

e

No 1 | 2009

**Swedish government agencies
are requiring e-invoicing**

**Organic ice cream maker gains
market visibility**



Success!

ICA's Target appeals to
local suppliers

More time for customers

PLS switches to e-business

Axfood:

**“We’re adding 20 suppliers
a month. That’s up from
10 a year”**

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Meet the Managing Director

e-business: soon as natural as e-mail

This is the first issue of Expert Systems' new customer magazine, so I would like to begin by welcoming you. I hope you enjoy what you read, and I hope we succeed in inspiring you to let us and our services make your daily work easier and your business more profitable.

We decided to call the magazine "e". For us, "e" stands for excellence in our chosen mission: helping small and large companies do business with each other electronically. We want to show you how natural e-business can be. Soon, e-business will be as much a part of life as e-mail.

For many companies, this is going to be a tough year. I believe the people who handle difficult times best are those who dare to commit and look to the future. Personally, I am convinced that electronic commerce is a necessary investment, especially in an era when efficiency counts. Electronic commerce makes your business more efficient, boosts the value you provide to customers and reduces your environmental footprint.

Expert Systems began investing in electronic business in the mid-nineties. That was about ten years too early, as it turned out, but now it is yielding results. For us,

the current market anxiety has meant more inquiries than ever before. Even still, we hope the crisis will be over soon.

We are based in Sweden, but electronic commerce is a global business. We trade with the entire world. There are many standards already, and we're seeing a proliferation rather than a consolidation. In 2009, we will be continuing to take part in standardisation efforts in order to help companies that operate globally. New standards and variants keep coming on line in various industries in Sweden, too, and we are continually building them in to Exder. The goal is to help you do even better business electronically.

With electronic business, everybody wins – especially the environment!

Enjoy!

MD Expert Systems



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On the front cover, left to right:
Inocencio Perera, Susanne Maal Kärsrud,
Thomas Hansen and Jakob Sefors,
Axfood. Read more on page 8.



Government agencies connect to the Invoice Portal

Every year, Swedish state agencies receive 11 million invoices from 85,000 suppliers. Now the agencies are requiring electronic invoices. It's a good thing the Invoice Portal exists.

SWEDISH STATE AGENCIES are now doing business with electronic invoices. This is the result of a government decision that went into effect in 2008. The state expects to save some SEK 4 billion of taxpayer money in the next five years by using electronic invoices. Besides cutting costs, it will mean improved quality, better financial control, shorter lead times and less environmental impact. If every company in Sweden sent e-invoices, it would cut carbon dioxide emissions by 40,000 tonnes – equal to the annual emissions of 13,000 cars driving 15,000 kilometres each, according to a study done at the Royal Swedish Institute of Technology.

FOR SUPPLIERS, e-invoicing eliminates the costs of postage and printing. Suppliers are paid faster and can feel more confident. The Invoice Portal e-mails a receipt as soon as their invoice reaches the recipient.

FOR THEIR SUPPLIERS' CONVENIENCE the agencies provide the Invoice Portal from Expert Systems. The Invoice Portal is an Internet-based service that makes it easy to send electronic invoices. It has been in operation since 2002. Suppliers choose the method that suits them best: they can register invoices free of charge using a web-based form or send them from their own invoicing system.

Since invoices from the Portal are electronic, a variety of checks can be run on their contents. No separate tests have to be run if the supplier sends the invoice as a file. The Portal sends all invoices to the

recipient in the same format. If you choose Exder ePrinter or Exder Link, you can continue to use your enterprise resource planning system as usual. Correctly formatted e-invoices can be sent to essentially any recipient desiring electronic invoices. To register invoices on the web, all you need is a PC with an Internet connection. You can apply using a simple on-line form, and your password will be confirmed within a couple of minutes by e-mail.



INVOICEPORTAL.NET IS the most widely used invoice service in Scandinavia for invoice registration. Thousands of suppliers in Sweden, Denmark and Norway are already using it to invoice companies like Axfood, ICA and Coop, as well as municipalities and county councils. State agencies have also been connected for the past year or so.

Expert Systems is a subcontractor to Itella, which has a general e-invoice contract with state agencies. The Invoice Portal is compliant with Sweden's SwedInvoice invoicing standard and supports attachments. If a supplier later decides to sell and receive orders electronically, it's easy to grow with Exder.

READ MORE about the state's introduction of e-invoicing at: www.e-fakturera.nu. More information on SwedInvoice can be found at www.svefaktura.se

For anyone with a PC and an Internet connection:
Send invoices free from Invoiceportal.net

- Go to www.invoiceportal.net
- Click on Invoice here.
- On-line help shows you how to fill in the web form. The program will warn you of errors and let you try again.
- Send the invoice.
- A receipt is sent to the e-mail address you provide.

If you prefer to use your ordinary ERP system:
Print invoices as usual – but electronically – with Exder ePrinter

If you use an ERP system operating under Windows, the virtual Exder ePrinter is an easy, convenient alternative for sending electronic invoices via the Invoice Portal. With ePrinter, you can work as usual in your ERP system and send correctly formatted e-invoices to essentially any recipient. If you prefer, you can also e-mail the invoices as PDF files through Exder ePrinter.

Connect your ERP system to Exder with Exder Link

Exder Link is intended for companies that cannot use Exder as their only ERP system. It enables integration of Exder and your ERP system. Ready-to-use links are available for systems like Agresso, Crom, Garp, Infoflex and Visma SPCS. You create the invoices as usual in your system and then send them with Exder Link to your customer via the Invoice Portal. Integration with Visma SPCS also requires Swinx EDI, which is sold through Trenddator.

SwedInvoice – what's that?

SwedInvoice is the Swedish state standard for e-invoicing. SwedInvoice can be employed for most types of goods and services. It is supported by many ERP systems as well as all Exder products and invoiceportal.net.

Success!

ICA commits to local suppliers with Torget

More and more consumers are asking for locally produced food. With its “Taste Locally” project, ICA is making a commitment to local suppliers and providing Torget – the “Public Square” – as a marketplace.

“Taste Locally’ is going great!” says ICA project manager Peo Werne. “We already have over a hundred suppliers at our marketplace site Torget. Our goal for the first year was fifty suppliers, so this is a success by any measure.”

THROUGHOUT SWEDEN there are many small local producers who have a tough time reaching the market with their products. Yet demand for locally produced food is stronger than ever. With Torget, ICA is making it possible for local producers to sell their products through one or more ICA shops.



How a supplier might show products at Torget.

“We know that more and more customers are looking for products with a heart,”

says Peo Werne. “The products that sell include locally produced delicacies like cheeses, meat and butcher’s specialities.

“Torget is available to all 1,400 ICA shops, enabling them to find new local suppliers and exciting locally produced items. It represents a unique opportunity for a small supplier to reach out to every single ICA shop.”

BESIDES BEING A MARKETING channel, Torget provides efficient sales support for receiving and confirming orders and sending electronic invoices.

“For small suppliers, Torget is an effective way of growing into a big chain like ICA,” says Peo Werne. “If it turns out that there’s enough demand for a particular product, we add it to our regular range. It’s convenient, too, since the product information has already been entered in Exder and it’s easy to add more information.”

ICA also uses Torget for its Premium product group – imported luxury items suitable for some shops.

AS PART OF an ongoing pilot project, ICA has developed Exder in cooperation with Expert Systems to enable small suppliers

to use a new supply-chain flow that is both cost- and climate-efficient. They call it “Microflow”.

“With Microflow, all a supplier needs to do is deliver their products to the nearest transport hub, instead of driving around to every individual shop,” says Peo Werne, who is very satisfied with the partnership with Expert Systems.

“They have years of experience with our industry and understand every aspect of the grocery business.”

“Torget” – an internet-based marketplace

“Torget” is built on Exder Marketplace, a service enabling shops to order goods, and Exder Market, a service enabling suppliers to market and sell their goods. Through Torget, individual shops can agree on prices and terms of delivery with suppliers and start doing business. ICA shops place orders through Torget and can track the process through confirmation, delivery and invoicing. For the shops, it’s an efficient procedure employing electronic invoices and an easy way of tracking purchases and supplier delivery quality. The concept can be customised and employed for other business flows and applications.



” This is a unique opportunity for a small supplier to reach every single ICA shop.

Peo Werne, project manager at ICA

Torget provides new opportunities

Stronger market presence for organic ice cream maker

Pipersglace is a family-owned business that has been making ice cream for a century. Their recipe for success? Quality ingredients, trend awareness and selling through ICA Torget.

“Thanks to ICA Torget, we have gained market visibility and turned into a more established player,” says Pipersglace Managing Director Maggie Ciprian-Olevik.

Pipersglace decided to join Torget in order to do business with ICA shops. There they rub elbows with a number of other luxurious Premium range products that are also targeting selected ICA shops.

Pipersglace is a venerable family firm that has made ice cream and sorbet according to Italian recipes since the beginning of the previous century. Providing high-quality ice cream has always been their ambition. Today they are the only company in Europe that manufactures twelve different flavours of premium organic ice cream. Their ice cream is available

in shops, cafes and restaurants throughout Sweden.

“We also manufacture organic ice cream bars covered with 65% cacao chocolate,” says Maggie Ciprian-Olevik.

On the Torget site, Pipersglace can publish written information and pictures of its products, and ICA shops can place orders. According to Maggie Ciprian-Olevik, the biggest advantage Torget provides is easier communication with retailers.

“Torget is a gateway to new customers,” she says. “With Exder Market, it’s easy to

send information and pictures of our articles and do business electronically. It has helped us structure our range better, too.” She believes the key to Pipersglace’s success is their small, quick, versatile production capacity.

“We have invested in smart computerised business solutions that give us quick feedback about stocks, sales and purchasing, and provide good statistics. We try to stay ahead of the competition when it comes to monitoring trends. This enables us to be up and riding a new wave quickly.”

Why is Italian-style gelato so popular in Sweden?

“Italy has a reputation for being the birthplace of the ice cream industry. They have been making ice cream for many years.”

What is your best seller?

“The traditional flavours always sell well. Consumers who are looking for a premium product with something extra often choose white nougat, cardamom or elderflower sorbet.”



Vanilla, strawberry and chocolate ice cream are classic favourites.



NAME: Marcus Dyberg
AGE: 38
POST: Managing Director
CLEANING TIP: Use products that both protect and clean.

More time for customers

ERP system handles administration

PLS not only knows how to get your floor shining brightly and your window panes absolutely spotless. They are also good at business. Their secret? Instead of spending all their time at the office, they are out meeting their customers.

“We let our enterprise resource planning system, Exder, take care of all the administrative work,” says Marcus Dyberg, Managing Director at PLS.

“We chose Exder because it is a user-friendly, cost-effective system that is easy to get started with,” says Marcus Dyberg.

“This meant that we could focus on doing business.”

PLS is a turnkey supplier within the area of cleaning and hygiene. They have products for every need, from consumables for small companies to advanced machinery for industry. Their customers span the range of companies: a small hot dog stand, Volvo and the entire Gothenburg healthcare system. They also sell via wholesale chains and have customers in Norway, Finland and Iceland.

“Our floor care system, I-Vax, is our bestseller by far. Today, this is the leading wax system in the Nordic region.”

EVER SINCE PLS WAS FOUNDED 35 years ago, they have realised the importance of meeting their customers and demonstrating their products. This way of working continues into the present day and has

provided them with invaluable knowledge and experience.

“We know our customers and we know what requirements they have as regards our products,” says Marcus Dyberg.

In order to be able to spend more time with their customers, they have invested in electronic trading.

“We want our sales staff to meet our customers and spend less time on administration, which is possible with Exder,” says Marcus Dyberg. “Out in the field is where business is done, not at home in the office.”

PLS HAS ALSO OPENED A STORE online. This means that they are always available to their customers. With Exder Webshop, they can quickly and easily change content, structure and prices on the website.

Previously, PLS used a different busi-



Marcus Dyberg with PLS owner Anders Larsson, who also handles product development for the company.

“ Today we have a fully integrated ERP system that handles orders, stocking, invoicing and accounting.

Marcus Dyberg, MD PLS

ness system. One of their important customers was a municipality, which required all suppliers to connect to an EDI solution. The old system's EDI solution was expensive and complicated, which led to the decision to adopt Exder.

“With Exder, Expert Systems was able to offer a cost-effective total solution that we could quickly get started with,” says Marcus Dyberg. “It was important for us to be able to get started quickly, since we wanted to focus on our business. The system had to be user-friendly, too.”

Over the years, PLS has extended its system, adding more functions.

“Today we have a fully integrated business system that manages orders, stock, invoicing and accounting,” says Marcus Dyberg. “It works perfectly, regardless of whether customers trade with us in the old-fashioned way, via EDI or online.

We have the EDI, Webshop and Admin Exder modules.”

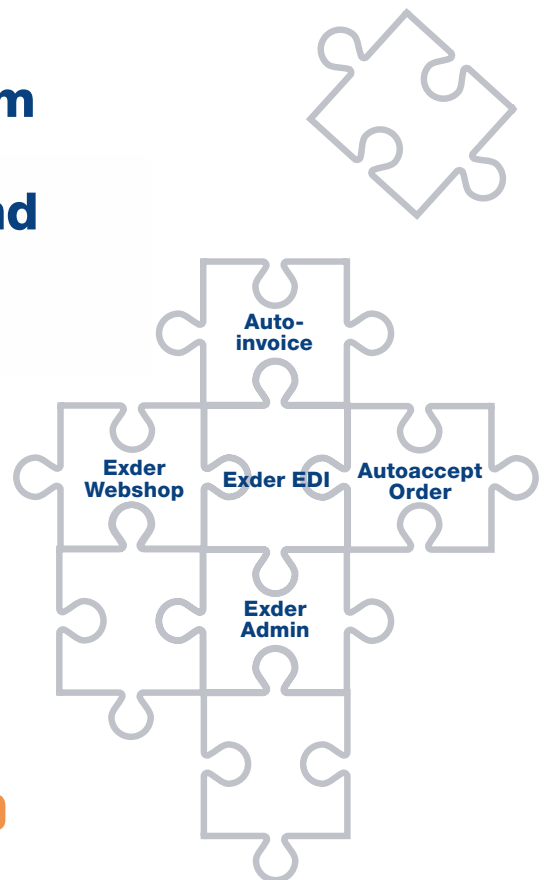
PLS's experience has been that things have gone well growing with Exder. Expert Systems has been very sensitive to their requirements and ideas.

“At the moment we have exactly the systems we need. When it comes to functionality, though, more is always better. We're ready and waiting!”

FACTS & FIGURES

ABOUT PLS

PLS was founded in 1973 and is a complete cleaning and hygiene supplier. From the start they sought to develop simple, cost-efficient cleaning methods. They operate throughout the Nordic countries and have an ISO certified chemical plant in Skövde, Sweden.



PLS started with Exder EDI and has taken advantage of the opportunity to add additional modules afterwards - for example, with Auto-invoice, it only takes one click to invoice all fully reported deliveries.



”

We haven't done a comprehensive study, but most people understand the business benefits of EDI and technological progress.

**Susanne Maal Kärstrud
Axfood**



“We save a huge amount of time”

Matric Italgross has been trading electronically with its customers for several years. This has led to enormous time savings and minimised the risk of error.

“Exder EDI suits us perfectly,” says Johan Viitanen, Key Account Manager in the convenience food trade at Matric Italgross.

Electronic trading with Axfood was already fully operational when Johan Viitanen started as a Key Account Manager at Matric Italgross a couple of years ago.

“There was a lot of new information to learn,” says Johan Viitanen, “but the system proved to be easy to use. It was easy to learn and the information was clearly presented.”

Successful e-connection

Axfood brought in outside help to convince suppliers to do business electronically

Connecting hundreds of suppliers to an e-commerce system isn't easy. Axfood understood the challenge and ultimately turned to Expert Systems and its ESAM connection method for a solution. Along with increased resources and a greater focus on EDI, this lifted the connection rate from 10 suppliers a year to 20 a month.

"Everything has gone very well," says Susanne Maal Kärstrud, an EDI coordinator at Axfood who manages retail trade with grocery chains like Hemköp, Willys and PrisXtra. "We have shared procedures, checklists and regular contacts with Expert Systems, which has helped keep problems to a minimum in the process."

TO IMPROVE ITS BUSINESS PROCESS, Axfood has made electronic commerce a requirement for all its suppliers. To date, they have connected some 580 of a total 750 suppliers to some form of EDI messaging. Before they initiated the connection project in autumn of 2006, they were connecting 10 suppliers a year.

With the help of Expert Systems and its ESAM connection method, which rapidly connects many suppliers, they boosted the pace of connection to 20 suppliers a month for the entire business chain in 2007.

IN 2008, AXFOOD STARTED working with existing suppliers to expand their EDI message protocol to match the industry standard ESAP 20. Currently, they are in the process of connecting local suppliers with the help of Expert Systems. Axfood is planning to connect an average of 30 local suppliers a month this spring.

"We expect the majority of Axfood's suppliers to be connected to EDI and

many to switch to the ESAP 20 standard by the end of 2009," says Jakob Sefors, another EDI coordinator at Axfood.

THE CONNECTION PROCESS begins with Axfood notifying suppliers of a deadline for starting with electronic commerce. Following Axfood's initial contact, Expert Systems presents its e-solution to the suppliers. Axfood and Expert Systems then work together with suppliers who choose Expert Systems' solution Exder, using a common startup checklist and regularly recording progress in the supplier list log at the ESAM website.

The ESAM site is a web-based application that Expert Systems uses for shared document management during the project. Each supplier's status can be updated by both Axfood and Expert Systems. As a result, all project-related documents exist in a single version that is always up to date.

"This approach works very well and has

Johan Viitanen had other duties when Matric switched to e-commerce, so he had no previous knowledge of Exder EDI. He learned the system on his own, combining a self-guided crash course in the manual with distance learning.

"Everything has worked really well," he says. "If I had any questions, all I had to do was contact Expert Systems. They have always been very accommodating and easy to deal with."

Exder EDI is a web-based system. To use the system, all you need is a PC with an Internet connection and a web browser. Expert Systems takes responsibility for operation,

backups and system maintenance. All EDI flows to connected customers are carefully tested and verified.

The system is flexible and adapted to different customers' needs. Exder EDI includes support for maintaining articles and prices, agent orders, managing orders, order confirmation, advice notes and invoices as well as printing labels with SSCC codes.

"The time savings we achieved through electronic trading are enormous, and there is little risk of error," Johan Viitanen concludes. "I feel very safe using Exder EDI. It is constantly updated and it has a great future."

Exder's web-based system for electronic commerce, Exder EDI

- No special expertise required.
- Opportunity to do business electronically with ICA, Coop, Axfood, Bergendahls, ABB, Skanska, Sandvik and the entire public sector.
- Labels with SSCC codes can be printed out on an ordinary printer.
- Notification of incoming orders is sent by e-mail.
- Price list for grocery business compliant with ESAP 20.

enabled us to succeed with the project,” says Susanne Maal Kärstrud.

E-connection required Axfood to commit resources. Initially, they had one person working full-time on the process, two people working half-time at Axfood IT and several people on the steering committee and in the project group.

“Today five people are working on the project, two of them full-time,” says Susanne Maal Kärstrud. “For the project to succeed, though, the whole business has to be involved, including Axfood IT, category supervisors, buyers, invoice matchers and chains.”

“We work closely with Expert Systems, with daily contacts,” says Jakob Sefors.

“Expert Systems is always willing to listen and develop our shared processes in the course of the project, with the result that we are continually improving our partnership.”

ACCORDING TO AXFOOD electronic commerce offers a range of advantages. For example, it is possible to follow up on the

efforts of direct suppliers more accurately. Less administration is required, and the company has gained a whole different level of control over their prices and range.

“We discover problems more easily, and when we implement full ESAP 20 with a supplier, errors are cut to a minimum,” says Susanne Maal Kärstrud.

PREVIOUSLY, THEY COMMUNICATED by fax, e-mail and telephone. Not all the suppliers were overjoyed at having to switch to electronic commerce.

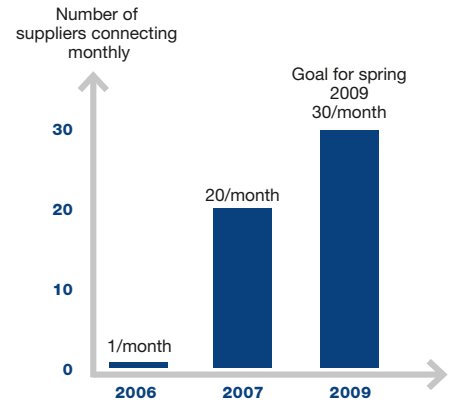
“The suppliers’ reactions were mixed, depending on the size of the company, their technological maturity and their priorities,” says Jakob Sefors. “Sometimes it has been hard to convince suppliers to prioritise our EDI requirements relative to their other projects. We are fully aware that a project like this requires an investment of both time and resources on their part.”

However, Jakob Sefors notes that suppliers’ opinions of electronic commerce seem to grow more positive once they e-

connect.

“We haven’t done a comprehensive study, but most people understand the business benefits of EDI and technological progress,” says Susanne Maal Kärstrud.

“For our part, we are very satisfied. Getting everything right from the start really saves a remarkable amount of time.”



The connection rate has picked up since 2005. The goal for 2009 is to continue connecting suppliers at a rapid rate.

HOW IT WORKS

Connecting suppliers with Expert Systems

ESAM is a proven method of connecting suppliers. The goal is to connect as many as possible in the shortest possible time. ESAM consists of three parts, but which to use and to what extent is determined case-by-case, depending on the wishes of the customer.

The supplier portal is a concept for customers who want to gain the full benefits of their connection project quickly.

ESAM's 3 parts:

Project feasibility study

- Expert Systems surveys conditions and concretises goals, activities and schedules.

Project start

- Expert Systems develops informational materials and structures the supplier list.

Connection period

- An ongoing process of connecting suppliers. Suppliers are informed of the customer's requirements and when they have to be implemented. Expert Systems provides information on methods of getting started. All contacts are logged on the ESAM website so that everyone understands what comes next and who does what.

Supplier portal

- The customer buys several Exder licences and distributes them to suppliers. The supplier portal may include one or more Exder modules, depending on the customer's business model. Technically there is no difference between the supplier portal and Exder, except that the customer is responsible for selected suppliers' costs.
- Supplier portals are used to trade with a single customer. Suppliers wishing to trade electronically with several customers can buy their own Exder licence and easily go further with Exder.

Meet Expert Systems

DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT



“I want to make life easier for our customers”

Tina Johnson does development work at Expert Systems. Her goal is to make life a little easier for customers. Thanks to modern technology, she can sometimes work at home on Ljusterö – an island with what she considers to be the perfect location.

“The best part of my job is teasing out solutions,” she says, “finding a solution in a reasonable amount of time and at a reasonable cost. Being able to make a difference is what inspires me.”

Tina Johnson has worked with systems development for over 20 years. She collaborates with other developers to put together solutions that improve systems and make life easier for customers.

Tina lives with her husband Mats and their two children, Linnea and Axel, on Ljusterö Island.

“I love living in the country,” she says. “I own a horse together with my daughter, and caring for it takes much of my time. We do a lot of boating in the summer, too.”

What is it like to do development work for Expert Systems?

“Exder is under constant development. We develop the systems so they can serve new industries that demand new functionality. Sometimes it’s a matter of adapting to new regulations, or implementing small changes that make things easier for Exder users. We use Exder at Expert Systems, too, and thus receive internal suggestions for improvements. The projects proceed according to a normal development cycle, from a specification of requirements to coding, testing, documentation and sometimes instructions for user tutorials.”

Do your customers often suggest improvements?

“We always welcome suggested improvements, since perceived customer benefits are our bread and butter. We are constantly soliciting customer suggestions. If somebody makes a good suggestion, we set to work developing it. If the suggestion is more of a customisation, the customer may fund all or part of it.”

How do you keep track of all the suggestions?

“We use Exder’s Resource Management module, registering all development projects as jobs. Generally, at least three people are involved in every project, and the system keeps track of that, too.”

What’s best about living on Ljusterö?

“I think the location is perfect – far enough out into the coastal archipelago that open water is nearby, yet close enough to Stockholm for me to work there and enjoy what the city has to offer.”

The development department

In 2008, Expert Systems had

- 930 development jobs
- 6,080 development hours
- five scheduled releases as usual.

Expert Systems is active in standardisation efforts under GS1, NEA, SFTI and BEAst.

Upgrades are implemented regularly to comply with new versions of standards.

Tips and tricks

How well do you know Exder?

Make the most of Exder! Here we present a few practical functions.

Interested in learning more? Contact customer service on: +46 (0)8 446 34 00 or e-mail us at support@expertsystems.se

Exder EPC

COPY PREVIOUSLY STORED INFORMATION to reuse it for new articles using the “Copy article” function.

REQUIRED FIELDS are underlined in blue in Exder, but if you don’t have all the information you need for a goods certificate, you

can click “do not check required fields” to save the certificate in Exder EPC.

Exder EDI

SEND MULTIPLE INVOICES SIMULTANEOUSLY with automatic invoicing. This way, all fully reported deliveries are invoiced in one click. The function is called Autoinvoice.

AUTOACCEPT ORDER is a function that automatically accepts incoming orders from a particular customer. It can be set individually for each customer.

EXDER’S NEW SUBSCRIPTION MANAGEMENT MODULE keeps track of contract periods, invoicing periods, etc., and generates invoice documentation. Excellent for leasing firms!

SORTING THE STATUS LIST makes it easy to find orders. Under Company settings/Miscellaneous, you can preset how you

want the list to sort your orders.

Exder Market

DESCRIBE YOUR ITEMS IN PERSUASIVE WORDS AND PICTURES at Torget and increase the chances that ICA shop managers will choose your product.

BEFORE CALLING ON an ICA manager, make sure you have contract terms and prices posted at Torget so they can order your products straightaway.

All Exder modules

CHOOSE YOUR OWN INVOICE NUMBERS in Exder. You can choose to let Exder generate serial numbers or make your own invoice numbers. Contact customer service and we will be happy to configure the setting for you!



Photos: Lasse Halvarsson

Organised sales

providing tulips to all of northern Sweden



David Thorberg in one of the greenhouses at Sörby garden centre.

How do you organise the sale of 20 million tulips? The Sörby Handelsträdgård garden centre uses Expert Systems' Exder enterprise resource planning system. "Exder helped us increase sales, too," says David Thorberg, Managing Director at Sörby Handelsträdgård.

"It is an extremely complex undertaking to plant 20.3 million tulip bulbs in the autumn, grow them during the winter and finally deliver the tulips to distributors and shops in the winter and spring," says David Thorberg, Managing Director at Sörby Handelsträdgård.

Planning is essential. Everything has to flow. Sörby Handelsträdgård can draw on over a hundred years' experience to design a plan that works.

"We supply tulips to all of ICA Norrland, and nothing can be left to chance."

Between December and March, they receive 100–200 orders daily that need to be picked, packed and shipped in short order.

"Without an EDI system, there's no way we could do it," says David Thorberg. "There would simply be too much extra manual labour, both for ICA and for us."

Today they manage each order with a commercial flow called Shoppack. The tulips are packed and the boxes labelled. Everything is automated. When it's all finished, trucks pick up the tulips and drive them to ICA's distribution warehouses.

In order to create and send electronic goods certificates and trade electronically with customers, Sörby Handelsträdgård uses Expert Systems' Exder ERP system and its EPC, EDI and Autoorder functions. This was not their own choice from the start. ICA required it.

"One day, ICA simply said, 'Implement this,'" says David Thorberg. "We wouldn't have come up with the idea on our own, but we're glad ICA made the decision. For us, it has meant increased sales."

The sales boost came primarily because it is now easier for shops to place orders. All they have to do is turn on the computer and click a link. Previously they placed orders by telephone or fax, and they didn't have as good an idea of how much stock

was left. Now they know exactly what they have and can always place orders in good time.

"When we implemented the system, both ICA and Expert Systems were very interested in our feedback, which we appreciated. We always felt like an active participant in the process. The cooperation between all three of us has always worked very smoothly."

Tulips have become something of a national flower in Sweden. David Thorberg thinks it may be related to our long, dark winters. Tulips remind us of brighter times.

"People never get tired of tulips, since there are so many different varieties to choose from. A rose, on the other hand, is just a rose. Personally, I love the fresh feeling of tulips."

FACTS & FIGURES

Sörby Handelsträdgård

- founded in 1896, specialising in flowers grown from bulbs
- grows some 100 tulip varieties and accounts for over 10% of Swedish production
- 38 year-round employees, 70 additional personnel during the December–April high season.