

IDCN'S CAREER EVENT AT NNE, SEPTEMBER 5

«Networking across Cultures: Cross-Cultural Communication in your Career Strategy»

Thinking about the Roots of “National” Behaviour



The latest IDCN event on September 5th, 2018 was hosted by NNE in its head office in Virum. IDCN partner members learned a lot about the company, took part in a workshop on Networking across Cultures, discussed the challenges of working in a new country with NNE employees, and got advice on their career strategy from IDCN corporate representatives.

NNE is an international company, specialised in pharma engineering, with 2,000 employees in 15 locations worldwide. In Denmark, NNE has 750 own employees and 230 internal consultants. According to NNE Director of Active Products, Richardt Sonnichsen, informal atmosphere and flexibility, as well as range of special trainings for employees, make NNE a great place to work for.

In 1999, NASA lost its \$125 million robotic space probe Mars Climate Orbiter. The reason was a metric mishap: a Lockheed Martin engineering team, which helped in building the spacecraft, used English units of measurement, while NASA's team used the more conventional metric system.

Birgitte Høj Ranch, Senior Global Mobility Consultant at NNE, used this example to illustrate, how critical it may be to keep in mind cultural differences, when working with representatives of

other cultures. To benefit from synergy, it is better to think in advance about potential pitfalls, and make things clear for everyone who is involved in a project.

During the workshop on **Networking across Cultures**, **Birgitte Høj Ranch** and **Freja Holm Pedersen, HR Student at NNE**, used an analogy to explain human behaviour: the same way a tree has its roots, every person is rooted in traditional values and cultural norms.

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«Networking across Cultures»

If you study medical science or public health and have fresh ideas, you are always welcome at SUND Hub to discuss them and have a cup of coffee! That's what Peter Løvschall, Innovation Consultant at SUND Hub, University of Copenhagen, suggested. The organisation provides non-financial support to young entrepreneurs and start-ups.

The workshop participants reflected on different stereotypes that we carry with us about people from different nations, and then representatives that originally come from these nations shared their perceptions of their “national character” and “national values”.

At the same time, an individual's behaviour can be determined by multiple factors. It is a good idea not to base your judgments about a person on national stereotypes. ▀

***Further reading:** Dennis Nørmark. Cultural Intelligence for Stone-Age Brains: How to work with the Danes and beyond*

PANEL DISCUSSION

Three NNE employees with international experience talked about the challenges they faced when moving to a new country, and gave pieces of advice to the attendees.



For Automation Lead Engineer, **Daniel Alipo** from Brazil, the most difficult thing (apart from the weather) was to see his little daughter not being able to play with her peers because of the language barrier.

Project Portfolio Manager, **Jan Creutzfeldt**, was supposed to spend just one year in China, but eventually stayed for six and regretted not having started learning Chinese from the day he arrived.

Automation Engineer, **Amal Allet Seema**, emphasised how important it is to stay positive and not to give up, if you were rejected at a job interview.

Learning Danish after July 2018

Useful Tips

As a foreigner in Denmark, you might have heard many times how important it is to learn Danish.

The Danish language is not easy, due to its very **specific pronunciation**: Danish has 9 vowel letters, but linguists distinguish about 40 vowel sounds in the actual speech. At the same time, many consonants are “swallowed”, and a whole phrase is often pronounced like one word – these processes are called reduction and assimilation. As a result, Danish can be more challenging for foreigners, than, for example, Swedish or Norwegian, which belong to the same North Germanic language branch.

Danish phonology is a challenge even for native speakers, [writes](#) the Copenhagen Post. According to Dorthe Bleses, linguist at Center for Child Language at the University of Southern Denmark, an average 15-month-old Danish child understands 84 words, while a Croatian child already understands 150. Therefore, **when you start** learning Danish, it might make sense to invest in finding a **good teacher**, who can guide you through the challenges of “dansk udtale”.

Until July 2018, newcomers to Denmark could benefit from free Danish classes. Now, all so-called “self-supporting residents” have to pay **DKK 2,000** for each of the 5 modules of Danish Education 3 (*Dansk Undervisning 3*).

The price is affordable for an employed person, but may be too high for a family with only one income, where both partners are planning to learn Danish. **But still, there are possibilities to learn the language while saving money.**

Luckily, the Danish grammar is not so complex as in German or French, for instance. If you have experience in learning languages, are well-organised

and already have devoted some time to get familiar with the basics, it may be an option for you to **study at home** with the help of books, online or with mobile apps. Keep in mind that it is important to practice all **four basic language skills**: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

At the same time, it may be a good idea to join an **FVU course**, which is **still free** and may give you a great support in your studies. FVU (Forberedende voksenundervisning) means “preparatory education for adults”. “FVU-Læsning og Skrivning” (reading and writing), “FVU-Matematik” (mathematics), and “FVU-Start” for improving your oral communication skills are offered by various language schools, e.g. [IA Sprog](#), [Copenhagen Language Center](#) and [Clavis](#).

You can also try a **free Danish course** in a [church](#)!

When you learn a new language, it is essential to **use it every day**. Curiously, for some expats in Denmark it is a great challenge to speak Danish with Danes. Many locals tend to skip to English, as soon as you pronounce your first “Hvad siger du?”. If this happens to you, you can find a **language café** or join the **Copenhagen Host Program** to practice the **language with volunteers**. And if you love **arts**, you may join free [meetings](#) at the **Statens Museum for Kunst** (the National Gallery of Denmark), where Danes and foreigners discuss related topics.

If you want to look up more information about language courses and rules concerning Danish Education, you may find it [here](#) or [here](#).

We wish you great success and fun in mastering the Danish language! ▪

IDCN Success Stories

My motivation? Finding a job that I like!

Juliette has been living in Copenhagen since the end of 2016. Soon after stepping down as president of IDCN Copenhagen, she found her dream job.

Coming from the South of France was a big change for me but I instantly felt at home here in Copenhagen. Almost immediately after I arrived, I started volunteering at IDCN. This certainly helped me a lot in **creating a network**. After a very short maternity leave, I came back to serve as the president of IDCN. It has been a great experience, and I have learned so much during my stint at IDCN.

Volunteering at IDCN gives you the opportunity to **develop your skills** ranging from public speaking to management, communication and organisational skills. Moreover, it brings you in contact with highly motivated people that will give you the energy to also work hard on finding a job.

The people around me kept me going in my job search. They were my mentors (Mark and Mary), my fellow volunteers (now friends), recruiters, fellow Danish language students, and even my neighbours and people at day care. One other very important factor was that I always kept myself busy by **learning Danish, volunteering, keeping up to date in my field and integrating into the Danish society**.

Some of the challenges in finding a job include putting myself out there, making phone calls, and going for coffee meetings. Denmark is all about networking and creating your own chances. The chances of getting a job through job advertisements were pretty slim for me as most advertisements can receive up to 200 applicants. **Networking felt like my only good option**.



Juliette Van Zanten-Jansen

Senior Associate
in Risk Management,
Independence at EY
Former IDCN Copenhagen President

Luckily, I found a job only half a year after I started searching. **I received a phone call from a recruiter I met at IDCN** and she asked me if I was interested in a job. After a few meetings with my manager, I was hired.

The interview process really surprised me. My interviews felt like a coffee meeting, and my coffee meetings felt like an interview.

But one thing I did learn is that in both cases you need to **always be well prepared**. Know what you can do, and have examples ready to illustrate your capabilities. Recruiters like to hear about your journey. Make sure you **highlight all skills from your previous jobs** which are important for your next job. Make it seem like you are building up to this job, even if your CV is all over the place with a lot of different experiences. Find the red thread that leads you to this moment and show the recruiters why you are perfect for the job. ▀

IDCN Mentors

Two Brand-new Global Executive Board Members

Mary K. Kobia and Mark de Vos,
International Mobility Consultants
for the University of Copenhagen

Mary
has been working with talent management and career development for the past 8 years and has a proven track record in developing strategies for attracting and retaining highly skilled professionals and their families.

Mark
is a Dutch anthropologist using his international working experiences from Ghana, India and China to assist international researchers and their families coming to Denmark. He is responsible for developing and facilitating cultural courses and workshops at UCPH.

They provide support for international scientific staff and their families at the university and assist with all matters that concern employment and integration. They also support accompanying spouses by offering tailored Dual Career Services, which provide professional and personal network opportunities and guidance in job search in Denmark through personal career coaching and workshops.

When IDCN Copenhagen was founded in March 2016 you were one of the main drivers. And in 2018 both of you were elected to the IDCN Global Executive Board. Could you explain what that entails and how this new role adds to what you have been doing for IDCN Copenhagen and the Dual Career Services at UCPH?

Mark: Our new role in the board is an add-on to everything else we do within IDCN. We strive to create the best possible services for our international staff and their spouses. IDCN is a great initiative, because it is for spouses and it's driven by spouses! Through its many career events, IDCN offers the opportunity to get a business network in Denmark. It also gives the possibility to create a social network with other

spouses. Therefore, I believe that IDCN is a very good supplement to our Dual Career Services here at UCPH.

Mary: Our IDCN global role in the Executive Board is important, because it gives us the opportunity to network globally, to influence and to share best practices from IDCN Copenhagen, Funen and Jutland with other board members. Although the IDCN concept is very different from country to country, we can see that we have a lot in common and also experience the same challenges. The Global Executive Board is a great platform for knowledge sharing, setting strategic goals, and making sure that there is consistency in IDCN's global work.

The structure of IDCN with its more or less independent chapters sometimes seems a bit abstract. Could you tell us a bit about the connection between IDCN Global and its local chapters?

Mark: IDCN global reflects today's world, where companies and its employees operate on a global scale and where departments and herewith people work and act on a global scale. The active global IDCN companies also use IDCN in their global strategies. When people move to another location, it is important that the employees and their families have the best possible start. If a spouse can have a network from day one, the integration process is smoother and more successful. The members of the global board do hope that the structure becomes less abstract if the volunteers from the local chapters start reaching out globally. There is a lot of experience to get and to exchange, and we invite all of you to start expanding your global IDCN network.

You are also a member of the IDCN Copenhagen Steering Committee. Could you tell us a bit what the Steering Committee actually is and what it does?

Mary: The Steering Committee is a great place for the corporate members to share experiences in their work with spouses but also to talk about other work-related mobility issues and, of course, to network. It is our role as Steering Committee that IDCN Copenhagen keeps on running and that we create as many network opportunities for the spouses as possible. The spouses need a job in Denmark and everything we do is connected to that. Moreover, we mentor the spouses in our respective teams. Everybody is doing this in a different way, but all the members are very committed. Important is that all steering committee members are doing all this work because they are passionate to help spouses and understand the sometimes hard reality the spouses experience in Denmark.

Both of you have been through a professional transition from one field of work to another. Many of the IDCN partner members are facing this challenge after moving to Denmark. What advice would you give to them?

Mary: My best advice is show energy and remember to highlight your transferable skills! We have all developed a wide range of hard and soft transferable skills that have prepared us for multiple career options. These skills have an important role to play when building our future career. Nevertheless, we often fall into the typical trap of seeing our

skills as applicable to only one setting, and therefore, we don't recognize that we are qualified for a wide range of career paths. Therefore, it is crucial to also remember to highlight your transferable skills and show your energy and motivation.

You regularly attend the networking sessions at IDCN events, where you give advice on job search. Could you give some advice on the particularities of the Danish workplace? What do we have to expect from working with Danes?

Mary: Most Danish companies are known to have a flat hierarchical structure with a low power distance. People expect and accept power relations that are more consultative and democratic and they relate to one another as equals regardless of job titles and formal positions. Managers and employees address each other by their first names and most decisions are discussed in forums where all employees have an equal say. At lunch, you will find managers and employees sitting at the same table talking openly about their private lives and pursuits. These particularities are important to know about when you are new in a Danish workplace, because it makes it easier to understand what is going on and to be part of the working team.

Do you have an anecdote about cultural miscommunications at the workplace that you want to share with us?

Mark: Your question is already very interesting to approach with cultural diverse glasses on. A lot of people would not talk about miscommunication at their workplace, because they might be afraid they could lose face with their colleagues. But I can give you an example which we recently experienced: Mary and I are organizing cultural courses at the university. We received an email from somebody who was interested in a talk on culture: "I would like to ask Mary and Mark to give this workshop, because we prefer a "non-Dane" giving this workshop". We replied that we were therefore and unfortunately not able to organize a workshop for them. They didn't understand why not and then we explained that Mary only has a Danish passport and Mark recently became a Danish dual citizen. It was a good start for the workshop which we then held, and we started it by talking about prejudice. ■

STAY IN TOUCH!

NEXT IDCN'S EVENTS:



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

23 November,
2018



1 February,
2019



Join IDCN Kaffemik!

An informal monthly meet-up, where everything about life in Denmark can be discussed.

No registration necessary – just show up! Kids are welcome.



SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORY:

Found a job?

Started an internship?

Relocated?

Please let us know by email at:
membership.copenhagen@idcn.info

IDCN COPENHAGEN CORPORATE MEMBERS



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