



No more boring meetings gives delegates a reason to smile

# Dane to be different

**D**enmark is a country which has turned the process of organising a meeting on its head. Meetovation, a revolutionary new concept and what the Danes call return on meeting investment (ROmi), was launched last year with the help of government funding and backed by an academic research project on learning meetings.

The premise, thank goodness, was to put an end to 'one-way communication', the outcome of which is plain and simple – 'boring meetings'. To comply with the Meetovation concept, at its most basic your meeting must meet five rules: participation, flexibility, responsibility for the environment, evaluation and relocation.

Visit the Meetovation website and you'll see something a bit different. What you won't see are endless lists of how many bums can be fitted on seats in each configuration in every venue. Instead, the focus is on the intended outcome of the meeting. Perhaps you are holding a meeting in which

## Novo Nordisk and ICS are converts to Denmark's radical Meetovation concept. Katherine Elton reports

the outcome for delegates would be to network and build a team? Click through and you'll see 12 suggestions from different venues and suppliers – from a CO2-neutral meeting concept at Radisson Blu Scandinavia, to a Shuffle the Cards Day at Hornstrup Centeret.

The approach may be daring but it has been hailed a success by both the corporate and agency planners I spoke to – from creating a win-win flexibility with venues to raising the profile and professional status of the role of the meeting planner. And it seems other European countries and the United States are beginning to sit up and take note.

Marika Rasmussen, meeting management specialist for Novo Nordisk, took part in the Meetovation training concept, which is now used as a global standard for organising

all of the pharmaceutical company's meetings. The training has resulted in the reassessment and reorganisation of meetings at Novo Nordisk with meeting planners now seen as being at the forefront of stakeholder relations.

Rasmussen says: "Now we understand the detailed planning that has to take place, these meetings are handled by dedicated meeting planners with a meetings professional in charge of each key project. They are responsible for drawing up a business plan to take the project forward."

A number of meeting assistants have been promoted to meeting professionals following the training and Novo Nordisk's planners based in Princeton and New Jersey in America have travelled to Denmark to undertake the Meetovation programme. The

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**Marika Rasmussen**  
Novo Nordisk

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training will also be rolled out to meeting planners in China, Japan and all new appointments.

Rasmussen explains how it works in her company: "We are now approached with set objectives for the company. We have to ensure that the participants are involved in the meetings and ensure we are getting a return on investment. Are we asking the right questions? Will the meeting have an impact?"

"We involve delegates early on with the stakeholders to ensure we are meeting the objectives and providing the right learning environment and we will follow up to ensure the delegates are still meeting those objectives up to three months from the meeting.

"We had a lot of 'a-ha' moments during the process and it's been a really big win for us. We really feel that they are now able to hold better learning meetings and it's much easier for the delegates to learn."

Rasmussen's delegates are often

will listen."

Like Rasmussen, Per Ankaer, of professional conference organiser, event agency and destination management company ICS, has become a firm supporter of the Meetovation concept. Ankaer says: "It's a win-win for us. Venues have become much more flexible as have a lot more suppliers. Meetovation has become more widespread throughout Denmark, it's not just Copenhagen."

He adds: "Delegates must be personally involved in the meeting if they are to get the maximum out of their time there. If you were to hold a question and answer session at the end of a discussion, only 2-3 per cent of delegates would put their hands up and ask a question in a room of 1,000 delegates. If there is time for them in the meeting to just turn to the people either side and discuss the content, it is just another way of turning the meeting around and getting the



Lego can be used as a problem solving tool

doctors and nurses and, in the past, she admits they have been tough to motivate. "It is important to us that we are seen to be as professional as possible and for these meetings to be taken care of by dedicated meeting professionals because our customers can be so delicate!"

Choosing the right venue is another vital ingredient for boosting meeting content, as Rasmussen explains: "There have to be coffee areas and spaces for people to ask questions in different ways. We always have opportunities for them to do so. There are e-learning points available and booths with medical supplies for those who prefer to learn by touching and looking at the products. It's important that we can use a venue that's flexible; nowadays we cannot hold a meeting in a venue that will not let us use round tables, but the more we request this, we have found that the more venues

delegates involved."

Ankaer uses the 'Relocation' rule of Meetovation to boost delegates' brainpower through exercise as well as giving them a taste of the country. He explains: "We try to incorporate a lot of different things into meetings and this includes meeting space outside of Copenhagen. Sometimes we incorporate outdoor running in the morning or other healthy activities, even just a half-hour walking tour for a break which allows delegates, at the same time, to discuss the information they have just received.

"On the client side, they think this is a great idea and there are a lot of them getting involved in meetings which work with the Meetovation programme. The British approach to Meetovation has been positive as well – they want to do something different with their meetings as do many western Europeans." ■

## case study

Per Ankaer  
ICS



ICS put delegates on their bikes to boost brainpower

## The board on bikes

**Event:** Two-day board-level programme to discuss cost-cutting measures

**Delegates:** 20 delegates from the board of a Swedish industrial company

**Main venue:** Hilton Copenhagen Airport

to be as environmentally friendly as possible so we used the Copenhagen Metro or walked between venues.

It was important for the meeting to be cost-effective given the subject matter and event perception was an issue should the press have got hold of it.

Clients like to use different themes from Meetovation for their event and for this event the board held their meeting in a traditional format. The content was planned by the Swedish firm, however they did utilise three themes from Meetovation: organic and therefore sustainable food, relocating the meeting and boosting the brain through exercise and creating a meeting which was as environmentally friendly as possible.

The meeting was held at the Hilton Copenhagen Airport to allow those that needed to fly in for the day of the meeting to take part and then depart again. The client wanted the transfers

On the first day, a cycle tour of Copenhagen was organised to introduce delegates to the city. Half-way through the tour we stopped for half an hour in the harbour for a glass of organic champagne. The tour ended with dinner at Noma, which serves fresh organic Scandinavian food.

In this case, we weren't required to evaluate the outcome of the meeting but, for example, if the learning content was about time efficiency, we could work with the client to monitor if the participants work output was greater, by say 10 per cent, and how much that would impact on the bottom line.