



# copenhagen co'creation

## / co-creation makes demands on the organisation

– kim rahbek, sticks'n'sushi

*"Sticks'n'Sushi is able to optimise processes of development using co-creation, but this makes demands on the organisation: we have to bring the right resources into play at the right time, which means involving more employees, cutting across*

*the traditional organisational diagram," concluded Kim Rahbek, the Director of Sticks'n'Sushi, after the company management had taken part in a Copenhagen Co'creation workshop.*

Co-creation has been identified as one of the business strategies of the future, improving effectiveness and knowledge sharing and thus cutting down on the use of resources and consumption in general. During *Copenhagen Co'creation: Designing for Change 09*, more than 250 Danish and foreign companies, designers and experts in innovation concluded that there is a huge potential in using co-creation as a business strategy for innovation. As a pilot project, Copenhagen Co'creation invited management teams from Sticks'n'Sushi, ME-FA and KPMG to work for a day on how each company could use co-creation to translate knowledge and skills into new products and solutions and improved work processes. One of the aims of Copenhagen Co'creation is to spread the knowledge about co-creation gained during the international meeting in August 2009 to Danish companies.

Sticks'n'Sushi took part in a one-day workshop on 3 December 2009 – and when we asked Kim Rahbek afterwards what his company gained from working with co-creation, he stressed that he sees great potential in it in terms of processes of development within Sticks'n'Sushi.



On 3 December 2009, Sticks'n'Sushi took part in a Copenhagen Co'creation Workshop. Kim Rahbek, Sticks'n'Sushi (left) with Mikael Hallstrup and Niels Clausen-Stuck, Designit, who ran the workshop.

### **We want to develop a new area of business**

Sticks'n'Sushi opened on 22 March 1994 – one of the first restaurants in Copenhagen to specialise in sushi and yakitori sticks served in settings with a modern design. The founders were Jens Rahbek Hansen, Thor Andersen and Kim Rahbek Hansen. Today, Sticks'n'Sushi has more than 300 employees and at present eight restaurants in Copenhagen, but growth has always been an ambition; the mission and vision written in 1993 still apply. Throughout the years, Sticks'n'Sushi has created different interior designs with respect for the local environment and history.

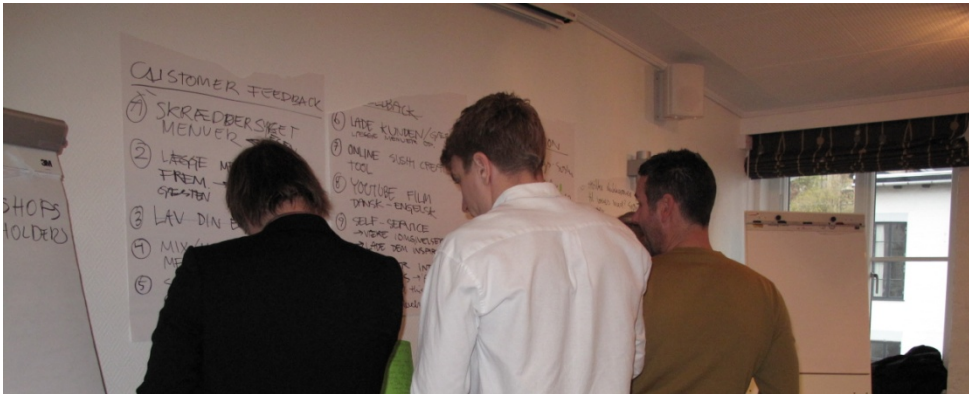
The focus adopted by Sticks'n'Sushi at the workshop was how to turn the considerable knowledge which the company possesses and shares into a sustainable business concept. As Kim Rahbek puts it:

"There is a lot of knowledge in the company in general. Our employees have a lot of specific, professional knowledge and we run courses, and so on. We have developed the sushisustainable concept (the vision of becoming a sustainable restaurant, ed.). Our customers, the clientele and those we cooperate with have been telling us for a while now that we ought to set up a knowledge lab. This idea did not come from the management. Five years ago we were telling people about sushi as a tradition; now we are telling them about sustainability and business strategies, which means that we are peddling knowledge that has nothing to do with food, and normally for free. So the question we are asking today is how can we exploit this in terms of developing a business strategy and organisation? Should we go alone, or work with others? We would like to get all the knowledge we have working together in a new area of business."

The aim of the workshop was to test a number of co-creation methods and tools, focusing on how to involve customers, consumers and stakeholders in the development process, and on this basis to line up a number of possible solutions to this challenge – finding the final solution will of course call for a longer, strategic process.

### **We were given lots of ideas**

Doing innovation WITH people rather than just FOR people can help shift value creation and business concepts away from the product towards holistic solutions, as well as strengthening service provision and non-material values. Sticks'n'Sushi tested 10-12 different ways of involving customers, partners and specific groups of consumers, focusing on creating added value through knowledge about end-users.



Sticks'n'Sushi tested a number of co-creation methods and tools. Co-creation is an umbrella concept for approaches to innovation in which companies involve stakeholders, customers and strategic partners, and there are various methods and tools. There is no one particular method, rather a mindset that is beginning to establish itself.

Asked what his reactions were to working with the co-creation tools, Kim Rahbek had this to say:

"I think being in the workshop was very interesting and I was really very happy to be invited because at Sticks'n'Sushi we are always trying out new ways of generating knowledge. In the course of the day we worked on different approaches to development and I became aware that there were various new ways of involving our clientele, but also that this calls for new resources. One shouldn't underestimate the effort needed to treat data and enter into a dialogue with customers."

"We were given lots of ideas. It was interesting to see that the two groups we were working in were getting the same ideas. In the first place, though, we realised that internally we have to learn to *listen* to each other in a different way. As a method, co-creation differs from the approach we usually take to development, in which we delegate a project to an individual, who then takes responsibility for everything – process, product and result. Co-creation involves the whole value chain. Sticks'n'Sushi can get better results by pulling together all those involved at the start of a project, even though we are used to working cross-professionally and people are accustomed to putting their oar in. In the future we will launch projects by involving more stakeholders from the start."

"Setting up a challenge was not so important; it was the methods that mattered. We can use co-creation to develop products."

#### **Sticks'n'Sushi have adopted co-creation**

When asked whether he thought using co-creation called for special skills or posed special challenges, Kim Rahbek replied: "First and foremost it calls for someone to keep it moving ahead. Someone has to acknowledge ownership, and you have to define co-creation as *the* method and mindset used by the company. Co-creation is anarchistic, and this calls for expert facilitation".

"Co-creation as a method is interesting because you have to focus on the organisation", he continued. "I became aware of this before the workshop, when trying to think beyond the normal organisational diagram. Traditionally, different skills are involved in development tasks and in the running of the company, but with co-creation you work across traditional hierarchies. The challenge facing me was to think beyond the normal organisational diagram. The head of the company was invited to take part in the workshop, because working with co-creation calls for a top-level decision, and I wanted to bring along more stakeholders and people with posts of responsibility that I normally would. So that's why we trooped up with a group of twelve employees as a cross-section of the organisation."



"We have decided to include all those employees who will be affected along the way in order to create a greater sense of ownership and find new solutions", explains Kim Rahbek.

"At Sticks'n'Sushi we are applying this new multi-disciplinary approach to an actual project in 2010. We are about to expand with two new restaurants and for the first time we are including waiters and specialists without management responsibility in the

development process, because it's our ambition to integrate their experience and make the end product more practicable and functional. We already do a briefing by the management every week, but now we're going to try something different. We have decided to include all the office staff to spread knowledge more widely. Everyone is going to know what's going on. This is still a briefing, not a discussion, but the point is to involve people more and spread knowledge about the organisation. What's more, we are about to move our central production facilities. This would normally involve our technical manager, production staff, etc., but now we have decided to include all those employees who will be affected along the way in order to create a greater sense of ownership and find new solutions."

### Co-creation as a engine for growth

Danish companies need to be stronger in terms of innovation, growth and competitiveness. Productivity is still falling in Denmark, so we need to translate knowledge into new commercial models based on holistic approaches, personal involvement and service-mindedness, to get a better foothold in existing markets and to penetrate new international markets.

In response to the question whether co-creation as a business strategy can help lift Denmark into the future, Kim Rahbek's view is that co-creation is an approach to innovation we should be very much aware of:

"Co-creation can be an engine for growth. Here in Denmark we have to live off our knowledge. If all companies used as many resources on developing new ideas as the oil companies do on finding new oil reserves, we would be able to optimise our development processes in a way that would also lead to improved figures on the bottom line. Co-creation opens the way to involving new, relevant resources, so that companies can do business on the basis of new ideas and in this way improve their success rates."



"The workshop we took part in was an appetiser. But the company must positively choose this method. Co-creation is binding", says Kim Rahbek.

### Recommendation by Kim Rahbek

"Danish companies will experience major changes within the next fifteen years, and they must be ready to adapt quickly, which requires you to have the time to think quickly. As a method, co-creation can support this process. The workshop we took part in was an appetiser. But the company must positively choose this method. Co-creation is binding because it reaches right into the organisation, so I believe a company needs specialists to run the co-creation process. People who are at home in the methods. At the same time, the company management must be committed to using co-creation in the long term, and give people time to implement it. This means that the company has to earmark financial resources for this. Just like courses, the development of new ideas must be included in the budget, and you can challenge yourself by setting up a management tool that sets out to measure how many ideas employees have developed."