

“You are not alone” – MOM brings Swedish companies to Germany

Business consultants, international consulting firms, chambers of industry and commerce and associations: In the eyes of Hasso Wien, all are beneficial institutions. Perhaps there are even too many of them. But they all have one big flaw: It's hard to find any entrepreneurial thought that has been gained through experience and oftentimes they have no practical market knowledge.

But Hasso Wien can boast a gigantic quantity of such knowledge and experience. And the businessman who grew up in Sweden hasn't rested since he sold his IT company in Hamburg with 600 employees in 2000. Instead of spending his days in the tranquil areas around Stockholm playing golf, fishing and sailing, he shortly thereafter founded a new type of service company in the Smålish Växjö with MOM United. The goal: To open the way to the German market to numerous Swedish companies wishing to expand.

Wien's approach is based upon a simple fact: “For Sweden, Germany is the largest export market by far, as large as China, Russia, India and Japan combined. But these are mainly large Swedish companies who already have a foothold in this market such as IKEA, Volvo, Ericsson, etc. However, the medium-sized Swedish companies – this includes the 600,000 small- and medium-sized companies – aren't as confident in their attempts to enter the German market. This begins with the language, but is also related to the unique, more consensus-oriented corporate culture of Sweden. Anxieties about the purportedly typical German overregulation likewise play a role and sometimes I also observe something of an “underdog” feeling towards the gigantic market between the Rhine and the Oder and the steamroller mentality we frequently encounter.”

An ideal target group for Hasso Wien's MOM: “We are doers, we don't just provide prospects.” At an Information Day, he and his nine employees, including two Swedish companies familiar with MOM's approach who are wanting to locate to Germany, provide an introduction to the German market. Step 1 is a trip to Germany where the concrete conditions and opportunities for setting up operations here are explored on-site whereby numerous meetings are held with the local chambers of industry and commerce and other local associations. Step 2 then follows as a one-week-long intensive course in which the product and manufacturer are analysed from all sides for market suitability and the German market and German customs are also addressed. This occurs in Sweden's No. 1 economic region of Småland.

The 3rd step is now decisive: MOM's supporting of the Swedish company wishing to expand upon its path through the maze of rules and governmental agencies to reach the customer. “We never leave our charges' side”, that's Hasso Wien's credo. And it is precisely here where he sees the additional benefits of MOM which a Swedish company wanting to expand would not find with consulting firms that are typically in the market.

Four eyes see more than two: Thus, MOM provides counsel through leading business people of Swedish heritage with knowledge of the German markets who regularly work on MOM's projects; they include, among others, Sweden's Honorary Consul Leif A. Larsson in Hamburg, owner of the international paper industry group Conrad Jacobson and Bengt Norrgren, the German CEO of Tetra Pak Processing.

And how does the economic downturn affect all these plans? "Certainly, life right now isn't particularly easy, but there is enough work", says Wien. For example, right now, he is looking for an assistant who has good communicative and analytical skills and ideally should be a Swede living in Germany. "It isn't easy at all to find the right person!" The biggest problem is to find sufficient numbers of suitable and reliable specialised personnel to work for the company. This also greatly affects the plans to use MOM to establish a foothold in the English and / or Dutch markets.

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