**Digital meetings gave the manufacturing industry a boost**

400 meetings over the course of four days. Close to 300 suppliers and 70 buyers from 26 countries. These are the figures that made up Elmia Subcontractor Connect, which ended on 13th November.

- Everyone we have met online has been so positive and happy to meet. It is so clear that platforms like this are what is required in the current situation both for business development and for generating new contacts, says Cornelia F. Sundberg, Managing Director, Kyocera Fineceramics Nordics AB.

Elmia Subcontractor Connect created new opportunities for the manufacturing industry to make new contacts at a time when the opportunities to meet physically are severely limited.

For four days, a digital matchmaking event took place between suppliers and buyers - in collaboration with the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).

- This year, together with EEN, suppliers and buyers, we have created a digital version of Elmia Subcontractor Connect. We, at Elmia, think it has been fantastic to be able to do this as an alternative to a regular trade fair. As is always the case following trade fairs, the important work now remains for all participants to follow up their leads - but we have already received numerous positive signals that the foundations have been laid for tomorrow's business, says Helena Åhs, exhibition manager for Elmia Subcontractor.

- We look back with pleasure on all the work that led to the meetings between the various industrial buyers and sellers. In addition to all the meetings that took place during the week, there has been much dialogue and we also know that many companies have already planned both new and follow-up meetings, says Malin Jönsson, Project Manager EEN.

A total of 400 meetings were held between different suppliers and buyers during the four days.

- I think that the whole set-up with search options and the various opportunities to make contact before the meeting made it very effective, says Tobias Camitz, Sourcing Manager at Scania, adding that he had enjoyed several very interesting meetings:

- Hopefully there are one or two potential long-term suppliers for us. It is a long process and not guaranteed, but we have received some concrete information that we can certainly look at further, he says.

The transition to digital matchmaking was received positively from both our suppliers and buyers. Effective, focused, simple were a few words that the participants used to describe the event.

- Of my six meetings, two or three may well lead to future business. Two are very interesting and one has good potential, says Johanna-Maria Johansson, Purchasing Manager at AQ Plast, who continues:

- Elmia has done very well in arranging this. The technology has worked excellently and both the booking and the platform itself were simple to use.

In parallel with the matchmaking, an online program was streamed with high-profile guests from the across the breadth of the manufacturing, business and political scenes. Among others, were the Minister of Trade and Industry, Ibrahim Baylan, Center Party Leader, Annie Lööf, and Minister of Energy and Digitalisation, Anders Ygeman, who spoke about the future of the Swedish manufacturing industry.

Even during a year as disruptive as this one has been, Elmia Subcontractor has been able to use this digital platform to offer an arena for knowledge, inspiration, meetings and, not least, business. The transition from a physical to a digital trade fair has been great for Elmia as well as for its exhibitors and visitors. It has highlighted that a combination of the digital and the physical space will become even more important in the future.

 - We take with us all the benefits that a digital format brings, such as increased flexibility and better opportunities to participate remotely and will continue to develop this concept further. At the same time, we still believe strongly in the importance of the physical meeting. A digital event cannot fully replace a physical fair, however, a combination of the two is a successful recipe for the future. So, we hope that next year we will be able to combine the strengths of the physical fair with the experience we will take with us from 2020, says Helena Åhs.