

eEvent - Collaborative Event Planning

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE @ AALBORG UNIVERSITY

Event name:

What do you want to do first ?

Event Create an event which contain different activities. 

Date Pick a date for the event or put multiple dates to the vote. 

Participants Invite friends from Facebook or via e-mail. 

Create Create the event and wait for reply from the invited. 

9'th Semester in Computer Science by
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Abstract:

This work presents an idea of collaborative event planning and develops this idea into a new venture. The idea is developed using various techniques like W5H2, Disney and especially an innovation management strategy called The Seven Circles of Innovation. The idea has been selected, since collaborative event planning between multiple peers, can be a time consuming task. When the amount of peers increase, the task of collaborative event planning can become almost impossible, due to the amount of communication needed to reach agreement. We propose to utilise Business in Beta as the business creation strategy, and present a business plan, describing most aspects of the planned business. A prototype is implemented and tested in a proof of concept study, involving users from the target group. The study yields that the idea of collaborative event planning could be feasible, even though there are some financial issues.

Preface

This Dat7 project report was written in the autumn of 2009 by Morten Bøgh, Markus Krogh, and Simon Nicholas Moesby Tinggaard with guidance and supervision of Ivan Aaen.

The report is the result of our 9th semester study, in Industrialised Computer Science at Aalborg University (AAU). It focusses on developing an idea of collaborative event planning and turning this idea into a new venture.

An executive summary of the business plan presented in this paper has been submitted to Venture Cup on the 30th November 2009. Venture Cup is an entrepreneurship competition between the Danish universities where students can submit their ideas and receive feedback. In Venture Cup the best ideas are awarded with a prize.

We would like to thank our supervisor Ivan Aaen for his support during the preparation of this report.

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Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

Planning social events can be a complex and time consuming task. This report describes the processes of developing an idea of collaborative event planning into a sustainable business, and present a business plan for a venture deploying this idea.

The report explores different areas of entrepreneurship such as how to plan a business and how innovation is managed in order to advance idea generation and venture creation since most new ventures are based on an innovation [7, 15, 22].

We choose to work with event planning since we believe it to be an area where venture possibilities exist. Time has shown that internet applications are becoming increasingly popular, applications like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr have become very popular. Facebook has expanded very fast, and now almost 40% of the Danish populations has a profile on Facebook [14].

Based on the assumption that users are getting more familiar with online applications we propose to develop a business that supplies a single solution for collaborative event planning. Today it is possible to find different tools which aid planners and make some part of event planning collaborative. Some examples are Doodle which offer collaborative decision making, and the Facebook event system which offer the possibility to invite people to an event, and provides an overview of attendants' status. As it is, there is no single solution which focuses on collaborative event planning.

Besides improving the event planning process we suggest features that provide intelligent help during the planning. An example is to suggest possible event elements like dinner or entertainment at some specific place.

1.1 Motivation

Planning a trip to the cinema for you and your colleagues seems like a simple task. However it can actually be very difficult to plan. An example of this is to achieve consensus among the participants when it comes to when and which motion picture to watch. The problem of event planning applies not only to cinema trips but also to restaurant visits, going to the theatre etc. and if these different events are combined into a single event, e.g. going to a restaurant and the cinema, the difficulty level rises even further.

Imagine that you and your colleagues are facing the challenge of planning

an event containing a dinner at a restaurant and a trip to the cinema. In order to plan such an event you and your colleagues need to agree on a date, a restaurant, and a motion picture, that satisfy as many of the attendants as possible. Depending on the number of colleagues, the planning demands an extensive amount of communication in order to reach an agreement, since each attendant, in the worst scenario, need to communicate their ideas and prioritisations to all other planners multiple times, before a decision can be made. The communication flow is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

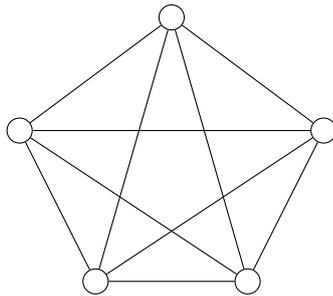


Figure 1.1: Traditional peer to peer planning.

Today this communication is eased by technology such as email and mobile phones. These help to reduce the amount of communication needed by providing means for communicating with multiple peers at once, e.g. by sending an SMS or Email to multiple receivers. Even though technology has eased the communication process, planners still need to keep track of all the communication back and forth. In the presented figure there are 5 peers yielding a total of 10 communication channels. If the amount of peers is raised to 10 the amount of communication channels is 45. The number of communication channels can be described as $n(n - 1)/2$, where n is the number of people. This yields that collaborative planning is becoming an almost impossible task as the amount of peers increase.

We propose to create a service that provides a single point of communication, thus changing the communication pattern to be more centralised, as shown in Figure 1.2. The service should provide different means needed to plan an event, ranging from selecting a date, restaurant, and motion picture to inviting attendants and allowing them to pay in advance.

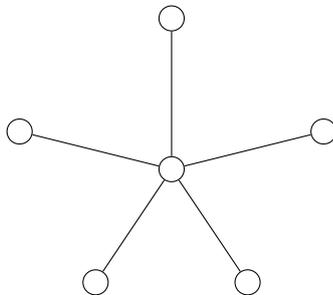


Figure 1.2: Single point of communication planning.

Developing a business is not a trivial task, therefore this first part of the report introduces theory on business development, innovation management, and some strategies for idea generation and evaluation. These theories and methods are then utilised in the second part in order to develop the presented idea of collaborative event planning into a business concept. This concept is then tested in a proof of concept study to evaluate if the idea has potential to be a sustainable business. The third and last part of the report presents our reflections on the process and the proposed business concept and a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Theory

The main theme of the project is business creation. In order to create a common understanding of the subject of business creation, the following sections will describe theory related to entrepreneurship, innovation and innovation management.

2.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the act of being an entrepreneur, which is the French word meaning one who undertakes an endeavour. In a business context, entrepreneurship is to start a new business or revitalising an existing business. Entrepreneurs assemble resources like, finance and business abilities in an effort to transform innovations into economical sustainable businesses.

The entrepreneurial activity of creating something new is often associated with uncertainty, since there may not be an existing market, or the current market does not embrace the new product or business.

Donald F. Kurato and Richard M. Hodgetts define entrepreneurship as seeking opportunity, taking risks, and the ability to push ideas through to reality [8].

Opposed to the above definition Marc J. Dollinger [7] defines entrepreneurship as the creation of innovative economic organisations, for the purpose of gain or growth under conditions of risk and uncertainty. Dollinger defines entrepreneurship with the following three characteristics:

Creativity and innovation A large part of entrepreneurship is creativity and innovation since new ventures emerge from innovation and innovation emerge from creativity.

Resource gathering and the founding of an economic organisation

Resource gathering covers gathering of: reputational, physical, organisational, financial, intellectual, and technological resources, where founding of an economic organisation covers business planning and creation.

The chance for gain (or increase in gain) under risk and uncertainty

The last characteristic covers the fact that starting a new venture as a new business or in an existing one, always involve risk.

When comparing the two definitions of entrepreneurship it can be seen that Dollinger puts more emphasis on innovation than Kurato and Hodgetts do. We assume this is caused by them looking at entrepreneurship from different perspective. Dollinger has more focus on innovation and entrepreneurship where Kurato and Hodgetts focus more on entrepreneurship as the act of creating a business. So generally seen, Dollinger sees a person who starts a new business based on an innovative idea as an entrepreneur whereas a carpenter who starts up a business on his own is not as much an entrepreneur. Kurato and Hodgetts see them both as entrepreneurs.

This project concerns the development of a new idea of collaborative event planning into a business, thereby being entrepreneurs. The next sections describe innovation and innovation management. Since it is important to understand these to better the development of a business idea based on innovation.

2.2 Innovation and Innovation Management

Innovation and innovation management have been described in many ways [11, 9, 16]. Innovation can be seen as a process of turning opportunity into new ideas and of putting these into widespread practice, e.g. a new venture.

As mentioned by Dollinger, innovation is in his opinion one of the characteristics of entrepreneurship. This is further elaborated in the section concerning innovation management, since innovation management has many similarities with the process of creating a business and the process we must go through in our current project.

In order to better understand what we are trying to manage and later build a business upon, we start out with describing what innovation is and thereafter management of innovation.

2.2.1 Innovation

Innovation is the process of turning opportunity into new ideas and translates these into useful new products, processes or services[16]. The basic understanding is that, innovations is about generating ideas, selecting the best ones, and then to refine and realise them.

Innovation can be defined as change, since innovation in different areas inflicts change in some way. Chance with respect to innovation can be described in the following four forms, called the 4 Ps of innovation[16]:

- **Product innovation** is change in the products and services offered by an organisation. This could be the introduction of a new mobile phone or a new insurance package.
- **Process innovation** are changes in the ways things are created and delivered. This could be new manufacturing processes or new collaboration processes.
- **Position innovation** consist of changes in the context in which products and services are introduced. An example could be the repositioning of B&O into a high-end car audio system.

- **Paradigm innovation** consist of changes in the mental model of an organisation. An example could be the change of mobile telephone providers into mobile communication providers that supply telephone communication and broadband data communication.

When talking about innovation, we also talk about the degree of novelty involved in the given innovation. The novelty ranges from minor improvements to radical changes, which can transform what we think of the given innovation. A facelift of a car is not a radical innovation, where a brand new car running on electricity is a radical innovation. Incremental innovation could be a new car that uses less gas than the older one.

Understanding innovation helps businesses make a better business strategy when deciding whether or not to engage a new and hostile market. Therefore it is important to understand the area of innovation that a given organisation engages in. Figure 2.1 illustrates the innovation space in which organisations can operate. The four axes each represent one of the four Ps and the amount of change in the given innovation, ranging from incremental to radical.

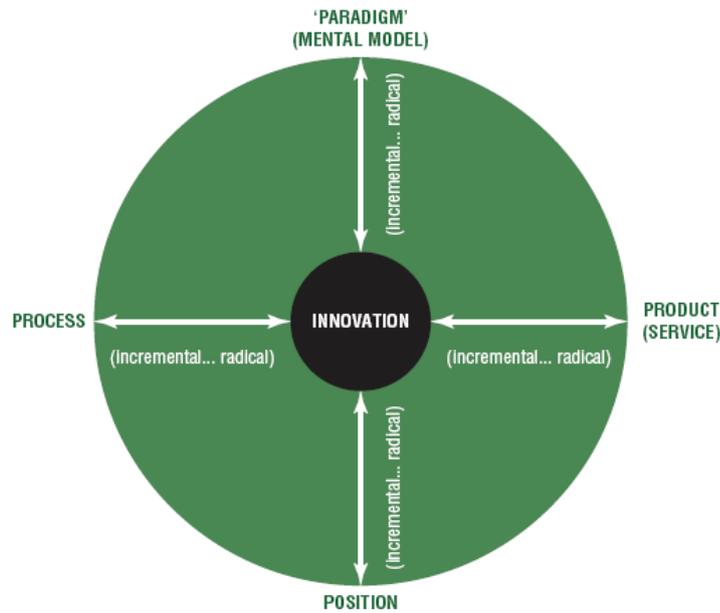


Figure 2.1: Innovation space.

Now that we have established an understanding of what innovation is, we introduce a strategy to manage innovation, and describe how this relates to the process of starting a new venture.

2.2.2 Innovation Management

The following section presents the innovation management strategy called *The Seven Circles of Innovation* [11] shown in Figure 2.2. The strategy describes the different processes that needs to be maintained in order to stay innovative.

The Seven Circle of Innovation were primarily targeted at existing organisations that needs to stay innovative in order to advance or stay in business.

In this current project we utilise this innovation management strategy in the development of our idea into a business. This is due to the fact that the five phases of the strategy, in our opinion, represents the same processes needed to establish a new business, based on innovation. The five phases of this strategy is:

1. Idea generation, where new ideas are generated.
2. Evaluation and planning, where the new ideas are evaluated and preliminary business cases are created.
3. Testing/prototyping. Here the innovations are tested by means of prototypes, test runs, scenarios, etc.
4. Business planning. In this phase the identified innovation is contextualised in a business plan.
5. Implementation, where the innovation is set into operation.

As seen on Figure 2.2 each of the five phases are placed within the market area and all intersect with the next to symbolise the connection between the phases.

The innovation fundamentals are the central part of the figure, around which the five processes are placed. This is to symbolise that innovation thrives when the fundamentals, described in the next section, are present. The fundamentals primarily describe how the environment should look like in an existing organisation. In the case of business creation the fundamentals serves as guidelines on, how to embrace innovation in the business creation.

Innovation Fundamentals

There are seven fundamentals for innovation:

Team The first fundamental is the team of persons that do the innovation. A good team is important for producing results in the area of innovation. In the perfect world the team should be assembled with people having different personal and professional backgrounds and with the different competencies required to solve the given challenge.

Empowerment The second fundamental is to give the people empowerment. Empowerment is about creating initiative and mobilise the spirit of creativity among the people in the teams. This is done by giving people the opportunity to voice ideas, act independently and then provide them with constructive feedback.

Culture The culture fundamental is about the culture in the company or team. Culture has an important influence on the way people think and take action. For instance, an innovative organisation must allow its members to make mistakes and learn from them without being sanctioned. If they got sanctioned for every mistake, they would most likely stop attempting something new. The acceptance of mistakes is actually seen as a hallmark for the innovative culture.

Strategy This fundamental is about having a strategy or plan for the company and thereby directing the innovation into the area of focus. Research shows that companies with a strategy have greater growth than companies having a hard time figuring out where to focus and how to move forward [11].

Cooperation Since the markets can change fast it is becoming more important to the innovation process, to utilise external sources for ideas by cooperating with customers and other stakeholders. This cooperation is becoming more important in order to keep up with the competition and to promote innovation.

Monitoring The second to last fundamental is about evaluation and benchmarking. Having procedures for benchmarking and evaluating innovations is important, as this can help you enhance the innovation even more.

Structure The last fundamental is about having structure in the teams. This could be clear procedures for the innovation process, specific innovation models, and dedicated facilities for innovation projects. An example of this could be the SIRL lab for Essence [1].

The next chapter describe different techniques and methods that can be used in the different phases of the strategy.

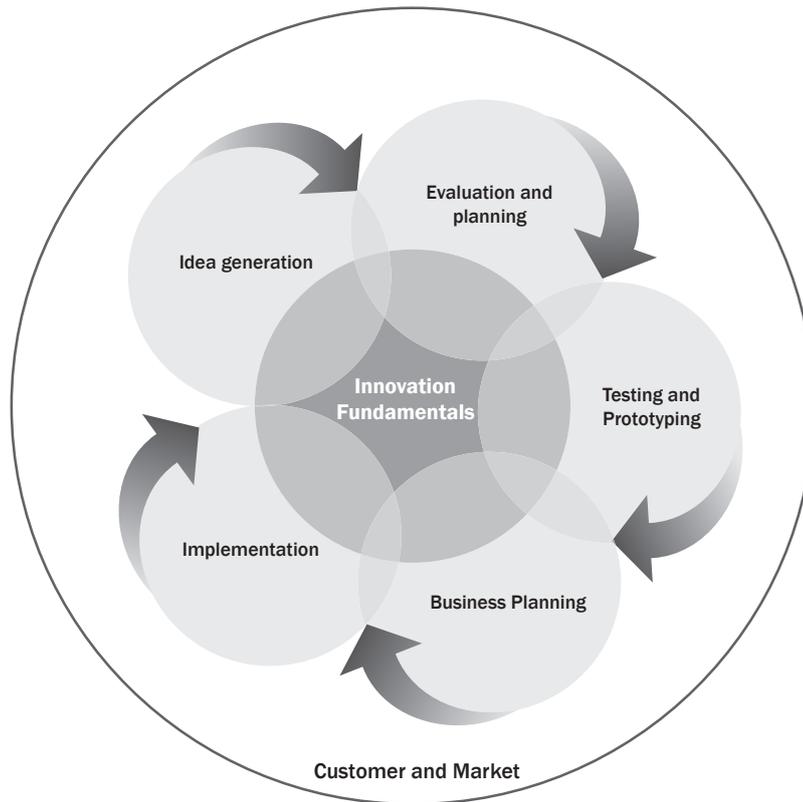


Figure 2.2: The Seven Circles of Innovation.

Chapter 3

Methods

This chapter describes the different methods utilised during the hands on part of this project. It is divided into two sections, one concerning the technical methods, and one concerning business development.

3.1 Technical Methods

This section describes different methods and how they relate to the presented innovation management strategy. Section 3.1.1 concerning preject and project, describes how Lotte Darsø's innovation model relates to the Seven Circles of Innovation and how this can be seen in the process of creating a business. Section 3.1.2 describes an idea generation strategy called W5H2 that fits into Darsø's innovation model. Section 3.1.3 presents a creativity strategy based on observations of Walt Disney. Section 3.1.4 and Section 3.1.5 describes how the evaluation and prototyping can be utilised during phase two and three of the Seven Circles of Innovation.

3.1.1 Preject and Project

Lotte Darsø [5] presents a creative chaos time called a preject, which precedes the actual project / venture. During the preject one does not seek to solve specific problems, instead idea creation and information gathering are in focus.

There are a lot of different tools that can be used during the preject to explore the four facets of the innovation process model, proposed by Darsø. The four facets are; concepts, knowledge, relations, and non-knowledge, and where each of them are important in an innovative preject. Knowledge is what we know, where non-knowledge is about what we know we do not know. In order to be innovative it is important to challenge the knowledge we already possess to avoid getting limited by existing knowledge. Therefore is it also primarily in non-knowledge radical-innovation emerge. The relations facet is about the relations between the involved persons of the venture. Trust is important to gain innovative relations. Concepts are about making a common understanding of new ideas and concepts. This can be eased by e.g. making a prototype which is further explained in Section 3.1.4.

Darsø introduces four roles into the model: A gardener who is responsible

for creating a common vision in the project and responsible for relations with external network. A jester, responsible for asking questions that could be challenging, stupid, impossible, wild, hypothetical, or enthusiastic. A conceptualiser who is responsible for making a common understanding in the group. A challenger who is responsible for building a common knowledge in the group, this could be done by asking questions to known knowledge and thereby challenge an expert's existing knowledge.

Techniques such as W5H2, explained in Section 3.1.2, can help one explore the four facets in a more structured manner. W5H2 is well suited since it adds structure without limiting the four facets and thereby ruining the intended chaos in the project phase.

If we look at the Seven Circles of Innovation, the diverging phase describes the Idea generation phase. The converging phase of Darsø's model describes the next three phases of the Seven Circles, concerning *Evaluation and planning*, *Testing and Prototyping*, and *Business Planning*, since each of these phases is converging towards the implementation of the given business.

3.1.2 W5H2

The W5H2 [2, 12] method was first introduced as the W5H1 questions derived from the famous poem of Kipling:

*I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who...*

W5H1 was later extended with "How much" into W5H2 and therefore consists of seven open questions, which is used to spark and discuss new ideas, and inspect unknown aspects. The seven open questions are: What, Why, When, Where, Who, How, How much. These questions can then be formulated so they fit the areas they are applied to. In our case we utilised the following questions to direct it towards a solution for our collaborative event planning idea:

- What is the application providing?
- Why is there a need for it?
- When is it to be used?
- Where is it to be used?
- Who are the users?
- How is the application technologically being realised?
- How much is financially required for implementation?

The W5H2 method works in three stages: (1) The generic questions force the user to see the problem from different aspects, (2) You evaluate the problem when defining the seven questions, (3) The answers to the questions again provide knowledge about the problem. It should be noted that even though W5H2 helps to cover a large part of the problem, it does only cover one side of the

problem. This is due to the fact that the specialised questions can have many forms, and we only use one of them.

3.1.3 Walt Disney Creative Strategy

The Walt Disney creative strategy was modelled and developed by Robert Dilts [4]. It is based on his observations of the process Walt Disney went through when creating his animation films.

The strategy consists of three roles and responsibilities:

1. The **Dreamer** thinks freely, brainstorms, and fantasises. This gives the dreamer a non-restricted way of thinking where the individual can explore a broad spectre of ideas, this is where innovation happens.
2. The **Realist** is the one putting the ideas into the real world. The realist takes the ideas and assess if it is possible and realistic to implement them.
3. The **Spoiler** or **Critic** tests the soundness of the generated ideas to see if the idea is feasibly.

The Dreamer and the Realist can be one and the same person. Where the Critic should be persons external to the project, in order to get proper critique. The three roles can also be seen as phases, that are executed in the order in which they were presented. If the idea fails in phase two or three, the three phases can be cycled again.

The strategy is used in many situations without even knowing it. In most idea generations phases, ideas are generated using brainstorming. The ideas are then evaluated using a realist to see what can actually be made and in the end the critic selects the ideas feasible for development.

During the current work we apply this strategy in the idea generation and selection phase.

3.1.4 Prototyping

Introducing a new product to a market, can be a huge risk for a company. Especially if the product has not been tested by users before launching it to the market. Testing a product on a user is a good way to reduces this risk. It does however lead to a problem, if the user test of the product indicate that the product is a failure; the whole production and development has been wasted. To accommodate this problem, prototyping is used.

A prototype is a demonstration of a possible final product, that still is subject to change and not as expensive to develop. The concept of prototyping [6] is a tool used to reduce the risk in development and production and thereby avoid producing or developing something that is unreliable or unusable for the market.

Generally there are two kinds of risks reduced by prototyping: Manufacturing risk and development risk. Manufacturing risk is the risk of making or adapting a factory to produce a given product only to find that the product cannot be sold. Development risk is the risk of using several man hours in developing something that does not sell.

In software development there is the risk of using several man hours on developing the software, which the customer does not want or software that do not

sell at all. Outside software engineering prototyping is primarily done by making a prototype construction e.g. a miniature building to show its architectural appearance. Making a prototype construction can be very costly, and therefore prototyping is mostly done when a product or concept is close to realisation. An example could be the construction of a prototype car to be shown on a car fair.

In software engineering different kinds of prototypes can be considered, since it is not necessary to implement the whole software solution in order to test it. A software prototype is an implementation of a small part of the whole software system, made to evaluate or learn something specific about the implemented part. The implementation can be coded in a programming language or setup in various prototyping tools.

User interface prototypes only implements the user interface without the need for any back end functionality. This is a fast way for the end users to try the system, to see if it satisfies their goals. Moreover it is a quick way to test new features. There exists different ways to create the look and feel of a user interface with minimum effort. An example is the creation of screen shot images with storyboards to guide the user from screen to screen. The user interface prototyping is a cost efficient and very accurate way to explain the functionality of new features to users, and thereby get the users evaluation of the new features. Functional prototypes focus on implementing the back end functionalities without any focus on the user interface.

Prototyping in software development is not just limited to the early phases of design. In agile software development methods [18] the idea of prototyping is heavily used and is here known as incremental development rather than prototyping. The difference between true prototyping and the way it is used in agile development is that in agile development, production code is developed where in prototyping the goal is only to show functionality.

In Scrum, an agile development method, a sprint will result in a working program (prototype). This program is then demonstrated to the customer, who has to approve or request change. This involvement of the customer heightens the satisfaction and reduces the waste of man hours on features the customer does not want.

The following three reasons can be given to why prototyping has become a popular tool in software development:

1. Without prototyping there is a high risk that the developed software does not satisfy the user's needs.
2. If a program is first sent to the users when finished, it becomes costly to make changes to it.
3. Since we thrive to solve more and more complex problems, it is very difficult to determine users needs. This can be aided by utilising prototyping.

The risk of developing software not satisfying the user's needs can be lowered by making an early prototype to ensure that the user and the developers have a common understanding of the customers needs. The prototype also helps the users identify the needs of the software, since most users do not know what they actually need in a software solution.

We utilise user interface prototyping in our project, since we need to analyse what features the users would prefer. Thus enabling us to make a better business plan for the creation and future development of the business.

3.1.5 User Experience Evaluation

The second and third phase of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy are about *Evaluation and planning* and *Testing and Prototyping* and this section therefore focuses on the theory of evaluation and testing. Before we can begin the business planning, the results of the prototyping phase have to be evaluated. The outcome will then determine whether or not the final product has a chance of success or it will be an immediate failure. Thus making or breaking the business foundation.

As described earlier in Section 3.1.4, a prototype can be build to evaluate if an idea should be carried out and put in production or development. So to evaluate a prototype the target-group users must be involved as they, in the end, are the ones who can give qualified answers on whether or not they would use a given product or service.

A prototype usability test can consist of multiple stages [21] depending on the situation. We have chosen two of these stages as they fit our situation best. The first stage is a usability test of the prototype where the user performs a predefined number of tasks called a task scenario. The second stage is an interview and/or a questionnaire made to better understand why the user did what he did.

Stage one of the usability test can have different shapes, depending on which stage the development is in. A test in the early or pre development stage is called an exploratory study. An exploratory study has its starting point in an interface prototype or paper mock-up, and it is used to examine if the user can understand the initial design. Due to the limited functionality of the prototype it is important to both make tasks which match the prototype and have a person assist the user in the cases where the prototype lack functionality. The person who guides the user, should kindly ask the the user to think aloud and thereby speak out what he is thinking about, when performing the specified task. Through the think aloud method, it is possible to gain knowledge about the process of solving some specific task, where you would normally just get the result of the specific task.

Stage two is the interview or questionnaire, where the focus is to get even more insight into the user and his opinion of the prototype. An interview will have a number of static guide questions that concerns the prototype and tasks performed. It can also have questions which are situational, that is added if the user does something special during the test. A questionnaire will also have a static amount of questions, but no specialised questions to the user. In the interview the questions can have a more complex nature, as the user can easily speak his mind where becomes more difficult, when the user has the write something down.

We will perform the interview in stage two instead of a questionnaire since we want to have a dialogue with the user in order to find out what he thinks about the idea presented in the prototype. A questionnaire would contain questions too complex to answer in writing and thereby risking that the user gives up or

give insufficient answers. According to Steiner Kvale [17] an interview consists of seven stages:

1. **Thematising** is the first step regarding the subject and goal of the interview. Here "what" and "why" should be clear before continuing to the next stage.
2. **Designing** concerns the planning of the interview, where all stages of the interview should be considered.
3. **Interviewing** concerns the actual interview. This should be performed using a predefined interview guide, that helps to ensure that the interviewer touches around all the subjects of the interview.
4. **Transcribing** concerns the preparation of the interview material for analysis. This is not something we plan on doing due to time restrictions.
5. **Analysing**, when the interview has been performed the results should be properly analysed in order to gain knowledge from the interview.
6. **Verifying** concerns the validity of the interview. Can conclusions drawn from the interview be generalised?
7. **Reporting**, the last stage concerns the reporting of results. In our case this is going to be done in the later Chapter 6 concerning our proof of concept study.

These six out of the seven stages will help us in handling the interview phase. After these two stages the results must be analysed in order evaluate whether or not the idea is feasible to build a new business venture upon.

3.2 Business Development

The development of a new business is in many ways similar to the five phases of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy, introduced in Section 2.2.2. The Seven Circles of Innovation was originally proposed for innovation management in existing companies, where the result of a successful iteration through the strategy is a new implementation, e.g. a new product or service that brings profit to the business.

In our opinion there are many similarities between the Seven Circles of Innovation strategy and the development of a new business. Since when developing a new business you also need to go through the phases of idea developing, evaluation, testing, business planning, and finally the implementation of a new business based on the idea.

This section primarily concerns the business planning phase of the innovation management strategy. When planning to start a business, there are a lot of issues that have to be considered [22, 3]:

- What is the business concept or idea for the new business? A good idea is crucial for a good business, but in most cases the idea needs further development before it can become a commercial concept.

- Does the product or service satisfy the customers' demands? The product or the service should be well analysed to ensure that it satisfies the customer demands, since the product or service is the main income of the business.
- Does the business creator possess the capacity and resources needed to be the creator of a business? As the creator, typically is the only one running the business in the beginning, it is very important that the creator is well aware of this, in order to gather the information needed. This could for example be to gather the necessary information on accountancy.
- Which market is the business to penetrate? Before the business can operate in any market, a thorough market and customer analysis should be performed in order to identify the target customers, competitors and possible barriers to overcome.
- How does the business get in contact with the potential customers? Sales and marketing are tools to approach potential customers in order to raise an interest in the product or service which the business offers.
- How should the business be run, and what is the cost of arranging and running your business? This has to be clarified in order to persuade banks to loan money or investors to invest money in the business.
- What is the future perspective in the business? Although it is hard to think 3-4 years ahead even before the business is up and running. It is an advantage to envision the outlines of an even bigger and more interesting company than the initial one.
- How to raise the funds needed to start-up the business? There are several ways to gather the funding needed for business start-up. This could for example be investors or banks. But before contacting any of them there should be a thorough description of the venture, giving the investors the necessary knowledge to decide upon an investment.

These issues can be considered in different ways. It is recommended to write a business plan [3, 7, 8, 9, 16, 22] when planning to start a business, since writing a business plan forces the entrepreneur to consider many of the start-up issues.

The business plan is beneficial to the entrepreneur, his or her family, personal network, consultants, and sources of finance, since having made a business plan shows commitment from the entrepreneur. The business plan should not be seen as the final statement for the business, it is more like a platform from where you gain access to the business world. The world is dynamic so the business must be dynamic too, and therefore the business plan should be revised during the life of the business. Donald F. Kurato and Richard M. Hodgetts [8] recommends revising the business plan at least once a year, since this help to ensure the business is on track with its goals.

3.2.1 Business Plan

A business plan [3, 7, 8, 9, 16, 22] is a written document containing details of all aspects of the proposed venture and contribute to a more well-arranged start-

up. It should describe how the business is to be started, further developed, and if already existing the status of the venture.

The business plan should cover most of the elements presented in the following. The presented elements are primarily based on the elements of the business plans presented in [3, 9], but are very similar to what is written by [7, 8, 16, 22]:

1. Cover page

The cover page of a business plan should include the company name, contact information, business creation year, copy number, and a logo. The name and logo presents the company's visual representation and thereby provides more ways of remembering the company or the business idea. The contact information should always be easily accessible and is therefore well placed on the cover page. Some business plans are not intended for publishing, this can be avoided by tagging each business plan with a copy number to be able to identify a potential publisher.

2. Summary

The summary also called executive summary is the most important part of the business plan, since it is short and concisely explains the business plan. The summary should be of length one to three pages. The summary should describe the type of suggested business, the current status, what products or services it provides, what benefit the business brings to the customers, the financial forecasts, the venture's objectives in three to seven years, and the amount of financing needed.

3. Background information

Given that the company does not exist yet, this part of a business plan describes the entrepreneurs, including their past experience. If the business is already up and running, this section should help the reader to gauge how far the business has come, and to comprehend where the company are in the new venture creation process.

4. Personal resources and goals

Besides what is written in the background section about the entrepreneurs there should be a section that elaborate more on what they have to offer the business, and why they intend to create the venture. This should include information like family network, economy, know-how and weak points in relation to the business, and what the persons task are in the business.

5. The product or service

This section should deal with all important aspects of the product or service, giving the reader a thorough understanding of the product or service. After reading this section the reader should be well aware of the product features, uniqueness, and what it provides compared to existing products or services.

6. The market

Before doing any sale and marketing, the target customers should be identified. This section should provide information about the target customers and how they are identified. This market research should cover what precisely the market is, if the market growing or shrinking, and whether or

not it is worth entering. The section should also assess the competition, show their weakness and strengths, in order to understand their market position.

7. **Sale and marketing strategy**

A description of how the business intent to engage the users. This section should include a discussion of the primarily target customers, the secondary targets and how the business intent to identify and contact these customers. This section also describes to which extent the product or service will be introduced at first, e.g. nationwide or regional.

8. **Management & organisation**

Describes how the organisation is to be structured, including business policies, partners, and consultants. Present the legal owners, bank, accountant, and the procedures for accountancy- and administrative-routines.

9. **Development of the business**

The long term plan for the business. Who are the customers now and in the future? What is the product now and in the future? Provide a financial forecast and describe what goals the business has for future development.

10. **Budgets**

Budgets for the establishment and the future operation of the business.

11. **Financial requirements** This section is a crucial element when seeking money to start the business. The section should describe the financial requirements and the necessary initial capital and liquidity for operation.

These elements should not be seen as a section outline for the business plan, but rather as elements that should be covered in a business plan.

There exist different kinds of business plans [3], depending on the purpose of the plan. The **summary business plan** is about 10 pages long and have become increasingly popular since this plan take less time to create and read, given its smaller size. When seeking a substantial amount of financing the summary plan does not provide the insight needed for such investors. Here there is a need for a **full business plan**, that generally ranges from 10-40 pages. The last type of business plan is the **operational business plan** that exceeds 40 pages. This business plan is primarily intended large organisations that have a lot of issues that should be described.

3.2.2 Business in Beta

Another way to create a business, is through a strategy called “Business in Beta” [20] where prototyping is used in a way similar to agile incremental development.

Business in Beta seeks to address the following questions, when developing a business on a new product or service:

- How do you build a business in an unproven market?
- How to figure out customers’ needs, when delivering something they have never seen before?
- How to evolve, in order to stay competitive?

Similar to agile development, Business in Beta suggest that instead of developing a final version of the product or service, including all features, a small part of the product or service should be developed and released to the customers or users for evaluation. The feedback received is then evaluated to see if the solution should be further developed, changed, or in the most extreme dropped. By doing this you can minimise the risk of entering a new market or developing a new product that does not sell.

An example of this is Facebook that instead of guessing what features their users wanted, and thereby risk wasting a lot of developing hours, provided their users with the opportunity to develop features themselves. These user developed features then showed Facebook where to direct their feature development.

IDEO [20] defines Business in Beta through the following guidelines:

1. **Go early, go often**
Start small and stay focused, try everything but not at once.
2. **Learning by doing**
Build value for the business as you prototype. Learn from success and failure.
3. **Inspiration through constraint**
Do not exhaust yourself searching for money and resources. The tighter your constraints are, the more creative your prototypes will be.
4. **Open to opportunity**
Look for unanticipated ways customers are using your offerings. Their improvisations may be the future of your business.

In this current project we plan to use the Business in Beta strategy, since we do not know what features the users would want in a collaborative event planning solution. We therefore propose to launch the application as fast as possible, with the minimum required features to facilitate collaborative event planning and then extent the service as it becomes popular. This also makes it possible for us to develop a cheaper solution at first, and then finance it with ads. Later the solution can be extended with features that generate profit in various ways.

Chapter 4

Summary

During this part of the report we introduced our business idea and presented theory and methods related to business development. The theory started with a description of entrepreneurship followed by innovation and innovation management, since innovation is a large part of entrepreneurship. The theory behind innovation is used to better our understanding of the potential customers. Innovation management, more specifically the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy where presented, since this model gives a good overview of what is needed in order to stay innovative. We used the innovation management strategy as a foundation, and presented different methods that can be utilised during the five phases. We also described how Lotte Darsø's preject and project view fits into the presented innovation management strategy.

The introduced business plan and Business in Beta have in our opinion two interesting, but different views on business creation. They are in some way similar to software development. The business plan can be seen as the waterfall business creation method, in the sense that you analyse and plan almost everything before starting the business. Business in Beta is thus more related to agile development, where you through numerous iterations develop the product, and in this case the business. This should not be seen as two totally different approaches, since some of the elements in a business plan still are to be made before Business in Beta can be done. An example could be that you still have to make the necessary market analysis in order to know where to launch the business and so on.

As mentioned in Section 3.2.2 we intent to use the Business in Beta approach for our business development, since we do not know what the final product should consist of. Besides doing Business in Beta we are still developing a business plan describing as much as possible to better our understanding of business creation.

The business plan is going to be developed using the presented techniques following the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy. In the preject phase of our project we are going through idea development utilising W5H2 and the dreamer role of the Disney strategy. When switching over to the project phase and into the next three phases of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy, we intent to use prototyping and user evaluation to identify whether or not the business is feasible, what features the initial product should include, and what features can be postponed until later.

Part II

**Idea and Business
Development**

Chapter 5

Idea Development

This part of the report presents the idea development process and describes our process through the first four phases of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy, presented in the first part. The following sections describe how the idea went from the initial idea of collaborative event planning to the final business concept. Then the developed concept is evaluated in a proof of concept study where a prototype is made and tested with potential customers. This information is then used as a preliminary feasibility study for the business development and business plan.

5.1 Idea Refining

As presented in the introduction of the first part, we decided to develop an idea of collaborative event planning. At this point it was already decided that the product were to be an event planning service, however it was still unclear what approach to take and what to focus on. The first thing that became clear was that there were three different approaches to event planning: one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many planning. One-to-one planning is when someone wants to go out and have fun, without planning who to go with. One-to-many is when someone takes the initiative to arrange a social event for a group of people, such as a birthday. Many-to-many cover the collaboration between multiple people, e.g. when a group of friends decide to go to the theatre.

With these three types of event planning in mind the W5H2 method was used to explore what the end users, Kino.dk (a booking service for Nordisk Film Biografer), and general entertainment providers could use an event planning service for. Two of the three market segments were selected since they represents two different generic market segments, where Kino.dk were selected because they already facilitate online booking.

The W5H2 method, as presented in Section 3.1.2, consists of seven open questions, which is used to spark new ideas, and explore unknown aspects. To utilise the openness of the seven questions in W5H2, they were first answered independently, thus making the idea exploration more divergent. The different answers to the questions were then compiled into a common W5H2 for each of the three perspectives.

During the analysis of the end user, see Appendix A.1, it was found that the

event planning solution would assist during the planning, and that the planning of events are not a trivial task. The W5H2 also yielded a sketch of who the end users could be, thereby helping the later feature generation.

From the Kino.dk perspective, see Appendix A.2, an event planning service would be a new sales channel, which could help them both to boost sales, and heighten their customer service. In the case of Kino.dk the event planning service would be rather limited in its focus, since it would only be focused around planning trips to the cinema. On the other hand the potential profit from either being a ticket broker or developing the system for Kino.dk makes it interesting.

The W5H2 concerning the general event activity providers, see Appendix A.3, yielded that they could use the service to reach more customers, since they would get more exposure. Again this is interesting since the service could either be developed for one or more of the event activity providers, or sold like a broker service.

In our opinion, the most interesting focus is the end users presented in Appendix A.1. Because this where collaborative event planning is most in focus. Furthermore in helping the customers in planning, the chance of the social event being realised would increase.

Before going further into the development of a collaborative event planning service targeting the end users, we need to understand the process of collaborative event planning. This is further elaborated in the next section concerning an analysis of the user sequences.

5.1.1 User Sequences Analysis

Arranging an event, such as, a trip to the cinema with a couple of friends seem like a straight forward task but there are however numerous approaches to it.

Collaborative event planning should aid the users in planning events, and it is therefore crucial to understand how events are planned. In this section the sequence of actions involved in arranging an event will be analysed.

An example of a sequence of actions could be Peter and his four friends Jimmy, Tom, Jill, and Emma. Peter want to arrange a trip to the cinema with his friends and watch the new film “Kung Pow 2: Tongue of Fury” starring Steve Oedekerck, Peter’s favourite actor. In order to arrange this event with his friends, Peter visits the website of the cinema to get dates, times and seat options for the particular film. Based on the information Peter decides for a date and time where his favourite seats are available and he contacts his friends. It turns out that only Jimmy, Tom, and Emma is able to participate in the event, Jill is not available on the selected date.

The above example illustrates a one-to-many event planning scenario where a person take on the task of arranging an event for a group of people. To simplify the above example it has been expressed as a sequence of actions:

Peter wants to see the film “Kung Pow 2: Tongue of Fury” → Peter examines run times and select day and time → Peter invites his four friends → Peter goes to the cinema with three of his four friends.

The above presented sequence is very specific and only describes this exact case with Peter and his friends. This is not useful when the target group for

collaborative event planning is more than just Peter and his friends. Also the sequence above does not account for a sold out film which would mean that Peter would have to start from scratch, if the film is sold out on the chosen date and time. To address this problem an extra action has to be added to check whether or not the selected event is available, before continuing to the final step. A more generic version of “Peter’s” sequence with a check if available action is generated and shown below.

The initiating planner → Find an event → Find a date → Invite attendants →
Check event availability, if not available pick new date → Execute event or
abort.

This more generic sequence can be used to describe how **one** person would arrange an event for a group of people where the group does not have any say in the event details. As this project is about collaborative event planner, the attendants have to be involved in the planning process. Even though the sequence is more generic, it does not capture all the ways a person can arrange an event and especially not collaboration between the attendants and the planner. A sequence could be made which would describe collaboration on the date, event, or date and event. An example of a sequence with date collaboration is shown below.

The initiating planner → Arrange an event → Invite attendants → They vote
on specified dates → Check event availability → Execute event or abort.

As mentioned, this sequence does not capture all possible ways of arranging an event. Peter could for example have chosen the date before the event, or invited people before deciding anything or what if he decided to arrange an event together with his sister Sarah then the sequence would be as shown below.

The initiating planners → Decide on and arrange an event → Decide a date →
Decide on and invite attendants → Check event availability → Execute event
or abort.

The above sequences are expressed in a natural language and are therefore limited, since there are many different sequences which are more or less similar, but not covered. To avoid listing all the possible combinations or the actions involved in event planning a different approach must be taken. A better way to describe all possible sequences is to use UML activity diagrams. Activity diagrams are part of the UML standard [23] and can be used to describe work flows, as we have done in Figure 5.1. The presented sequences have been transformed into the single activity diagram shown in Figure 5.1 as it captures the same work flow as the textual sequences. The activity diagram begins with a planner or a number of planners and then leads into a fork. The fork means that “Decide Event”, “Decide Date”, and “Invite Attendants” can occur in random order, but it is not possible to move on before all three steps has been taken. After the fork we check to see if the event will be realised and then we check to see if the event/date is still available, if not then the event and/or date has to be picked again.

Having decided upon a target group, the end users, and examined the process of event planning, we can begin to consider the functionality of a collaborative event planning service.

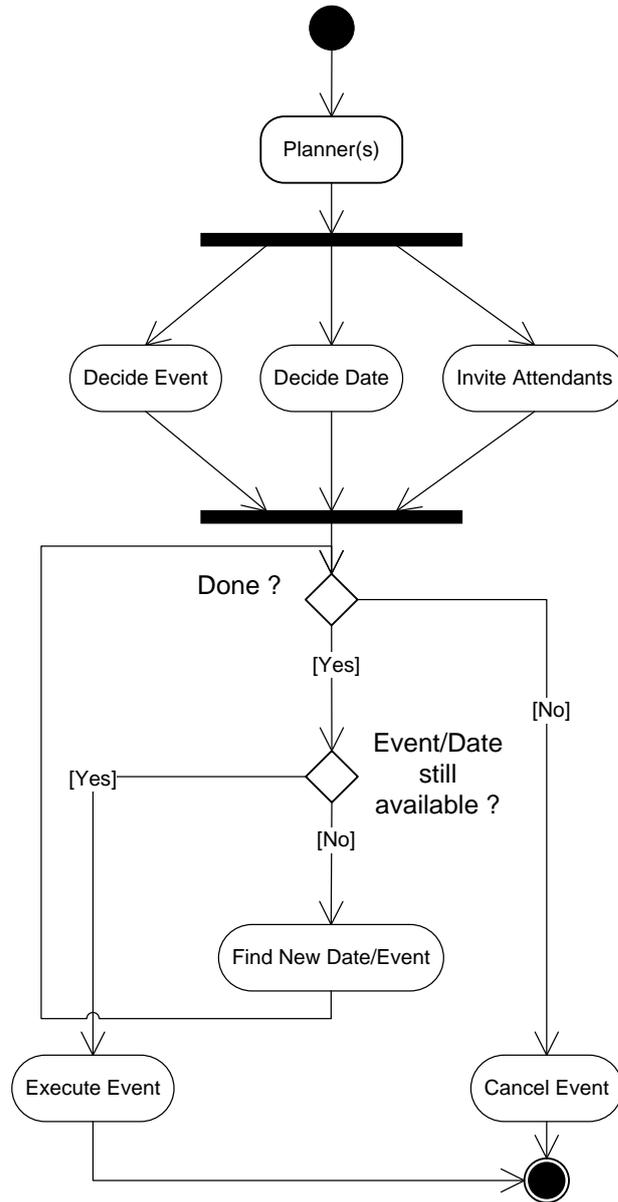


Figure 5.1: Activity diagram for collaborative event planning.

5.2 Feature Generation

This section concerns the *Idea generation* and the *Evaluation and planning* phases in the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy presented in Section 2.2.2, and describe the features derived from our idea generation phase. This feature generation phase is inspired by the Disney creativity strategy introduced in Section 3.1.3, in the sense that we used the three roles to generate ideas, evaluate them and discard the ideas that did not fit. Using Darsø's terminology, our innovation process, during this phase, switched from divergent to convergent, since we limited the generated features down to the ones presented.

Through the idea refining process described in Section 5.1 and the W5H2 analysis presented in Appendix A, we discovered different interesting features that emerged from planning the interaction with social networks. Based on this observation we initiated the feature generation phase to explore the differences between regular event planning and event planning using social networks. This approach to feature generation was chosen to see if either type had any special advantage over the other. In order not to influence each other the feature generation was also done individually, and then compiled into a common set of features which can be seen in Appendix B. These features will be explained during the rest of this section.

During the process of generating features, it became clear that an event planning service focused on using social networks have several advantages compared to the one that does not utilise social networks. These advantages are primarily the amount of users already active in the social network, and the amount of information that can be derived from the social network. Based on this observation we decided to focus our future development on a collaborative event planning service for Facebook. The reason for choosing Facebook is, as presented in the introduction, that it is one of the fastest growing social networks. Since Facebook already have a simple and feature limited event system, we decided to name our solution eEvent which is short for extended event. We assume that by developing eEvent as a Facebook application, it becomes easier to attract users.

The process of comparing, analysing, and discussing the generated features, lead to the groupings presented below. The following sections describe each of these categories and the features within them.

Core features are features that are essential to an event planning service and without these features other features are unrealisable. The core features also includes features that facilitate collaboration between multiple planners. A feature such as creating an event, and showing it, is a core feature. The core features are meant to be extended and enhanced by other features.

Interactive creation features are features that enhance event creation, by offering the planner different choices. A feature which fits into interactive creation is event templates, where commonly used event types are predefined, e.g. a trip to the cinema or going to a bar. These templates can then be glued together to form a new event containing both a trip to the cinema and a dinner.

Invitation contain features that aid the planner in inviting people to an event.

An example would be contact importation, or suggestions based on friends Facebook preferences.

Individual planning contain features that make it possible for the individual user, planner and participant alike, to plan event specific things, such as payment, or how and when to receive notifications.

Participant involvement allows participants to influence parts of the event planning, such as invite additional people, or determine a common meeting place.

Planner organisation features are features that assist the planner in maintaining an overview during the planning of an event. An example of a feature in this group is a planner check list, where a planner can keep track of e.g. shopping.

Information organisation are the features concerned with mining and presenting event data. An example is the tracking of upcoming events feature, where public events of relevance to a user are displayed.

Each group consists of several features. The next sections describe the features that fall into each of the presented groupings. The features will be highlighted in order to ease the understanding of Figure 5.2 and the later eEvent version description.

5.2.1 Core Features

The core features are the features that make the service an event planning service. As mentioned the core features are meant to be extended and enhanced by other features, which means that the core features are the base for the other feature groupings.

The most core part of an event planning service would have to be the ability to **create an event**. Creating an event consists of describing what happens at the said event. Another part of creating an event is the ability to break down event creation into clear steps, such that a generic **multi-step** event creation process can be utilised. The next feature that fits into the core features is **inviting people**, since one often need to invite people to participate in events. In the core feature group, it is only **private events** that are supported by the invitation feature, meaning invitations are only sent to people selected by the planner. This leads to the feature allowing invited people to **accept or deny** an invitation, and collect this information to be shown on a **dashboard**. This feature would make the service more attractive since it would simplify the process of registering who is coming to the event or not.

The following core features are targeted at events with multiple planners, where some kind of agreement has to be reached, such as deciding on a date, what to eat, or where to go. This is where interactive polls come in. The **interactive poll** feature is a tool that allows planners to suggest something, which other planners, or participants, can vote on. The interactive polls can be seen as a counterpart to Doodle®¹, which is a decision making service, where people can decide on a specific date, or make a general decision. Doodle® has

¹<http://www.doodle.com/>

also been the inspiration to the **doodle date** feature facilitating data decisions in the eEvent service.

5.2.2 Interactive Creation

The features in interactive creation are those that extend the multi-step decision concept, and refines the event creation process of the core features. A **browse available events** feature should provide the possibility to browse event activities. An example could be a catalogue showing the restaurants in a city. The feature called **browse available event** should, based on the **event tracking** feature, provide a catalogue of public events, such as, concerts that could be of interest to the planner and participants.

Event templates are another feature, that can help planners structure the planning process into predefined steps. It can also help the planners to agree on what an event should consist of. An example could be that the event is split up into three parts using an event template containing a dinner, entertainment, and a drink. One planner could then be responsible for planning where to go for dinner, where another plans the entertainment, and the last arrange some casual drinking afterwards.

5.2.3 Invitation

As mentioned, there are different ways to invite people to an event. The eEvent service should be able to aid planners in reaching the participants, or simply to draw more people to an event. When creating an event the planner chooses whether or not the event should be invite only, open for friends of friends or open for all. If it is an invite only event, the planner should get a list of social network contacts (**invite via Facebook**) to choose from. Furthermore it should also be possible to import email addresses from the planners email accounts, and different list formats, such as CSV files (**invite via email**).

Based on who has already been invited to the event, the eEvent service should suggest who to invite, e.g., mutual friends or people from a Facebook group (**suggest participants**). Also the planner should be able to filter through contacts to e.g. locate old classmates from high school.

In the case of an event limited to friends and their friends, it should be possible for the participants, who were invited by the planners, to invite their friends. Another way for participants to inform friends of an upcoming event, would be to use the news feed supplied by Facebook (**Facebook broadcast**). In case of an open event both of the above approaches could be used to attract participants.

5.2.4 Individual Planning

The idea behind this feature group is that planners and participants alike have a need for personal planning. The first feature is **auto-notification**, which allows people to receive event specific notifications. These notifications are, e.g., reminder mails, telling that the event is being held tomorrow. It could also be notification of new people attending the event. Since this could result in a lot of notifications, it should be possible for the user to define, if some of the

information should come as a digest mail. This could help make the service less annoying and more useful.

Another idea is the possibility to make **payments** using the eEvent service. This covers both paying the planner, and eventually being able to pay for e.g. food at a restaurant. The idea with paying the planner, is in the scenario where a participation fee is required. It could be that instead of first paying for cinema tickets when everyone has shown up, they could be paid for in advance.

Arrangement of **overnight accommodation** is another feature that falls under individual planning. In cases where participants are coming from far away it would be convenient for them to be able to book a hotel room, or perhaps find a couch at some of the other participants. This feature should therefore enable participants to find either a nearby hotel/hostel, or another participant to stay at.

Each user should have a personal **dashboard**, showing invitations, future events, participants for these, and so on. The dashboard is meant to be a quick overview of the current status. In addition to the dashboard, an event **timetable overview** should make it possible for the individual user, to see time specific information on the event.

A coupling between the eEvent service and a travel portal, such as Tripit², would enable users to easily **arrange transport**, to and from the event, and share this information. The transport time table should be available from the dashboard. Furthermore the time table should be exportable (**timetable export**), such that it can be imported into a calendar of choice, this could be done e.g. by using the iCal format. If imported into e.g. Google Calendar which is able to sync with several different mobile phones, the users would be able to take the time table with them.

Each user should be able to enter **personal preferences**, such as current residence, maximum travel distance, and a maximum price. These preferences could then be used to rank event suggestions, such that the events that are most compliant with the user's preferences are ranked best. They could also be used to help planners when choosing who to invite, again using the same idea with ranking, since there is might not be any point in inviting people that are located too far away.

Another feature for the dashboard could be a coupling with **Google Maps**, where the different locations are marked. This would allow users to navigate to the different locations, which would be quite helpful when participants are from out of town.

5.2.5 Participant Involvement

By allowing participants to invite other people, they need to be able to do so (**participants can invite**). This should be done in the same fashion as with planners, thus it is not as such a new feature. In the case of friends inviting friends there should be some sort of control feature to administrate who can invite and who they invite.

The possibility to involve participants in planning could be extended to **arrange meeting place** and time. In this case it should be possible for the planner to suggest both, or allow the participants to suggest time or place. Each

²<http://www.tripit.com/>

participant should then be able to vote for the places and times best suited for them.

5.2.6 Planner Organisation

When planning an event a planner often has to prepare a lot of things, meanwhile also keeping track of budget. The features of this group addresses the individual planners need to organise and coordinate event preparations. The first feature is the planner **check list**, where one or more planners can share event check lists. An example of such a list could be a shopping list for a Halloween party, or a check list for a bachelor party.

Another feature in the planner organisation group is **budget planning**, where it is possible to record event specific expenses. A budget would provide an overview of the total event cost, along with a per participant cost. Furthermore if participants were to be charged before the event, it should be reflected in the budget.

The last feature placed in the planner organisation group is **booking**. The idea is that the eEvent service should be able to act as a broker for the event activity providers, such as restaurants and cinemas. The booking feature should be able to make reservations based on the number of participants and the event activity providers should then allow eEvent to book e.g. seats in their restaurant or seats and tickets for a film.

5.2.7 Information Gathering

The dashboard, mentioned before, should be able to show upcoming events, e.g. an upcoming soccer match or rock concert (**event tracking**). This information should be gathered automatically by the system (**mining information**), and based on the users profiles displayed when relevant. This could be, if the user has written about soccer on his or her Facebook profile, thereby showing interest in these kinds of events.

5.2.8 Additional Features

There are a couple features which do not fit under the other categories. One of these is advertising for entertainment providers, allowing them to make **special offers**, e.g. see a film and get a free burger. These special offers could help planners in choosing what to do, whilst suggestion based on previous events (**history suggest**) could be used to decide what to do next. These kinds of offers would make the service more attractive to the end users, while giving the event activity providers an additional sales channel.

5.3 eEvent Versions

As the eEvent service is going to be developed in stages using Business in Beta, as described in Section 3.2.2, it makes sense to talk about versions, since versions can be used to focus the development. When deciding on which features to include in the different versions, there are different aspects to consider such as:

- What is the purpose of the version?

- Who is the target of the version?
- What is their value gain from the feature?
- How complex is it to implement the feature?
- Is the feature necessary for the specific version?

Defining the purpose of the version is crucial when deciding which features should be included in the specific version. If the purpose of the version is not defined, then it is difficult to evaluate it. Furthermore the purpose should be well defined, and restricted such that it is not too broad. If a feature does not fall within the defined purpose of a version, then it does not belong in the version.

Depending on the view, features are assessed differently, which is why you need to be aware of who is the target of the version. The user does not care whether or not a feature generates profit for a company or whether service providers increase their sale. The user is interested in features from which they benefit. That would be features which make the service worth using compared to other event planning solutions. If seen from our view, there is more importance in the features which will ensure a large annual turnover. Finally the event activity providers are interested in features that allow them to reach their target users. Therefore, when choosing features, it is important to examine whether the intended target values a feature.

Complexity should also be considered when choosing features, if a feature is complex to implement it might be better to wait to a later version with that feature. It also helps to take complexity into consideration, when defining the purpose of the version, as too many complex features will make it hard to finish the given version.

The features of the eEvent service have been spread over five versions, each of which serve a different purpose. Using the simple guidelines just presented the versions of the eEvent service will be defined in the following sections. A visualisation of this division can be seen in Figure 5.2, where each feature has been placed around the core features. They are grouped after sense of belonging, arranged after complexity going outwards, and coloured after which version they belong to.

5.3.1 The Initial Version

The initial version of eEvent is targeted at end users. This is because we reason that it is easier to convince event activity providers to use the eEvent service to reach customers, when there is an actual user base. In order to attract users the initial version must be able to do the same as the main competitor, which in our case is the Facebook event system. Therefore the purpose of the first version of eEvent is to be able to do what Facebook events can and more. The initial version of eEvent should therefore allow multiple planners to collaborate in the event planning.

Using the Facebook event creation application it is possible to create events with a name, a place, a picture, a date, and a description. The Facebook event can also have a blog wall, along with a photo album, and a guest list. There are several privacy options, such as who can see the event, who are allowed

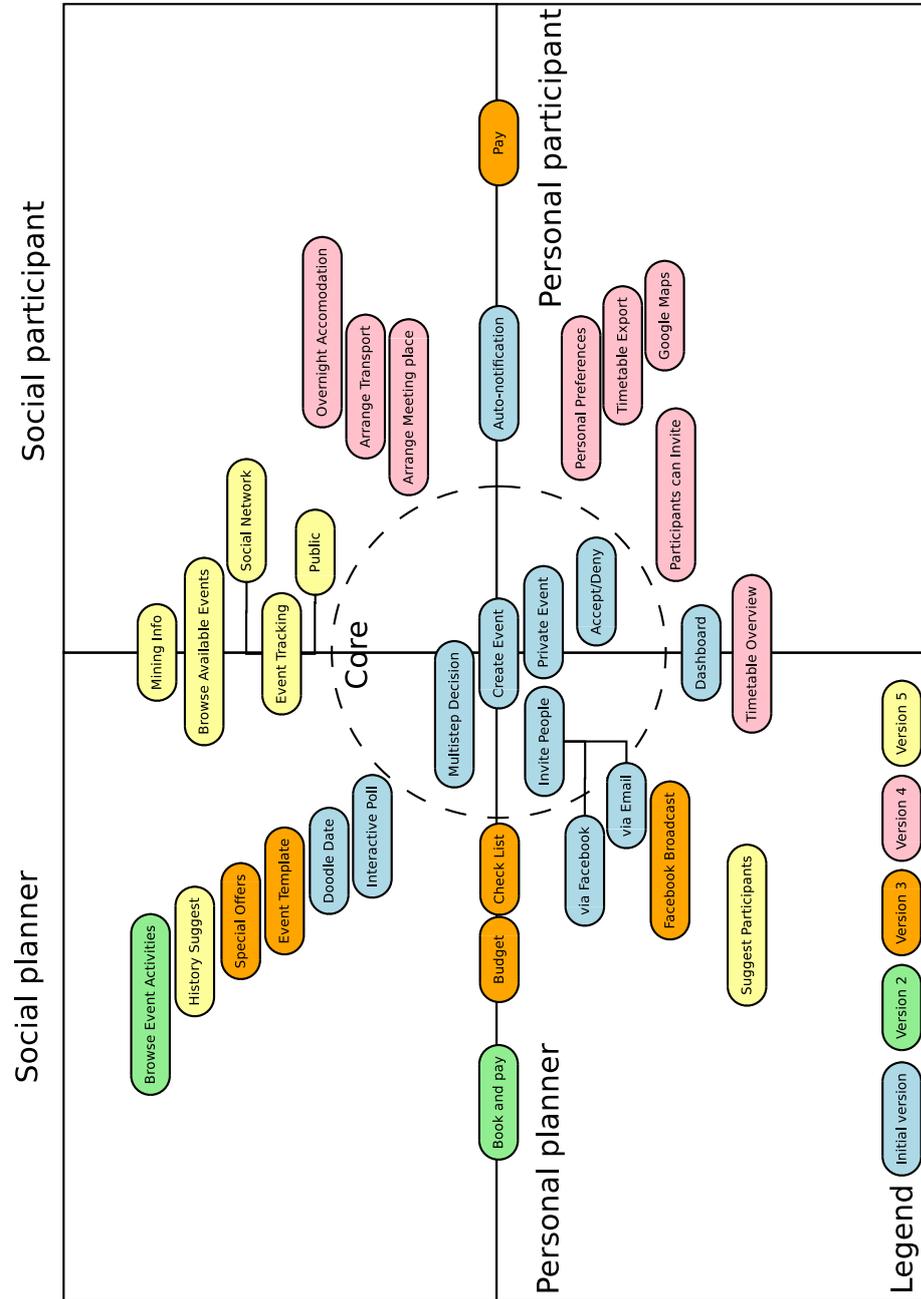


Figure 5.2: The feature division of the eEvent service.

to post on the wall and the photo album. Finally it is possible to invite your friends to attend the event, and indicate if they can bring a companion or not. Invitations to the event can be answered with a yes, no, or maybe, the latter is the possibility to postpone the decision. These are the features available for Facebook, of which most should be available in the initial version of the eEvent service.

The initial version should contain the core features, see Section 5.2.1, as they cover most of the features from Facebook events. From the interactive creation group the interactive poll feature should be included, since it enables multiple people to collaborate on the event. Furthermore it is a feature which the Facebook event system does not have.

The auto-notification feature from the individual planning group should also be included in the first version, as it creates an increased value for both participants and planners. The participants are automatically reminded of when the event starts, and registration deadlines. This means the planners can save time by letting the eEvent service handle notifications.

It is also necessary to have a way to monitor event activity, this could be covered by the dashboard, which allows both planners and participants to get an overview of the current events, and the status of the attendants. As the dashboard is not meant to only show information on current events, it would only be a subset of the dashboard that should be implemented in the initial version. The last of the features that should be in the initial version is that event participants can invite friends of their own.

To sum up, the following features are needed to comply with most of the features of Facebook's event system.

1. Create an event
2. Private events
3. Event dashboard
4. Invite people to an event
5. Accept/Deny
6. Attendant status

The features that aid multiple planners in collaborating are:

1. Multiple step decisions
2. Doodle like date decision
3. Automatic notification

5.3.2 Subsequent Versions

Second Version The second version of the eEvent service is focused on integrating the event activity providers into the service, such that planners can browse available activities. This is a crucial version as it is the basis for striking deals with activity providers, such as restaurants. The providers are the main target of this version, since this is where we involve them in the planning process. We ourselves are also the target of the second version of eEvent, since we are able to use it to convince different activity providers to use our service. Since there are many different kinds of event activities, we have to make a unified way to present the different providers to the planners. Although we need to make a unified representation of the event activities, it should still be possible to distinguish the different kinds of event activities, e.g. by using categories or

tags. Furthermore we want the eEvent service to be able to book and pay for activities where it is possible. This will require a very flexible booking service, which will have to be able to communicate with several different booking services. The payment feature will require a deal with a payment gateway, and integration of this into the eEvent service.

All of these features are quite complex and will require a lot of work, but they are necessary in order to fully integrate the activity providers. The last feature is to make it possible for the planners to browse available event activities, such that the version has an actual value to the activity providers.

Third Version In the third version the end users are again in focus, along with the providers. The purpose of the third version is to expand the functionality for the planners. Event templates would aid planners in creating events and with it, it becomes easier to suggest relevant activity providers. The budget feature is also relevant for this version, as it helps planners keep track of the event expenses, and who has paid for what.

Another quite complex feature, which would be of great value to planners, is the possibility to allow planners to charge participants payment. This should be possible both before and after the event has been executed, such that it is possible to split the expenses of the event between the participants. A check list feature also fits into this version, since it is a feature designed for the planners. The Facebook broadcast feature helps planners of public events to reach more people, making it suited for this version. The activity providers should be able to make special offers, such as Thursday night 20 percent off on tuna, or dine and go to the theatre and get a discount. This will also be of value to the planners as they can save money by using special offers and get new ideas.

Fourth Version The fourth version is mainly targeted at the end users by adding more functionality to the service. One thing is communication between event participants, allowing participants to share things like transport time tables, meeting places, and arrange overnight accommodations. At this time there are probably also suggestions to features which users would like to see, these should be evaluated and, if found feasible, implemented in this version.

Fifth Version The fifth version, which is the last version planned at the moment, is focused on using all the data available to us. Thereby allowing us to make better suggestions, and find more attractive providers. It will also help us when negotiating with providers, since we can tell them how many users have shown interest in similar event activities. Users should be able to track upcoming public events in their vicinity, making it easier to gain an overview of events in which they can participate. Planners should get suggestions on whom to invite, based on friends' preferences and patterns. Reusing former event data should also be included in this version.

This is how the five versions of the eEvent service are planned at this point. Of course the version schemes should be revised after completing a version. To evaluate the newly developed version, and to see if there are new developments in the market, which should be taken into account in the future versions.

Chapter 6

Proof of Concept

The following sections describe the proof of concept made in order to evaluate the eEvent concept, and therefore covers the *testing and prototyping phase* of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy. We decided to create a prototype implementation of the eEvent concept, since a prototype enables us to gather feedback from potential future customers. The following section describes the developed prototype, and Section 6.2 presents the target group experiment that forms the base for an evaluation of the prototype, which is presented in Section 6.3.

6.1 Prototype

As described in Section 3.1.4, the best suited type of prototype for validating the eEvent concept is an interface prototype, as it is quickly made and can be tested with end users. This section describes the conditions for making the prototype and the process of making it.

The prototype is created to be the base of an evaluation to determine if the business venture is feasible. It will only implement the core features presented in Section 5.3. The prototype will consist of a series of screen shots made in Pencil[13] and Adobe Photoshop, where Microsoft PowerPoint will be used to give the prototype functionality and to control the flow. It should be noted that we do not possess any special graphical skills, so the prototype will not necessarily graphically reassemble the final version. By creating the prototype in these programs, there is a loss of feel and functionality as this will be emulated with slides, and slides cannot emulate application functionality exactly. We assume that this loss will not have influence on the overall outcome of the user experiment conducted in the next section. As the purpose of the experiment is to review the idea and not the final product.

The process of creating the prototype of the eEvent service, started with a brainstorming session where paper mock-ups, sketching the interface were made for all possible scenarios. These paper mock-ups were then used to create a final paper mock-up by selecting the best ideas from each mock-up. The final paper mock-ups were then used to create screen shots, for most of the scenarios, in the above mentioned program. Figure 6.1 is a screen shot of the event page, showing 5 participants collaborating on deciding a data for the event.

The prototype screen shots representing the task presented in Section 6.2.1 can be found in Appendix C. When all the screen shots were finished, we used Microsoft PowerPoint to collect all the screen shots into an interactive prototype representing most of the features included in the initial version.

6.2 Target Group Experiment

The prototype described in the previous section has to be tested in order to evaluate the eEvent concept, therefore this section will outline the experiment and present the result of the experiment. The result is used to make a substantiated answer to, whether or not it is feasible to build a business upon collaborative event planning and what features eEvent should contain. The experiment consist of three parts; first a test of the prototype, then an interview with the participant, and lastly an evaluation of the result.

The participants of the experiment consist of a small group of people representing different personalities, with different experience, as described in Section 3.1.5 We are interested in getting a group of people who are as representative of our target group as possible without interviewing a substantial amount of people. The participants we have selected for our experiment are 23 or 24 of age and use Facebook at least once a week. They have all been selected from their computer skill level in order to represent different groups of Facebook users. It is assumed that the persons that have a higher computer skill level would be more eager to use a computer for tasks such as event planning.

The test is going to be conducted in a room equipped with a computer on which the prototype will be running. The test persons will kindly be asked to think aloud [21] during the test in order to give a better understanding of their process through the planning. During the test one of the authors will be responsible for assisting the participant if he or she needs help of any kind.

The person assisting the test will introduce the idea of collaborative event planning, the product, and its features to the participant. The participant is then given a number of tasks to perform with the prototype, while two observers monitor the participant performing these tasks and takes notes of their behaviour. The tasks concerning event planning, as presented in the next section, are designed to illustrate most aspects of collaborative event planning.

6.2.1 Tasks for the Prototype Experiment

The experiment consists of the following two tasks, that are to be performed using the eEvent prototype. The tasks are constructed to simulate the planning of two events with colleagues. In the first they have influence on the date and in the second they have influence on both the date and the event activity.

Task one Imagine that you are assigned as the co-ordinator of a trip to the cinema with you and your colleagues. Given that you have decided to use a software solution to aid the planning, and that you have decided on a motion picture to watch, your tasks are the following: Create the event consisting of a trip to the cinema, with a motion picture specified, and with an undecided date. When the event is created you should invite your colleagues into the date decision process and await their feedback.

eEvent

Event

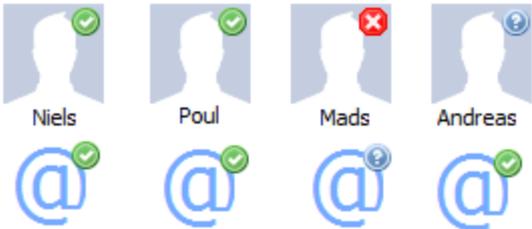
Event: Biograftur med gutterne!

Informationer:
Event: 500 Days Of Summer

Hvornår kan du ?

| Navn | 17/11 | 18/11 | 20/11 | 27/11 | 2/12 |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Niels | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Poul | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ade@gmail.com | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| another@cs.aau.dk | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| someone@gmail.com | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Total | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 |

Deltagere



Niels Poul Mads Andreas

ade@g... another@c... sommerf... someone@...

Figure 6.1: Interface prototype, a view of the event page with collaborative date decision

1. Create an event and name it: *A trip to the movies with the lads.*
2. Create a single event activity named: *500 Days Of Summer*
3. Suggest the following dates for the event:
2009-12-12, Time 18:00 - 21:00
2009-12-13, Time 18:00 - 21:00
2009-12-14, Time 18:00 - 21:00
4. Invite the following participants:
Niels, Mads, Andreas, and tommy@gmail.com
5. Create the event to send out invitations.
6. Since you cannot attend the 2009-12-13 you prefer the 2009-12-12 and 2009-12-14.
7. Check for feedback.

Task two Again you imagine that you are assigned as a co-ordinator of a trip out dining in the city. This time you have not decided on a specific restaurant, but selected a few that you and your colleagues should choose between. Besides the restaurant, the date for the event has not been selected either, leaving three Friday's as options. Your task as a planner, is therefore to select the date and restaurant that fits most of your colleagues wishes by creating an event with undecided event activity and date. To do this you: create an event consisting of a dinner in town at an undecided restaurant and date, and invite friends into planning process, for them to give feedback on the date and restaurant choice.

1. Create an event and name it: *A Friday dinner in town.*
2. Create multiple event activities named:
Hard Rock Cafe
Cafe Ritz
Stygges Cafe
3. Suggest the following dates for the event:
2009-12-4, Time 18:00 - 23:00
2009-12-11, Time 18:00 - 23:00
2009-12-18, Time 18:00 - 23:00
4. Invite the following participants:
Niels, Mads, Andreas, and tommy@gmail.com
5. Create the event to send out invitations.
6. You prefer the following two dates: 2009-12-4 and 2009-12-18.
7. You prefer the following two restaurants: Cafe Ritz and Stygges Cafe.

8. Check for feedback.

After the tests each participant is interviewed, through a semi-structured interview, discussing their impression of the collaborative event planning idea and the eEvent prototype they have just tested. The interview will be guided by the interview guide described in the following section.

6.2.2 Interview Guide

An interview guide [17] consists of an outline of questions for the interview. The questions are not meant as a strict guide for the interview, but rather as suggestions to questions to ask during the interview. Through these suggested questions, the interview guide helps to ensure that the subject are sufficiently covered during the interview. The interview questions should concern the following two dimensions: thematic and dynamic. The thematic dimension concerns the specific questions about the subject and are later the base for the analysis. The dynamic dimension is responsible for keeping the talk going and to motivate the attendants to talk about their experience with the subject.

The version of eEvent tested is the initial version, made to aid collaborative planning and we therefore focus the interview guide on evaluating the idea of collaborative event planning. The questions in this interview guide are designed to give an answer on whether or not it is a feasible business idea. To ensure this, the questions have been designed with the SWOT-analysis model, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, as guidance. A SWOT-analysis is a commonly used tool for creating an overview of a business development and in our case a business idea.

The following questions, representing the strengths, are made to evaluate if users are willing to use a software solution to aid collaborative event planning and if they are willing to use the presented eEvent solution.

1. What do you think of using a software solution for event planning?
 - (a) What do you think of the presented eEvent prototype?
2. What was the best thing about using software for event planning?
3. What do you think of the steps involved with creating an event in the prototype?

The following two questions represent the weaknesses:

4. Was there something you could not do when using eEvent in relation to event planning?
5. Were there any functionality you could be without?

The last section of questions is made to locate possible features that the users would like to have added to a future solution and to evaluate the financial concerns. These questions therefore represent the opportunities:

6. How much would you pay for a service like the one presented to you in the prototype?
7. Would you be willing to pay 5\$ per year for the use of it?

8. Would you accept advertising on the website and in notifications?
9. Would you pay a small fee to get rid of the advertisements?
10. What functionality would you like to have added?
11. Would you pay for an SMS notification service and how much?
12. Would you like a suggestion service that suggests event elements?
 - (a) How would you like the suggestions to be made? (e.g. categorised)
13. The ability to pay for the whole event by paying a small fee?
14. The ability to generate and share transport information?

The last questions concerning the threats of our business idea, evaluates if the business is feasible:

15. Would you use software to arrange events?
16. Do you know of other services, which offer the same features as eEvent?

6.3 Evaluation

This section describes the results of the experiment made using the prototype and the following interview. The results from the experiment and interview will be shown separately because we want to keep the two steps apart in order to show which results came from what. The planned features that our test subjects suggested during the experiment are in our opinion a good seal of approval for these features. Where we in the interview have a greater impact on what ideas gets discussed.

In the end we present a conclusion on the knowledge obtained from the experiment and interview.

6.3.1 The Experiment

In the experiment the users were asked, as previously described, to perform certain tasks using the prototype of eEvent and to think aloud. This gave us valuable insight into whether or not our idea about collaborative event planning was useful.

The test of the prototype went as expected: all four of the users completed both tasks with little help from the experiment supervisor. All four found the visual design of the prototype dull and that some of the sub procedures was too complicated. This was especially how the date selection was designed, since it required a total of seven clicks to add a date to an event.

One would have liked to get motion picture suggestions if the event is a trip to the cinema and restaurant suggestion if the event is a dinner etc. This is quite interesting as it is part of our future strategy for eEvent and it therefore supports the idea. The other three revealed during the interview that they too would like suggestions during planning an event.

6.3.2 The Interview

The interview took offset in the questions presented in Section 6.2 and was the most rewarding of the two experiment steps.

The following lists the different questions from the interview guide, and presents the results obtained from the interview:

1. **What do you think of using a software solution for event planning?** All users were positive about the using software for planning events and they mentioned the following reasons: It is time-saving, it reduces communication, it provides a better overview, and overall eases planning of social events.
 - (a) **What do you think of the presented eEvent prototype?** There was an agreement between all users that the idea behind the prototype was good, but that the current prototype could be improved to heighten the usability.
2. **What was the best thing about using software for event planning?** Two of our participants mentioned the idea and execution of collaborative event planning as the best part of the presented solution. Where the other two thought that the integration with Facebook was the best part. All of our participants liked the collaborative date selection feature, the communication approach, and the provided event overview.
3. **What do you think of the steps involved with creating an event in the prototype?** Allthought that the steps were intuitive and easy to use. Furthermore three of the users wanted to be controlled even more by the application, thus making it a step-by-step creation. Two liked the Facebook and email combination as this opened up for all even non-Facebook users.
4. **Was there something you could not do when using eEvent in relation to event planning?** Generally nobody missed anything. One of the users suggested a kind of discussion board to facilitate more than the yes/no communication which the date and event selection builds upon. The same participants would also have liked to be able to make a more extensive description of the event.
5. **Were there any functionality you could be without** One of the users could be without the event decision part of the planning process, as he would rarely use this function. The other three would not be without any of the features presented in the prototype.
6. **How much would you pay for a service like the one presented to you in the prototype?** None of the users were totally against paying for a service like eEvent, but neither were they very fond of the idea. Their answers can be summed up to the following: Paying for the use of eEvent depends on which features the payment would provide. One suggested that the payment should consist of small fees, charged all at once. This means that the users should not have to pay for the event and then the fee separately. The participants were also open for paying small fees, when they already have to pay for other services through the system.

7. **Would you be willing to pay 5\$ per year for the use of it?** Again the users would primarily pay, if this would give additional features.
8. **Would you accept advertising on the website and in notifications?** None of the users had anything against advertisements, as long as the advertisements does not ruin the usage of the application. They would even endorse advertisements relevant to the specific event.
9. **Would you pay a small fee to get rid of the advertisements?** None of the participants showed remarkable interest in this idea.
10. **What functionality would you like to have added?** Here the participants came up with a lot of features, both features we have planned for a future version, but also new features. Three out of four would like some sort of calendar integration. This calendar integration should then help to suggest available dates and when the event has been planned, import it into the calendar. The fourth did not use an electronic calendar and where therefore not interested. Other features that occurred are: Interaction with e.g. the cinemas to collect seat and motion picture information, tracking of up-coming events in the area, an event description field to further explain an event, and a discussion board on the event.
11. **Would you pay for an SMS notification service and how much?** Three out of four would pay for an SMS notification but could not put an exact amount on how much they would pay for such a service. They did however agree, that they would not pay more than 1 DKR per SMS.
12. **Would you like a suggestion service that suggest event elements?** All four would like suggestions to be made during the planning phase as this could inspire them. Some of the participants suggested a kind of catalogue, where you can see what restaurants and other activities the city has to offer. This was an interesting discovery, since it is one on of the features planned for future versions.
13. **The ability to pay for the whole event by paying a small fee?** Again all four agree on that this would be a nice feature to have as it would ease the planning task significantly.
14. **The ability to generate and share transport information?** All find this feature relevant but not vital.
15. **Would you use software to arrange events?** All would definitely like to use software to arrange events.
16. **Do you know of other services, which offer the same features as eEvent?** Only two could come up with similar services. These were Doodle and Facebooks existing event system.

6.3.3 Conclusion

The results of the interview presented above gave positive feedback on the idea about collaborative event planning. All four were fond of the idea and expressed that they would use a service like eEvent if it existed. They even contributed with additional features they would like to see in this kind of service. Some of the features suggested during the experiment and interview, matched several features of our later versions of eEvent e.g. the event suggestion. We interpret this as a confirmation of our future ideas.

Using Facebook as a platform for eEvent did not receive any critique, on the contrary it got positive responses as this eases the invitation of friends that are already on Facebook.

Even financially wise the results are somewhat positive as all four test users would pay for the service, though first when some of the later versions features are introduced. This result came as a bit of a surprise for us, since we initially thought that the users would be more reluctant to pay for an internet service.

This though means that the service will not become financially sound before version two, which results in a financial issue until the launch of version two. Advertisements can be a source of financing since none of the users had anything against advertisements in the application. Given that they would not disturb too much and that they are relevant to event planning.

We can conclude from the experiment and interview that eEvent at first would generate income after version two and until then an alternative income should be sought. This could be achieved by seeking capital through an investor, or by running the project on the side, financed through advertisements.

Chapter 7

Business Plan

In the following chapter we present the initial business plan of the proposed venture. Which is our approach to the *business planning* phase of the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy. The business plan analyses most aspects of the venture and propose different models for financing and how to run and develop the venture.

The business plan is also the basis for negotiations with potential business connections in order to convince them to invest or provide credit to the venture. Lastly the business plan ensures that the venture has been properly prepared before launch and describes how the venture is to be started and developed in the first few years.

7.1 Business Idea

We have developed an idea concerning collaborative event planning, as we believe it to be an area with venture possibilities, and since time has shown that internet applications are becoming increasingly popular.

Planning a trip to the cinema for you and your colleagues seems like a simple task. But it is actually very difficult to achieve consensus among the participants when it comes to when and which motion picture to watch. The problem of event planning applies not only to cinema trips but also to restaurant visits, going to the theatre etc. and if these different events are combined into a single event, like going to a restaurant and cinema, the difficulty level rises even more.

Our concept named eEvent combines existing technologies into a new and innovative approach to social event planning. The name is short for extended event, symbolising an event planning solution that is extended with several features to ease the planning process.

Imagine that you and your colleagues are facing the challenge of planning an event containing an event where you plan to dine at a restaurant and take a trip to the cinema afterwards. In order to plan such an event you and your colleagues need to agree on a date, a restaurant, and a motion picture, that is satisfactory for as many of you and your colleagues as possible. Depending on the number of colleagues, the planning demands an extensive amount of communication in order to reach an agreement, since each attendant, in the worst case, need to communicate their ideas and prioritisations to all other planners before a

decision can be made. The communication flow is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

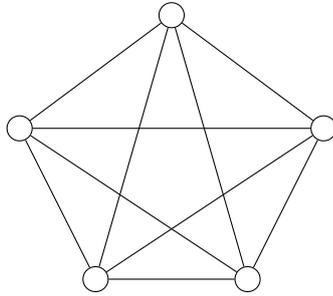


Figure 7.1: Peer to peer communication flow.

Today this communication is eased by technology such as email and mobile phones, that reduces the amount of communication needed by providing means for communicating with multiple peers at once, e.g. by sending an SMS or Email to multiple receivers. Even though technology has eased the communication process, planners still need to keep track of all the communication back and forth. In the presented figure there are 5 peers yielding a total of 10 communication channels. If the amount of peers is raised to 10 the amount of communication channels is 45. The number of communication channels can be described as $n(n - 1)/2$, where n is the number of people. This yields that collaborative planning is becoming an almost impossible task as the amount of peers increase.

The innovation of eEvent is to create a service that provides a single point of communication, thus changing the communication pattern to be more centralised, as shown in Figure 7.2. The eEvent service provides all the means needed to plan an event, ranging from selecting a date, restaurant, and motion picture to inviting attendants and allowing them to pay in advance.

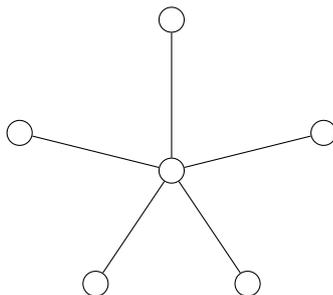


Figure 7.2: The eEvent communication flow.

7.2 Product Description

eEvent is a known concept applied onto social networking, more precisely it is all about making planning of social events easier. It supports planners through the whole process of creating an event, from deciding when and where to go, to actually allowing participants to pay in advance. This does however not mean that the planner needs to use eEvent for all steps, e.g. it is possible to use eEvent to just keep track of who is invited, and who is coming.

There are several software solutions that deal with event planning, mainly they fall into two categories: conference planning, and general social event planning. General social events cover events such as weddings, bachelor parties, and regular nights out. The eEvent service falls into the latter category, general social events. A typical scenario would be to arrange a social night out as presented earlier, starting with eating dinner at a restaurant, then going to the cinema, and lastly topping it all off with a beer at a local pub. Compared to the existing solutions, eEvent has several unique features, such as collaboration between multiple planners, and the ability to stitch together multiple event parts, as hinted in the presented scenario. Later versions of the eEvent service gathers even more unique features, such as all-in-one payment and suggestions for event parts, e.g., entertainment and dining.

The eEvent service is a very lightweight solution that guides the users through the event planning process and it possesses several possibilities for profit through extended features like brokering with suggested event activity providers and restaurants.

The initial version of eEvent is developed as a Facebook¹ application extending the existing Facebook event system and thereby gaining advantage through the still growing popularity of Facebook. It is however not limited to Facebook, as participants do not have to have a Facebook account to participate. The initial version of eEvent is targeted at end users. This is because we reason that it is easier to convince event activity providers to use the eEvent service to reach customers, when there is an actual user base. In order to attract users the initial version must be able to do the same as the main competitor, which in our case is the Facebook event system. Therefore the purpose of the first version of eEvent is to be able to do what Facebook events can and more. The initial version of eEvent should also allow multiple planners to collaborate in the event planning process.

Furthermore later versions should be available on a standalone platform, such that planners are not required to be Facebook users. This is however not a priority for the initial versions.

The second version of the eEvent service is focused on integrating event activity providers into the service, such that planners can browse available activities. This is a crucial version as it is the basis for striking deals with activity providers, such as restaurants. The providers are the main target of this version, since this is where we involve them in the planning process. We ourselves are also the target of the second version of eEvent, since we are able to use it to convince different activity providers to use our service. Since there are many different kinds of event activities, we have to make a unified way to present the different providers to the planners. Although we need to make a unified

¹<http://www.facebook.com/>

representation of the event activities, it should still be possible to distinguish the different kinds of event activities, e.g. by using categories or tags. Furthermore the eEvent service should be able to book and pay for activities where it is possible.

The third version again focuses on end users and activity providers. The purpose of the third version is to expand the functionality for the planners. Some of the key features are the following: Event templates should aid planners in creating events and with it, it becomes easier to suggest relevant activity providers. A budget feature would also be relevant for this version, as it helps the planners to keep track of the event expenses, and who has paid for what.

The activity providers should be able to make special offers, such as Thursday night 20 percent off on tuna, or dine and go to the theatre and get a discount. This will also be of value to the planners as they can save money by using special offers and get new ideas.

The fourth version is mainly targeted at the end users, adding more functionality to the service. One of these features are to provide communication between event participants, allowing participants to share things like transport time tables, meeting places, and arrange overnight accommodations. At this time there are probably also suggestions to features which users would like to see, these should be evaluated and, if found feasible, implemented in this version.

The fifth version, which is the last version planned at the moment, is focused on using all the data available to us, thus allowing us to make better suggestions, and find more attractive providers. It will also help us when negotiating with providers, since we can tell them how many users have shown interest in similar event activities.

7.3 Resources

The team behind the eEvent concept, consists of three Computer Science master students, Morten Bøgh, Markus Krogh, and Simon Nicholas M. Tinggaard, from Aalborg University (AAU). Being from AAU we are accustomed to teamwork and problem solving, which will help us realise the eEvent service and create a business based on this. During our study at AAU we have obtained experience with working in teams, both with each other and with others.

Each of us are confident with web development, and have already worked on different sized web projects using different kinds of web technologies. Two of us have even worked with the subject of web development in our master thesis where the other has gained thorough database knowledge during his master thesis work in the database department of AAU. Furthermore two out of three are, on the side, self-employed within different areas of development and consulting, thus having firsthand experience with entrepreneurship and business development.

Based on our previous experience and the competences explained above, we are confident that we are well suited to realise the eEvent service.

When realising eEvent we could benefit from seeking external aid in the areas of sales, marketing, and graphics design. We believe that our knowledge within these areas is insufficient in the long term perspective, since we only have a technical background. It is however expected that the necessary expertise can be found in our existing network.

7.4 The Market

eEvent is both Business to Consumer(BtC) and Business to Business(BtB) and therefore we have two target groups. The two target groups are respectively the users of the eEvent service, and the event activity providers who use eEvent as a sales and/or marketing channel. In the following the customers of BtC and BtB will be described in detail.

Business to Consumer In BtC our primary customers are facing the task of planning an event for some friends. This is a time consuming task which makes it an unwanted one. We help our customers by simplifying the event planning process involving multiple attendants and planners.

Since the first version of eEvent is targeted Facebook, a typical user of eEvent is a person who uses Facebook on a weekly basis, to communicate with his/her friends. These users are normally familiar with using Facebook applications and how to use Facebook to arrange and find events. Therefore the potential customers of eEvent are all Facebook users, who frequently arranges or attend events, e.g. going to the cinema with his/her friends.

The market for eEvent is growing as the popularity of Facebook keeps growing. Facebook has expanded very fast, and today almost 40%(2.000.000) of the Danish populations have a profile [14] on Facebook. This gives eEvent 2.000.000 potential users, even though it is not realistic that all 2.000.000 will become user of the service during the first year or at all. A more realistic, though still optimistic, estimate of the user count the first year would be 1% of the Danish Facebook users which gives 20.000 users. If eEvent reaches 20.000 users within the first year of business it will be a huge success.

Business to Business In BtB our primary customers are the entertainment industry like restaurants, cinemas, bowling, go-cart, bars etc. Business' of all sizes can use eEvent as a marketing channel. Through eEvent, they can make their event activities accessible to their customers.

Our customers are aided in reaching current and potential customers. By easing the planning process for their customers there is a greater chance of the event actually being realised. This increases the chance of sale for the BtB customers, since they provide a part of the events planned through eEvent. Through eEvent our BtB customers will be promoted as we recommend activities to the end users. The eEvent service also supply the BtB customers with the possibility to join forces and thereby make better offers to the users of eEvent. This could attract even more customers to their business and the eEvent service.

The entertainment business' are still going strong even though we in these years have a financial crisis. Reports have shown that cinemas have gotten a small increase in ticket sales compared to Q1 and Q2 of 2009².

Nationally and internationally there are no services or products that provide a service similar to the eEvent service. There are however a few providers, who offer a service that contains part of the functionality that eEvent provides. An example of this is MyPuchBowl³ which can interact with Facebook in a way

²<http://www.frontbox.dk/2009/07/17/status-pa-bio-2009/>

³<http://www.mypunchbowl.com/>

that allows the planner to send invitations to friends on Facebook. eEvent has the advantage that it will be fully capable of interacting with Facebook and take advantage of the large collection of information already there.

In summary the market size could potentially be: All Facebook users who attend or plan events. Furthermore by acting as a broker between the event activity business and the customers, the event activity business' are also potential customers.

7.5 Goal

The vision for our business is to become the common man's leading social event planning tool, with focus on broking event activities in Denmark. This is to be realised through the eEvent service, and the mission of the eEvent service is to make social event planning easier, by unifying the decision making process, invitation of friends, and financial aspects, e.g, by providing a budget overview. Adding to this a catalogue of event activity providers, allowing planners to choose between different event activities.

More concretely the following goals have been set for the venture:

- Create a user base of 5000 people within the first six months using only viral marketing.
- Become an entertainment broker for restaurants in Aalborg within the first year.
- Expand the broker service to other event activity providers.
- Create a standalone service that supports Facebook within the first two years.
- Within two years has expanded the catalogue of activities to cover five major Danish cities.

Creating a user base is crucial for our business, as the service is more interesting for event activity providers, if it already have a substantial user base. A user base is therefore a stepping stone for the business, which also doubles as a benchmark for the idea. If we are successful in reaching a substantial user base within the first six months, then it shows that there is a need for event planning. Viral marketing is used extensively on Facebook[19], where applications are able to tell the user's friends about feats done with the application. As mentioned in Section 7.4, 40 percent of the Danish population have a Facebook account, meaning that approximately there are two million Danish Facebook users. This makes our goal reachable as it is a quite small percentage of the Danish Facebook users, which we intend to reach at first. It is trivial to verify whether or not the goal is reached and to what extent, when half a year has passed.

We have decided to make restaurants the first group of activity providers to target, because there are a substantial amount of restaurants, compared to e.g. Theatres. Furthermore most of the Danish cinemas use a booking service called Kino.dk, thus we reason that time would be better spent targeting the restaurants first. If the restaurants choose to make use of the eEvent service,

it can be used as an incentive to other activity providers. The timing of when to initiate contact with the restaurants is dependent on the user base, and on the development of the eEvent service. However it should be possible to develop a version of eEvent that is capable of suggesting events to the planners, within a year. Evaluating the goal could be tricky, since it is difficult to set a concrete number of restaurants, which will be required for a success. After a year we aim to have the support of 15-20 percent of the restaurants in Aalborg.

As the vision of our business is to be the leading event activity broker, it makes sense to expand the service to include other kinds of event activities. Our goal is to include other brokers when the support of the restaurants in Aalborg has been gained. An example could be pool, go-carts, bowling, or the Theatre. With the inclusion of these kinds of activities the service will be even more attractive to planners. A lot of time has to be put into this goal in order to make it achievable, since we want to cover many different kinds of event activities. Again if it is possible to convince some activity providers to support our solution, it should be an incentive for more to join.

The service is set to start out as a Facebook application, it is however our plan to launch eEvent as an independent service, which can be used by people who do not have a Facebook account. The stand alone service should still be able to fully interact with Facebook. We believe that it is possible to launch this version within the first two years of business. The development of the stand alone service is to begin after the second version, when the service has begun to take form.

Within the first two years we want to be present in five major cities in Denmark. Here we can draw upon the experience gained by entering the market in Aalborg. At this point the service would already support the functionalities needed to offer event activities. This means that work has to be done in making contact and deals with activity providers, in other cities.

7.6 Sale and Advertisement

One approach to advertising is, as mentioned, viral marketing, the internet analogue to word of mouth. A good example of viral marketing is Blendtech's campaign called "Will it Blend?", where various everyday objects are blended, such as a golf club, and a mobile phone. These videos were then put on the video sharing site YouTube⁴, from where the users themselves spread the videos, thus promoting Blendtech.

In viral marketing the users of social networks helps with the marketing, spreading the message like a virus. Facebook can be used as a tool in viral marketing, e.g. by making a group for the product. When people join the group, they will automatically advertise for the product to all their friends, since Facebook notifies your friends when you join a group.

We intend to use viral marketing during our start-up phase, in order to draw users to our solution. The first reason for us to do this, is because we are targeting Facebook users, which makes it ideal to use the tools available. Furthermore Facebook viral marketing is free, which is preferred during start-up.

⁴<http://www.youtube.com/>

An alternative to viral marketing is advertisement, Facebook has a build in advertisement system, which allows you to bid for airtime. That is you either pay per click or per 1000 views.

7.7 Business Development

This section describes the different strategies, we consider for the eEvent service. As presented in Part One, we plan to be utilising a Business in Beta approach to create a business on the eEvent service.

We describe three different approaches to using Business in Beta in relation to our eEvent service. The three approaches primarily concern how to finance the business creation:

1. Self financed business creation.
2. Investor financed business creation.
3. A combination of self financing and investor financing.

During the next paragraphs, we describe each method and in the end argue which we consider using.

Self financed business creation

The self financed approach can then again be divided into two approaches: A pastime business creation, and a full-time business creation. The first mission with either approach is to attract a predefined amount of users to the service. When this goal has been met, the service should be re-evaluated in order to decide if there is the sufficient proof of business to continue the business development. This should either result in the closure of the business or a new plan of action. A market condition change like a new financially strong competitor could be a serious threat against the future business development, but we intent to gain advantage by being the pioneers on the market.

By making the business creation a pastime activity the demands for profit in the business is not as large as in the case of full-time, where the team members need salary to sustain their living. The full-time approach therefore needs to focus the development on features that have a high profit and not necessary attracts many new users. Using the pastime approach it is easier to focus on the goal of attracting users and therefore to focus on developing the features that raises the attractiveness of the eEvent the most.

Investor financed business creation

The investor financed approach has the benefit of a larger freedom in what to developed at first, as the business has the possibility to set more long term goals. Since we intend to utilise the Business in Beta approach in the business creation, the mission is to attract enough users, during the first year of business, to evaluate if the sufficient proof of business is established. If that is the case it should be possible to obtain more financing, and then use this to speed up the development, and in the end the business creation process.

A combination of self financing and investor financing

There are different ways to combine the two approaches. We propose to use the self financed approach during the initial launch of the business, in order to evaluate if proof of business is achieved. If this is the case it would be possible to seek investor financing, to speed up to future business development.

Given the nature of entering an unproven market, we think that the pastime approach to business creation could be feasible, since this approach is a cheap way to seek a proof of business. When evaluating proof of business, both prior presented approaches should be considered depending on the profit potential identified.

7.8 Budgets and Financing

Starting a new venture requires capital. In our case with the eEvent solution, the amount depends on which business strategy is chosen. If it is made as a pastime project, only a small amount of capital is needed for hosting facilities, business creation, legal fees etc. This small amount of capital could be covered by placing advertisements in the eEvent web solution and notifications sent to the users. If on the other hand the full long term business strategy is chosen, advertisements alone cannot cover the capital need, as there are at least three full time positions to be covered. A rough start-up budget estimate is shown in Table 7.1.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Salary (3 Computer Scientists) | 1.080.000DKK |
| Rent | 60.000DKK |
| Business Creation (Danish ApS) | 125.000DKK |
| Legal fees | 20.000DKK |
| Accountancy | 30.000DKK |
| Marketing | 30.000DKK |
| Operation costs | 50.000DKK |
| Unforeseen expenses | 100.000DKK |
| Total | 1.495.000DKK |

Table 7.1: Estimated start-up budget for the first year.

Financing

In order to finance the 1.500.000 DKK venture, different approaches can be used as described in the previous section. If the venture is self financed, then the business more or less has to make profit from year one, whereas an investor financed startup can give us more space to fine tune the product and business. Say an investor or multiple investors finances the 1.500.000 DKK, then there is no need for user payment the first year, as the capital is there to create a sound business and application. However if it is self financed there is a need for user payment, since it cannot be financed with advertisements alone. In the following we leave out the advertisements and say that the whole amount has to be financed from user payment. This is done to assess the financial demands, and because the profit from advertisements can vary a lot.

There is approximately two million Facebook users (40%) in Denmark but it is unlikely that all two million would use our application. A high estimate of the amount of users we can get, would be 1%(20.000) of the Danish Facebook user. Assuming all these users are paying, it would require a payment of 75 DKK per year. Either as a onetime fee, or divided over a series of small fees to obtain the needed financing. A medium estimate could be 0.5%(10.000) and a low estimate 1‰(2.000). When considering the medium and low estimate, the users would have to pay 150 DKK or 750 DKK per year respectively, in order to fully finance the business. We assume that these prices are impossible to realise and alternative financing would therefore have to be considered. If each customer pay 75DKK for the use of the solution we need to gather extra finances, shown in Table 7.2, in order to meet the required financial demand.

| Paying Users | Income | Financing needed |
|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| 20.000 | 1.500.000DKK | 0DKK |
| 10.000 | 750.000DKK | 750.000DKK |
| 2.000 | 150.000DKK | 1.350.000DKK |

Table 7.2: Financial demands.

Again this could be financed either through advertisements, self financing, or investor financing. Assuming we get 20,000 users in eEvent and they each pay 75DKK we will get our financial needs covered, but is the 75DKK a reasonable price for an online service? We have looked at three non-free social services and what they charge per year. The other services are Dating.dk - the largest dating site in Denmark, Datemig.dk - Danish dating site with focus on northern Jutland, and KomOgVind.dk - site providing online multi player puzzle games.

| Name | Price (month) | Price (year) | Difference |
|---------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Dating.dk | 89DKK | 1068DKK | +993DKK |
| Datemig.dk | 75DKK | 900DKK | +825DKK |
| KomOgVind.dk | 60DKK | 720DKK | +645DKK |
| eEvent | 6.25DKK | 75DKK | 0DKK |

Table 7.3: Overview of selected Danish online service.

As can be seen from Table 7.3 the yearly fee of 75DKK is a relatively small fee compared to the other online services even though their service is more comprehensive. Therefore it does seem plausible that people would pay this small fee for using our service to plan events.

As presented, we have only looked at user financing, self financing and investor financing. This is because it is, in our opinion, not possible to profit from event activity providers during the first year in business. Partly because we do not focus on getting deals with the providers, and since the features enabling interaction with the event activity providers are not developed at first.

We still argue that during the second year of the business, the financial requirements becomes remarkably smaller, due to the significant profit that can be gained from the interaction with our secondary customers, the event activity providers.

Chapter 8

Summary

Throughout this part of the report, the idea of a collaborate event planning service has been refined, a mock-up prototype has been created, a set of interviews have been conducted, and a business plan has been created. During idea refinement, several aspects of collaborate event planning were examined, using the W5H2 method in order to systematise the process. It was found that there are several interesting features which emerges when including interaction with social networks in event planning. An example of these feature are to invite friends from Facebook and the ability to gather information from Facebook profiles.

A set of user sequences were created in order to gain a better understanding of what is involved in collaborate event planning. With this information a feature generation phase were initiated, where features that matched the ideas from the idea refining were defined. Through this phase a set of core features were defined, consisting of multi-step event creation, inviting people, allowing participants to accept or deny, private events, and interactive polls. The rest of the features were grouped into the following categories: Interactive creation, invitation, individual planning, participant involvement, planner organisation, and information organisation. In order to structure the development of eEvent, the features were weighted and spread out over five versions, as shown in Figure 5.2.

A mock-up prototype were developed in order to get external input on our idea of collaborate event planning. Four persons, each of which represent a part of our target group, participated in an experiment where they tried the prototype. Each of them provided valuable feedback, and requested several features which we had already planned.

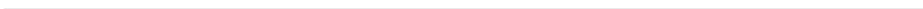
Based on the feedback and work done in this part a summary business plan was developed. The plan covers most of the elements described in Section 3.2.1. We propose that the business should be started as a Business in Beta, since this business model corresponds with our idea of cautiously starting a business, in order to minimise the potential loss. This is also why we have chosen to make a summary business plan rather than a full business plan, since the focus of the business can be changed relatively quickly. The reason why we have made a business plan despite of the more experimental approach of Business in Beta, is that a business plan makes it easier to communicate the business idea to potential investors and collaborators.

The initial version of the eEvent service should be launched early and be used to attract users. Launching the service early would allow for more feedback from early adapters, making it possible to correct errors during early development. When a substantial user base has been build, focus should be put on adding event activity providers to the eEvent service. If we reach our goal of 5000 users during the first six months, then we are confident that the idea of a collaborate event planning service is something people have been missing. Even if we do not meet the goal of 5000 users after the first six months, the idea might still be worth pursuing, but that depends entirely on the feedback from the users. We believe that if the first goal is reached it will be easier to negotiate deals, and attract more event activity providers. Thus making it possible to cash in the necessary turnover to make eEvent a profitable business.



Part III

Reflection and Conclusion



Chapter 9

Reflection

This part of the report presents our reflections on the process of developing the idea of collaborative event planning into a business. The following sections presents reflections on the process, the methods used, the performed user experiment, the developed eEvent service, and reflections on alternative planning applications.

9.1 Process and Methods Reflections

During the first part of this report, we presented different theories on entrepreneurship and innovation. We choose to work according to the Seven Circles of Innovation management strategy, since this strategy reflected our own ideas of how to develop an idea into a business. Even though the Seven Circles of Innovation represents a larger strategy for innovation management in existing firms, it was in our opinion a good choice to use this strategy as a guideline. The different phases of the strategy also fits nicely with the other theory presented in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship. The Disney creativity strategy, and Darsø's divergent and convergent idea development could easily be applied in the different phases of the innovation management strategy. Since the first phase is a very divergent process, whereas the latter phases are convergent. The Disney strategy is also great, to remind one, to look at the situation from different perspectives, which functioned well during our work.

When considering the business development part of the project, we made a cross between Business in Beta and the more traditional business plan. Even though the two approaches can be seen as contradicting, we argue that the use of both, is a good way to ensure sufficient planning before launching the business. The pure version of Business in Beta focuses on an early start of the business and refinement of the business idea through the knowledge obtained from running the business. The business plan focuses on planning both the start of the business and the future development and therefore the business plan would have to be revised when new knowledge occurs. Furthermore if alternative financing are to be sought, the business plan is necessary for the investors and incubator reviewers, since they need sufficient information to judge the proposed idea.

We used the business plan to ensure that we have considered as many of the

start up issues as possible and as our enrolment in the Danish Venture Cup. It should be noted that in order to actually do Business in Beta our business plan should not be seen as a strict document, but rather as the plan that should be changed when you learn something new from the Business in Beta. We therefore plan to utilise the Business in Beta approach during the initial exploring of the eEvent market and to adjust our business ad hoc.

The eEvent versions presented in Section 5.3 are also just our preliminary assessment and are likely to be changed when the eEvent solution has been launched and user feedback gathered. The presented versions are based on the assumption that the focus of the initial version is to generate a user base that can be used when negotiating partnerships with event activity providers. The version divisions are therefore not necessarily the best feature divisions, since it depends on the focus of the initial version. Section 9.3 concerning financing, present another scenario where the initial focus is Europe. This focus change entail, that the eEvent versions could be reconsidered, since the features included in the initial version for the European market not necessarily represents the ones concerning the Danish market.

9.2 User Experience Evaluation Reflections

Our experiment was realised through a prototype in the form of an interactive PowerPoint presentation. The prototype makes it possible to try the general work flow of the eEvent solution, seen from the planner's perspective. Using PowerPoint to realise the prototype took longer than expected, as the desired interaction was more complicated than first thought. PowerPoint looked at first glance to be able to do the things we wanted for our prototype, however we discovered that this was not the case. Instead of using PowerPoint and VB script to make the prototype it would have made more sense to create the mock-ups in the form of a web page. Since we are all proficient web developers, it would have been faster to create a web page, containing the same functionality. Using a web page prototype would also mean that the user experience would be more convincing.

To evaluate the prototype we invited four people to participate in a think aloud session, followed by an interview. All of which are part of our target group, meaning they use Facebook on a regular basis. They fall into four different categories of computer users: technically competent, gadget enthusiast, regular user, and intermediate user. The sex distribution was half and half, and all four participants were 23-24 of age. The main idea behind the interview was to validate the eEvent concept, which is why we argue that even though we have only interviewed four people, it has been very rewarding. Another approach to validating the idea would be to make a survey, however these take a lot of time to execute and analyse, and the feedback is not of the same quality as an interview.

Through the interviews, we verified that the idea behind eEvent is sound, that people would like to use a software solution for event planning, and if the right features are present they are even willing pay for it. Some of the features which we had in mind for later versions, were even identified by our test users, without us bringing them up. We interpret this as an approval of our future ideas and the potential in the eEvent service. Although the interviews have

been a success it would have been interesting to interview more people, e.g. in another age group. However with the limited features of the prototype, it seems like a better idea to wait with the interview expansion until a more advanced prototype has been developed.

The prototype developed for the interview was quite basic, it only showed how things looked from the planners view in a straightforward scenario. This was a deliberate choice for the prototype, since it was an evaluation of the collaborative planning concept rather than a usability test of the service. Through the prototype our four participants got a more tangible understanding of the eEvent solution, thus creating a better base for the interview. With a more advanced prototype it might have been possible to get more concrete feedback on specific features, such as the interactive polls, and it would also have been interesting to present the participant side of the eEvent service to the test persons.

9.3 Financial Reflections

During this project we have assumed that the market for eEvent was Denmark, both in context of business to consumer and business to business. This assumption was made because our focus was locally (Denmark) and not internationally, since we saw Denmark as a starting point. The assumption has a huge influence on the financial assessments presented in the business plan in Section 7.8. By targeting eEvent for Denmark, the goal of 1,500,000 DKK per year seems very unlikely as we need 1% of the Danish Facebook users to use the application and pay at least 75 DKK per year. If the focus instead was shifted towards Scandinavia or Europe, the market size would be so much larger, that the goal of 1.500.000 DKK a year no longer would seem impossible. According to InsideFacebook.com [10], Facebook had about 326 million users in November 2009. Whereas 33% of these comes from European countries, which are 110 million Facebook users, seen in perspective to the 2 million Facebook users we have in Denmark. With a market size of 110 million Facebook users, 20,000 users seems much more likely and even more as the price for using the service can be lowered considerably. If we get 1% (110,000) of the European Facebook users to pay for our service, each user would only have to pay 14 DKK per year in order to reach the 1,500,000 DKK.

Shifting the focus from Denmark to Europe changes more than just the income opportunity as the European market brings other challenges. One of these challenges is the language. Many of the European countries have no problem with the English language, but countries like Germany, France, and Spain have a history for preserving their own language by translating everything into their own language. In the business to business part we can no longer start out focusing on getting the local businesses like e.g. John Bull Pub in Aalborg to advertise through our service. It would be an almost endless task to get in contact with event activity businesses in most larger cities of Europe. Instead the work should be put into getting international companies like Burger King, McDonalds, and Hard Rock Cafe to use our service and then hope that the local businesses will copy the internationals. Getting the international businesses to use our service will be a hard, but not an impossible task.

Above we have talked about the payment as a yearly fee for each user but this approach could discourage some people from using the service, if they only

plan on arranging one or two events. Instead we could chose to let users pay, either per event or pay for a subscription which would let users create all the events they want. With this change we can change our goal to be the number of events created instead of the number of users. Let an event cost 20 DKK and a yearly subscription cost 100 DKK then we would need 75,000 events in order to reach our goal of 1,500,000 DKK a year. If all users choose to subscribe, we would have 15,000 users and this scenario is indeed very plausible if the market is Europe. Even if the 75,000 events come from a mixture of subscriptions and one time payments let's say 20/80 split respectively, we would have a maximum of 60,000 users who would have used the service one time or more and 3,000 who have a yearly subscription.

9.4 Alternative Planning Applications

An alternative to shifting geographic focus would be to change the focus of the eEvent idea. Instead of focusing on event planning we could focus on communication between multiple people. However communication between multiple people is the focus of one of Google's new services called Google Wave¹. Google is not a desirable rival company, as they offer most of their services for free, which is also the case with Google Wave.

As it is described, the eEvent service is able to handle the planning of events such as surprise parties, and birthdays. When handling this kind of events, a feature allowing the participants to communicate without the knowledge of some specified persons, could extend the use of the eEvent solution. The feature could be utilised to discuss who buys which presents and other things that should be a secret to the one hosting the party.

This functionality could also be made into a general wish-list service for occasions such as Christmas. Each family member could then post their wishes to be viewed and discussed by the other family members, without the posters knowledge. When a member then have bought, or intents to buy, a certain present they could announce this to the others, using the service. This would still be a suitable idea for a Facebook application, again allowing people to use their Facebook contacts.

Using some of the ideas from the eEvent service, the wish-list could be expanded with the possibility for two or more people to chip in to buy a more expensive present. The wish-list service should then allow people to keep a simple budget, and pay each other. There are many aspects from the eEvent service which could be used in a wish-list service, but a new aspect would be to expand the distribution channel to include mobile applications. Creating both an iPhone, and an Android version of the wish-list service would make great sense, allowing people to take wish-lists with them when shopping, and add wishes on the go. As this is an additional application it could have a small price, like 15-25 DKK. It may however be a better idea to offer the application for free, since there is a great advertisement potential in the wish-list idea.

Advertisements in a wish-list can help people, e.g. by suggesting where to buy specific presents, or simply to help them get more ideas for alternative presents. If the advertisement is relevant to the specific wish-list then the incentive to make use of these will rise. By using advertisements it would also be easier to

¹<http://wave.google.com>

expand the service to be international without adding any additional expenses. This is due to the fact that advertisement companies are already well equipped to detect and utilise people's geographical location.

The idea of a wish-list service is another approach to collaborative planning, and there are probably more areas of collaborative planning where a service of this type could be of use. Therefore it might be a good idea to create a framework for collaborate planning, which can be used to realise the different services. By developing a framework, the cost could be shared between each service.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

This project was initiated with the idea of making a business out of collaborative event planning. Our collaborative event planning idea was analysed and a concept named eEvent was developed. The eEvent service facilitates collaborative event planning between multiple peers, who are planning social events. The service brings structure into the planning process and includes features that assist planners in making decisions.

The idea of collaborative event planning and the prototype implementation of eEvent were evaluated in a proof of concept study. The study gave positive feedback from our test users, i.e., potential users, and yielded that it would be possible to make a business on the eEvent solution.

We presented a business plan that described a business based on offering the eEvent service. The plan described the potential market we see in making the eEvent service as a Facebook application, and proposed different strategies for the development of the eEvent service.

The business plan and the proof of concept study both yielded financial issues with the current idea, but the idea has in our opinion great potential in the long run. Even though it can be hard to profit from in the beginning.

Given the financial conditions and the unproven market, we suggest utilising Business in Beta to start the venture, with a version of eEvent containing the features necessary to attract users and thereby build a user base. This base can then be used to attract event activity providers, and investors if a larger scale business should be build.

We, as the authors, conclude that the idea of a service focused on collaborative event planning has great potential, when considering the possibilities for cooperation with different event activity providers. However we still think that the risk of developing a service that is not embraced by the market is too high, since the service is unlikely to generate any profit the first year. We therefore conclude that it would not be of our interest to seek investors at the current state. Instead we think it could be interesting to make the light version as suggested in the report, and thereby evaluate if it is possible to build the necessary user base. This could be done either as a future study project or as a pastime project (garage project). Launching a light version of the eEvent service, could also prove that the idea has potential in other areas as presented in the reflection chapter. This again could make the idea even more interesting for future development.

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Part IV
Appendix

Appendix A

W5H2

The following presents the W5H2 analysis of three market segments: End users, Kino.dk (Nordisk Film Biografer), and Entertainment providers.

A.1 End User

The following presents the W5H2 analysis of the end user market.

What (What is the application providing?)

For the End User the application is assisting the process of planning a social event, e.g. going to the cinema or planning a bachelor party. The application handles the whole process from the user deciding to do something to the ordering of, e.g. tickets and reminding the attendants of the event.

The following list presents different features the application could provide:

- Event planning e.g. selection of entertainment activities which could be a trip to the cinema, shooting range, selection of date, inviting people.
- Collaborate decision making e.g. like Doodle¹.
- Mobile interaction (SMS, GPRS) e.g. invitation, confirmation, and notifications.
- User profiles to assist planning (individual preferences e.g. film genre, restaurant type, and seating in the cinema).
- Booking of the planned event, let the end user book film tickets, restaurant table etc. through the application.
- Overview of available services (e.g. like the way Just-Eat lists its customers).
- Single point of payment, let the application be the only place the end user would have to pay.

¹[urlhttp://www.doodle.com/](http://www.doodle.com/)

Why (Why is there a need for it?)

Arranging a social event has a relatively large administrative overhead. It is easy enough for two persons to agree on when to go do something, but when more people are involved it becomes harder to coordinate, which in itself can hinder the event from happening.

As it is now, there is no single place where you, as a planner, can plan an entire event with you and your friends. By providing a centralised service for event planning, there is a greater chance of success. Success in two ways:

1. Getting an event planned and executed.
2. Getting an event planned where most people are available. Since it becomes easier for the planner and attendants to tell when available (e.g. Doodle, Collaborative planning).

When (When is it to be used?)

The service is meant to be used whenever you or your friends want to do something together. This covers everything from planning an event to attending one. The service can be utilised in all steps of a planning process e.g. from scratch or only ordering tickets.

Where (Where is it to be used?)

The initiating planning is to be done from a PC while negotiating using common communication channels such as SMS, Email, Twitter, Facebook, HTTP etc. The service could also be used during the event as proof of purchase. The service should provide the attending users with different ways to pay for the services included in an event.

Who (Who are the users?)

The user, that plans an event, should be familiar with the usage of online shopping, since we assume that the process of online shopping is technically as difficult as using an online planning tool. The attending users should be familiar with either SMS, Email, Twitter, Facebook, HTTP etc.

How (How is the application technologically being realised?)

Seen from the attending users:

- Mobile phone (SMS, Web, App)
- Web browser (Twitter, Facebook, Custom website)
- Email

Seen from the planning user:

- Web browser (Custom website)

How Much (How should the service be financed)

The service should be financed by either charging the users a small fee or by charging the service providers per sale or a combination of both. Examples are JustEat and Kino.dk. Another possibility is sale promotion through advertisements.

A.2 Kino.dk

The following presents the W5H2 analysis of the Kino.dk market.

What (What is the application providing?)

For Kino.dk the solution provides a new sales channel, which can boost their sale of tickets. Furthermore the solution will provide a better service to the customers. As it can lighten the planning and ordering process for the users. The solution should also provide user profiles facilitating individual preferences like favourite rows and seat numbers, rows and seats to avoid, or integration with the user's calendar to identify available dates.

Why (Why is there a need for it?)

Kino.dk being a commercial booking site, needs to stay up to date with features to keep customers satisfied. The current ordering process on Kino.dk is sequential and does not assist the user to do any other thing than select cinema, movie, date and seats. This process can be enriched in many ways to enhance the ordering process.

Nordisk Film Biograf has its own social club called BioZonen that invites users to pre-releases and other special movie events. BioZonen could be extended to allow the users to arrange social events involving trips to the cinema. The solution could be an offset for integrating social network into their business platform, e.g. sales promotion through Facebook.

By assisting the user in planning a cinema event, the cinemas get a larger exposure to their target audience.

When (When is it to be used?)

It is to be used before and during the process of selling tickets (sales promotion), by assisting the user through the planning and ordering of a trip to the cinema.

Where (Where is it to be used?)

It could be utilised as an add-on to Kino.dk's existing system or integrated into another website like BioZonen.

Who (Who are the users?)

The initiating user should be familiar with the usage of online shopping. The attending users should be familiar with either SMS, Email, Twitter, Facebook, HTTP etc.

How (How is the application technologically being realised?)

Integrate it into Kino.dk or by developing an API which can be used by a separate site like BioZonen. The API should allow for the whole kino.dk process to be handled from else where.

How Much (How should the service be financed)

By either charging the user or Kino.dk for each successful use of the system. Another way is to have the development financed by Kino.dk, sold as a separate service.

A.3 Event Providers

The following presents the W5H2 analysis of the entertainment providers market.

What (What is the application providing?)

The service provides a new and easy way to reach customers, since:

1. When customers advertise for their own events, the businesses involved in the event gets exposure.
2. During planning of events customers are presented with suggested services like:
 - Restaurants
 - Theaters
 - Cinemas
 - Pubs
 - Adventure entertainment (go-cart)
3. Different entertainment providers can create special offers, e.g. go to the cinema and get a free burger
4. The entertainment providers can receive feedback from the customers through the service, after an events has happened

Furthermore the service will provide the end user with some basic skeletons for a fun night out, e.g. have dinner, go to some show, and have a drink. By assisting the customers in the complicated planning of events, involving multiple people, the level of service is improved.

Why (Why is there a need for it?)

By assisting the user in planning events, the chances of the event being realised is increased. Therefore the service providers have a higher chance of selling their services to the event.

It is also a potential new market, which involves a new sale channel (social networking).

When (When is it to be used?)

For customers the service should be used when planning and attending an event. The entertainment providers use the service to reach customers, both with new offers, and to reach more customers. So for an entertainment provider it is an easy way to make sales promotion, reaching many potential customers.

Where (Where is it to be used?)

The service should be used as a part of the entertainment providers advertisement planning.

Who (Who are the users?)

The primary users are the customers of the entertainment providers included in the service. The customers must be familiar with the Internet (e.g. email, Twitter, Facebook, e-commerce), and mobile phones.

How (How is the application technologically being realised?)

By developing a custom web solution that includes all entertainment providers, and at the same time being able to interconnect with existing sites like Kino.dk etc.

How Much (How should the service be financed)

The service could be financed by charging the customer a small fee for each event, by commissioning the sales gain through this service, and by charging the entertainment providers through a subscription fee.

Appendix B

Feature Table

The following presents a table showing the eEvent features, generated for a social network and a non-social network focus. The features are divided into three groups: 1:1, 1:n and n:n. One to one (1:1) is where a user plans an event for himself, one to many (1:n) is where a user plans an event for a group of people, and many to many (n:n) is where a group of users plan an event for a group of people.

| Feature | Social Network | | | Non-Social Network | | |
|---|----------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n |
| Initial Version | | | | | | |
| Invite people: Let the planner invite people to the event via Facebook or Email. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Multistep decision: An event is created through a series of steps to ease planning. | | | x | | | x |
| Interactive Poll: Enabling planners and participants to vote on date and event suggestions. | | (x) | x | | (x) | x |
| Doodle date: Let the participants vote on dates. | | (x) | x | | (x) | x |
| Private event: Create events that are invite only. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Accept/Deny: Supply the invited with possibility to accept or deny the invitation. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Auto-notification: Automatic notification of event changes via Facebook, Email, SMS etc. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| <i>continued on next page</i> | | | | | | |

Appendix B. Feature Table

| <i>continued from previous page</i> | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-----|-----|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Feature | Social Network | | | Non-Social Network | | |
| | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n |
| Dashboard: An overview of event information and invitation status. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Version 2 | | | | | | |
| Browse Event Activities: Let the planner browse available event activities such as local pubs, cinemas, and etc. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Book and Pay: Allow planners to book and Pay for an event through the service. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Version 3 | | | | | | |
| Pay: Help splitting payment for activities between the participants. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Event Template: Let the planner create events from a series of predefined event templates, e.g. a template saying first go to the shooting range, then eat at a restaurant, and lastly go for a drink. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Budget: A budget of the event which would include calculation of total cost and price limits. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Planner check list: A check list the planner can use to keep track of tasks. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Social Network Broadcast: Send out status updates on Facebook, tweets on Twitter, and etc. | x | x | x | | | |
| Special offers: Offers made to the users of the service e.g. see a film and get a free burger. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Version 4 | | | | | | |
| Google Maps: Plot the event activities on a map using Google Maps. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Participants can invite: Let the participants invite people to the event. | | | x | | | x |
| <i>continued on next page</i> | | | | | | |

| <i>continued from previous page</i> | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Feature | Social Network | | | Non-Social Network | | |
| | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n | 1:1 | 1:n | n:n |
| Arranging Transport: Let participants make transport arrangements. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Arrange meeting place: Arrange meeting places. | | x | x | | x | x |
| Timetable overview: Give the participants an overview of the event, time wise. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Timetable export: Export the timetable to a calendar format of choice. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Personal preferences: Preferences like seating options, film genre, restaurant types, and etc. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Overnight accommodation: Help plan overnight accommodation either private or commercial. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Version 5 | | | | | | |
| Suggest participants: The service will suggest participants for the event based on history. | | x | x | | - | - |
| Event tracking: The system will keep track of events, which might be of interest to the user, both public events and events on social networks. | x | x | x | (x) | (x) | (x) |
| Browse Available Events: List upcoming events. | x | x | x | (x) | (x) | (x) |
| History suggest: Event suggestions based on prior events. | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Mining Info: Mine available information from users' profiles and use them to suggest events. | x | x | x | - | - | - |

Appendix C

Prototype Screen Shots

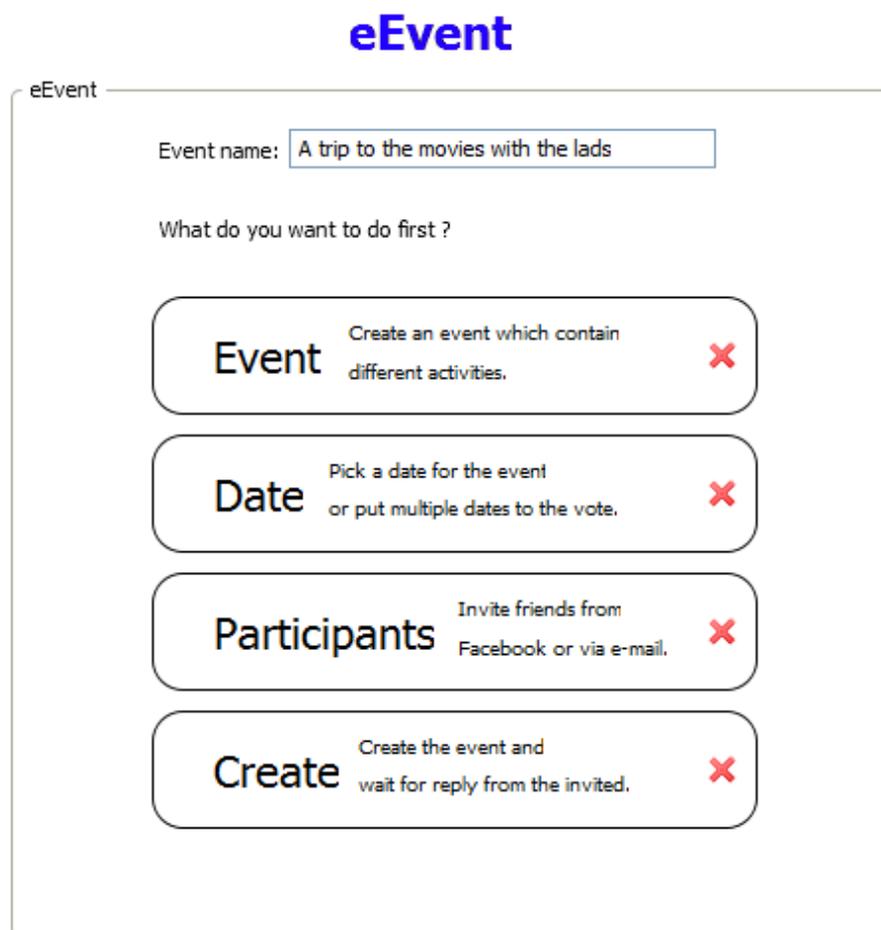


Figure C.1: The eEvent front page.

eEvent

Event

Event: A trip to the movies with the lads

Event Create an event which contain different activities. ⓘ

What do you wanna do ?

I pick the event

Select an event together

Limit to the following events

- The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest
- 2012
- The Twilight Saga: New Moon

The next steps:

Date Pick a date for the event or put multiple dates to the vote. ❌

Participants Invite friends from Facebook or via e-mail. ❌

Create Create the event and wait for reply from the invited. ❌

Figure C.2: Event activity creation where the planner can select what to do during the event or let the attendants decide.

eEvent

Date

Event: A trip to the movies with the lads

Event Create an event which contain different activities. ✓

Date Pick a date for the event or put multiple dates to the vote. i

Pick a date for the event or put it up for a vote.

I pick the date for the event

| | |
|---|---|
| Start date | Start time |
| <input type="text" value="25 November 2009"/> | <input type="text" value="12"/> <input type="text" value="15"/> |
| End date | End time |
| <input type="text" value="25 November 2009"/> | <input type="text" value="17"/> <input type="text" value="15"/> |

Select a date together

Limit to the following dates

| | |
|---|---|
| Start date | Start time |
| <input type="text" value="25 November 2009"/> | <input type="text" value="12"/> <input type="text" value="15"/> |
| End date | End time |
| <input type="text" value="25 November 2009"/> | <input type="text" value="17"/> <input type="text" value="15"/> |

- 2009-11-23 12:15 - 2009-11-23 17:15
- 2009-11-24 12:15 - 2009-11-24 17:15
- 2009-11-27 12:15 - 2009-11-27 17:15

The next steps:

Participants Invite friends from Facebook or via e-mail. ✗

Create Create the event and wait for reply from the invited. ✗

Figure C.3: Date selection where the planner can select the date for the event or let the attendants decide.

eEvent

Participants

Event: A friday dinner in town

Event Create an event which contain different activities. ✓

Date Pick a date for the event or put multiple dates to the vote. ✓

Participants Invite friends from Facebook or via e-mail. ⓘ

Who do you wanna invite ?

Facebook Friends:

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  ✓ |  <input type="checkbox"/> |  ✓ |  ✓ |
| Niels | Poul | Mads | Andreas |

Email invites:

- another@cs.aau.dk
- sommerfugl@mail.tele.dk
- ade@gmail.com

The next steps:

Create Create the event and wait for reply from the invited. ✗

Figure C.4: Participants invitation where the planner can invite friends from Facebook or via E-mail.

eEvent

Event

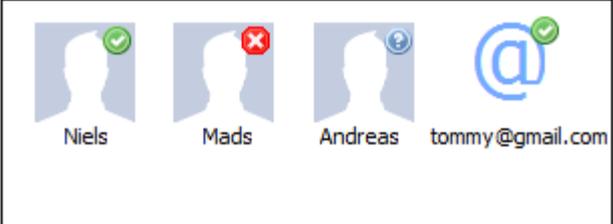
Event: A trip to the movies with the lads

Informations:
Event: 500 Days Of Summer

Which date(s) would you prefer ?

| Name | 12/12 | 13/12 | 14/12 |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| You | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Niels | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| tommy@gmail.com | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Total | 3 | 1 | 2 |

Participants



Niels Mads Andreas tommy@gmail.com

Lock the event

Figure C.5: Event status where the planner and the attendants can see details about the event and vote on dates for the event.