group of visionary meeting-industry leaders in Denmark in 2003. The result was a joint public/private project entitled "The Meeting Concept of the Future". The Danish Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs pledged 1.1 million DKK (approx. € 145.000) in support; eight hotels and conference centres formed the private partners, and a joint secretariat was set up between Wonderful Copenhagen and VisitDenmark to coordinate work and drive the process forward. This was done in collaboration with some of the local tourist organisations across Denmark; Visitaarhus, VisitAalborg and the Region of Southern Denmark.

Background: New generations work in teams and are not used to endless one-way communication. They share knowledge and ideas rather than just sitting down and listening. New technology opens new opportunities for the meeting industry. Globalization and cultural diversity set new demands. Meetings are recognized as an important and efficient communication tool, but highly demanding in terms of time and money. There must be ways to improve efficiency and outcome.

Vision: To strengthen Copenhagen's and Denmark's competitive position as a preferred international meeting destination by offering up-to-date, innovative meetings concepts.

Examples of Meetovation:

- rearrangement of the physical set up; using gym balls instead of chairs
- Healthy food for the brain
- Recycling and energy saving products; using USB sticks and whiteboards as oppose to paper based materials.

The 5 essential elements of **Meetovation** are:

- Involvement of delegates
- Creative use of the physical facilities
- Green and responsible operation
- Integration of authentic and local flavour
- Measuring the Return on Meeting Investment

The Danish research study on learning

These new ways of looking at the nature of meetings are based on research studies carried out by IB Ravn, associate professor, from the Danish School of Education at the University of Aarhus. He found that efficient meetings require increased attention to styles of learning, and that involving participants enhances the learning outcome.

Due to these findings and the responses from the private partners involved in 'The Meeting Concept of the Future', the conclusion was clear: Yes, the need is definitely there for changing the traditional meeting. Increased focus should be given to integrating modern pedagogical and educational methods, and ideas and theories from the so-called *experience economy*, into the meetings universe.

In January 2004, the results were presented at a "Meetings Bazaar" in Copenhagen, where the partners presented all kinds of imaginative solutions for making meetings better. Ideas included moving the conference room out to the beach, letting delegates sit with their feet in the sea, furnishing meeting facilities with soft cubes instead of chairs and tables, candle-lit brainstorming rooms, and many more.

The aim of Meetovation is to create a better **RoMI** :
Return on Meeting Investment - to create a better learning outcome, and thereby an increased return on the investment put into the meeting.

To mention a couple of results, concepts like "The learning meeting" were created - with emphasis on involving and activating delegates - and "Meeting Designer" consultancy services as a tool to assist the client in planning better meetings.

The early stages of Meetovation

The next step was taken two years later. In 2006, a follow-up project was designed with three major objectives and phases:

- Raise the competence level for key personnel in hotels and conference centres
- Develop new concrete and bookable meeting concepts
- Market Denmark internationally as the place, where "you get more

meeting value for your money".

Again, the Danish Ministry of Economic and Business Affairs (also the ministry for tourism) approved the plan and contributed 2.5 million DKK (approx € 335.000) over the next three years. This sum was more than matched by the private industry partners' total investment of 3.2 million DKK (approx. €430.000).

Meetovation – 'the product'

VisitDenmark took care of the project management and defined the end "product" as "Meetovation".

The aim of Meetovation is to create a better RoMI – Return on meeting investment. The concept builds on five basic pillars that together create a better learning outcome, and thereby an increased return on the investment put into the meeting.

- Involvement of delegates
- Creative use of the physical facilities
- Green and responsible operation
- Integration of authentic and local flavour
- Measuring the Return on Meeting Investment.

Examples of a meetovated meeting are many and varied. It can involve a rearrangement of the physical set up by having the participants sit on gym balls instead of chairs. It should include healthy energetic foods and snacks. Or it can focus on recycling and energy saving products and facilities such as using USB sticks and whiteboards as oppose to paper based materials.

To date, 180 key staff members from almost 80 hotels and conference centres all over the country have completed the educational program and are certified "Meetovators".

The Meetovation Training Programme

To date, 180 key staff members from almost 80 hotels, conference and congress centres, museums and theatres all over the country have completed the educational program and are certified "Meetovators".

The planning period ended by the beginning of 2010, and the Meetovation concept was ready to be launched. The educational program is now offered to hotel and conference centre staff, and due to demand a new version has been developed for corporate and association meeting planners. Both versions are being conducted by Ann Hansen from the company concept+competence.

VisitDenmark and Wonderful Copenhagen use Meetovation as a central element in international meeting destination branding. And everybody involved is proud of being amongst the leaders in the crusade against boring meetings!

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