

The e-Commerce portal “Meetingpoint Wermland”

1. Purpose of this document:

To describe best-practice case from the Wermland Chamber of Commerce in Värmland, Sweden

2. Country and Region:

Värmland, Sweden

3. Issue:

The main aim of the project ‘Meetingpoint Wermland’ is to increase knowledge of e-commerce and stimulate as well as promote e-commerce development in the region. The Chamber of Commerce’s involvement in the e-commerce area is built upon the persuasion that this new technology helps make Värmland a better place for business to thrive.

4. Approach / strategies / results:

The portal, ‘Meetingpoint Wermland’ in short, is a digital toolbox filled with services for sending and receiving electronic invoices, where companies and municipalities can operate e-commerce. The work invested in Meetingpoint Wermland has been extremely successful and the project has been noted both nationally and internationally for its positive yield. Among other things, Meetingpoint Wermland has been named the best example of e-commerce in Europe. Because Meetingpoint Wermland can offer knowledge, experience, and resources, Värmland’s operations save both time and money since e-commerce is more cost-effective even for smaller and medium-sized companies and municipalities who cannot finance or carry out e-commerce projects. In terms of benefits to business, e-invoices save time. In Torsby, the time needed to handle an e-invoice has been calculated at 11 minutes, as compared to handling a regular paper invoice that is calculated at 28 minutes. Since approximately 30,000 invoices a year are handled in the municipality, it is possible to save as much as 8500 hours per year. In pure money, that means a savings of approximately one and a half million kronor per year. Torsby will, in the future, handle all its invoicing through the Meetingpoint Wermland portal. This means that all companies who wish to invoice Torsby must do so with some form of electronic solution. Today, Torsby is electronically receives 35 per cent of all its invoices, from



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approximately 60 vendors, and the goal is that by the end of 2007, 50 per cent of all incoming invoices will be e-invoices.

When it comes to strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities and threats, strengths that derive from e-solutions are saving time and cost-effective. In addition, better internal control, simpler routines for archiving, and greater flexibility with the help of e-solutions result. Weaknesses can arise because it can be difficult to reach standard solutions since there are so many market forces that wish to earn money on e-invoices for example. It also demands certain competency and changed routines. E-solutions for business provide great possibilities to reorganise ones own operation and modernise the company's way of working. One e-solution can lead to several e-solutions, and e-solutions give the company opportunity to expand. Long range threats to e-solutions can arise from the inability to standardise solutions, and in turn, a huge jungle of e-commerce solutions can grow forth. A lack of competency may also constitute a threat, just as excessive expenses may also be a threat.

From 1 July 2008, all governmental authorities in Sweden shall, according to a Finance Department directive, handle both incoming and outgoing invoices electronically. In a study conducted by the ESV (the Swedish Financial Management Authority) during 2005 on the benefits and solutions available through e-invoicing, it has been shown that all authorities, even those that are small, benefit from e-invoicing. Calculations show that savings to the state are SEK four billion kronor over a five year period (www.esv.se). Through wide range introduction of e-invoicing the state can also promote the introduction of e-invoicing throughout the balance of society. The ESV is currently preparing the introduction of e-invoicing throughout the government by establishing Svefakturan (Swe-invoice) as the government's standard for e-invoicing. A uniform standard makes it cost-effective and easier for businesses to adapt their e-invoicing. In order to enjoy e-commerce success in Värmland, businesses must dare to direct their own purchasing and force standardised solutions from business systems vendors.

The Wermland Chamber of Commerce will continue developing Meetingpoint Wermland and working toward finding wide range user solutions so that as many vendors as possible can use the Meetingpoint Wermland portal despite their volume of invoices, their business system, or the size of their company. It is hoped that Värmland will be a forerunner in Sweden in terms of development and cooperation within e-commerce, and that, in the future, emphasis will be placed on operative project management, allowing the actors involved to bear the costs of technical investment to a greater extent. The Chamber of Commerce will, in the future, act as the intermediary for effective and flexible e-commerce for all Värmland's trade and industry.

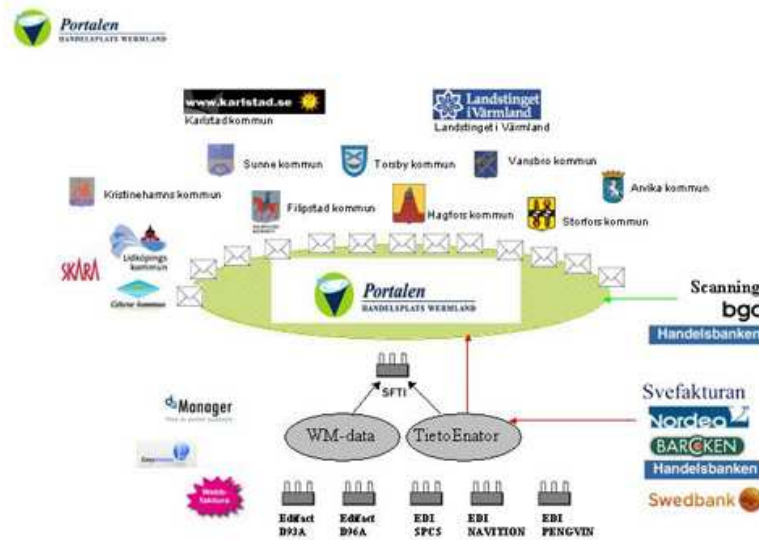
By December 2007, it is hoped that 350 business relationships between senders and receivers of e-invoices via the Chamber's portal will exist.



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Currently Meetingpoint Wermland has 100 suppliers that regularly send electronic invoices to 8 of the municipalities in Värmland. (12 municipalities in total + the County Council in Värmland) Meetingpoint Wermland is a regional resource for businesses and municipalities to generate electronic invoices in a format that the recipient’s system can process. The portal currently supports electronic invoicing in accordance with the Single Face to Industry (SFTI) standard.

5. Relevant keywords:

E-commerce, portal, electronic invoices

6. Main Impact:

Portalen Handelsplats Wermland offers a range of services designed by the Wermland Chamber of Commerce to permit the cost-effective exchange of electronic messages, including invoicing, ordering, certification and procurement. It is a joint e-commerce portal for municipalities, purchasers and suppliers. It furnishes all participants with suitable tools, training and project support. The portal meets the needs and expectations faced by businesses, both large and small, in the area of e-commerce.

Our objective is to promote e-commerce between municipalities and businesses, whether large, medium-sized or small. The portal strives to be the first place that a municipality or business will turn when it wants to engage in e-commerce – in other words, it is a regional hub for exchanging electronic messages.



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The main impact of the project Meetingpoint Wermland is that the project will:

- increase IT-skills and e-strategies
- Make SMEs understand the advantages of e-business and help them identify their e-business opportunities
- assist SMEs in implementing their transformation towards e- business
- A link between customers and their suppliers
- Provide a regional resource to generate electronic invoices

Meetingpoint Wermland’s services make e-commerce

- Cheaper
- Simpler
- More efficient

7. Recommendations:

Never underestimate the need for knowledge and competence in SMEs. The technique is not the problem when they switch to electronic invoicing, it is the pedagogic. The companies must come to realise why they should send invoice electronically and how to do that. The receiver must also come to realise this. There are many fantastic solutions offered on the market but few understand how to use them. A small company wants somebody to talk to, somebody who can help them out practically at the keyboard.

It is important that this type of development is purposefully driven forward and that a particular entity actively works to stimulate, promote, and influence e-commerce in the region. The Wermland Chamber of Commerce seeks to make “the Meetingpoint Wermland portal” the natural choice when a business or a municipality wants to start electronic commerce; that it will be the regional hub for e-commerce. Positive examples and good effects make it possible to involve more businesses and there are great gains to be made from coordination, both for Värmland businesses and for businesses outside the county. The concept can even transfer to other actors, both national and international, with great advantage.

Parts of this project have been carried out within the framework for Baltic Rural Broadband project in Interreg IIIB, Baltic Sea Region.

8. Attachments:

www.handelsplatswermland.se





Confirmation of publishing allowness

Location and Date

Name, Stamp and Signature



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