IKEA

Meet more, travel less

Since 2008, IKEA has operated a program, originally entitled Meeting the IKEA Way, which deliberately re-defines travel as a way to enable face-to-face meetings, which in turn is only one of several different ways to meet. The aim was to reduce travel expenditure and meet goals for reducing carbon emissions and achieving better work/life balance.

Laying the groundwork

Earlier attempts to move co-workers (the preferred term at IKEA for “employees”) to non-travel meeting options failed owing to lack of ownership and support within the business. IKEA concluded that the travel team needed to take responsibility for ownership, deployment and promotion of video-conferencing, phone conferencing and web conferencing. However, the travel team, led by meeting & travel manager Torbjörn Erling, also worked closely with human resources, finance and internal communications to create the strategy.

New thinking

IKEA requires its co-workers to think carefully every time they want a meeting about the most appropriate way to do it. During the planning phase, they are shown the costs of different types of meeting.

Web conferencing is used for the simplest meeting requirements. In financial year 2010, web meetings jumped 58% to 82,400. There are also different video-conferencing options according to meeting size, including communication through desktop video systems for the smallest meetings, and more than 100 video-conferencing rooms for larger gatherings.
IKEA also works hard to make meetings more productive by making them more structured. For face-to-face meetings of more than 50 people, the aim is for organizers to:

- State and receive approval for the purpose of the event
- Assess the return on objectives
- Create a checklist of direct and indirect costs
- Define what will be communicated before, during and after the meeting, and how
- Justify their choice of location

The results

Travel spend as a percentage of sales fell from 0.54% in 2007 to 0.35% in 2011 mainly because of a major shift to virtual meetings alternatives.

Next steps

IKEA was aiming to:

- Reduce travel costs as a percentage of sales even further to 0.27%, even though the company is expanding significantly outside its home region of Europe.
- Reduce emissions per trip.
- Double the number of virtual meetings.
- It intends to achieve these targets through behavioral change initiatives, including:
  - Co-worker coaching.
  - Making meetings management a mandatory leadership role for management.
  - Requiring yearly departmental business plans to include a meeting plan.

Results in brief:

Travel spend as a percentage of sales fell from 0.54% in 2007 to 0.35% in 2011 because of a major shift to virtual meetings alternatives.

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