

Moiling and Toiling: Putting Swedish Tools to Use

THE SWEDES ARE A SERIOUS, solid, and industrial people, said William Penn in describing the Swedish colonialists in the seventeenth century. Starting with simple tools in the 1650s, Swedes in America impacted history. Nordic cabins became an American icon. Alfred Nobel's dynamite cleared way for the railroad. Agricultural implements transformed the prairie. Swedish technology and American opportunity always have been a powerful combination.

Swedes still lead with modern tools. Consider cellular phones, for example. An astounding one in four Swedes carries one. Italian fashion designer Armani is selling suits in Sweden that feature pockets for a cellular phone. Fashionable Swedes now face the challenge of being all dressed up with no one to call.

How can Swedes use modern technology to strengthen their economy? How can small Swedish companies expand rapidly? Can Sweden create a Microsoft or CNN in a few short years? To answer these questions, Sweden turns to America.

"We need to make it more attractive to be a small company in Sweden," says Kurt Östlund, president of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences (IVA). To reach this goal, IVA soon will be introducing the venture capital forum "Connect Sweden." This will be based on the successful "Connect San Diego" program, which connects preeminent venture capital firms with small entrepreneurial firms. IVA will measure the success of Connect Sweden based on the job and revenue growth of



Photo courtesy of Ericsson

the small companies that participate. Yet success need not be limited to familiar constraints.

A new breed of Swedish companies is offering tools to solve problems that didn't exist five years ago.

One excellent example is Mirror Image Internet. The Internet enables users to send and retrieve information around the world almost instantaneously. As a result, thousands of people worldwide may be trying to access the *Wall Street Journal* or another American publication's Web site at the same moment—something that transatlantic telephone lines weren't designed to handle. Mirror Image has developed technology that diverts Internet subscribers to a "mirror" site in Europe, thus avoiding the overtaxing of transatlantic phone lines. Like the Internet, Mirror Image knows no boundaries. It has expanded its services to 15 countries in one year. (Visit Mirror Image's Web site at www.mirror-image.com.)

From Viking times onward, Swedes have developed excellent technologies. And American soil has proved to be fertile ground to bring clever Swedish ideas to

fruition. Like the movers and shakers did in 1617, modern Swedish entrepreneurs are responding to the call of King Gustavus Adolphus: "What do you here, moiling and toiling over a few pathetic estates? Hie yourselves to these lands and clear yourselves as many acres as your desire and power do permit!"

—Anders Benson

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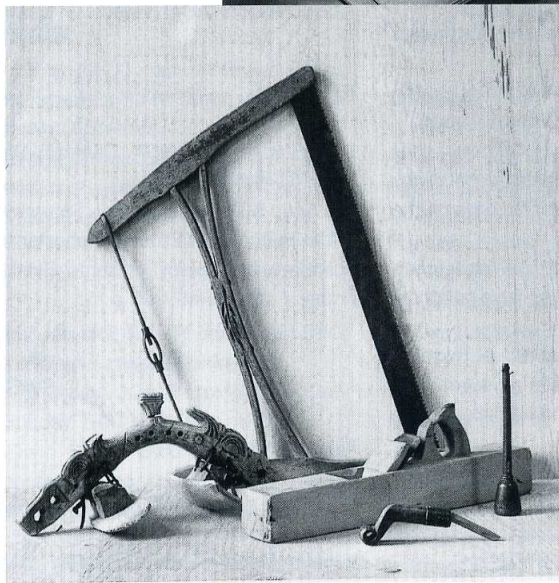


Photo courtesy of the American Swedish Institute

Swedish-made tools both old and new include (top) a sophisticated and stylish Ericsson cellular phone, and (below, left to right) an animal yoke, a two-person saw, a wood-working plane, a wood-carving knife, and a wooden scale.

From the Readers

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It's the Real Thing

The plant referred to in "When Moses Was a Swede" [Spring 1998] is not a "fictitious" plant as the author claims. It is a real plant commonly called a castor-oil plant or, in Hebrew bibles, a *keekayon* [transliterated]. I have grown one in a community garden that I till near my home. It can reach 12-feet high and has big leaves and very poisonous seeds called castor beans. The author should have described the plant in the wall paintings as stylized.

Marjorie Olson
Washington, D.C.

An Old Saw

I enjoyed the business article in the Winter issue ["Moiling and Toiling: Putting Swedish Tools to Use"]. However, the saw pictured is not a two-person saw as the caption claims. It is a one-person "buck saw," which was present in the woodshed of nearly every immigrant farm family and can still be found on most farms today.

George Peterson
Des Moines, Iowa

The Proper Way to Dress

Your Winter 1998 cover photo is of a darling little girl dressed in blue and yellow. I am well aware of the liberties taken with Sweden's "national dress" and I see nothing wrong with that—if one follows the colors and style as closely as possible. The United States climate is not always conducive to wearing a heavy wool outfit. *Folkdräkt* [folk dresses] are extremely expensive and certainly are not practical to purchase for children. However, I would hope that *Sweden & America* would seek to educate those of us first, second, and third generation Swedes in the proper way to wear national dress. First, no sheer stockings or ruffled socks. No high-heel shoes. No jewelry unless it is sanctioned jewelry. No nail polish.

National dress is not a costume. It is important to wear a national dress properly, and that can be done only if people are informed of the dos and don'ts. Thank you for hearing me out on one of my pet peeves.

Carol Wickstrom
Columbus, Ohio

