**The industry focuses on the future. With Elmia Subcontractor as a springboard.**

**As the economic indicators turn negative, the industry is taking aim at the future. That’s the clear impression summing up this year’s Elmia Subcontractor. For four days the fair has hosted meetings and business dealings, world-class innovations, lectures to a capacity crowd and debates with a focus on tomorrow.**

The current buzz in the media is that the industry is facing an economic downturn. This is confirmed by the Subcontractors’ Barometer, which was presented as usual on the first day of Elmia Subcontractor. Compiled annually by the Swedish employers’ association for industrial and service companies (Sinf), this year’s survey is not purely negative. A calmer order intake creates the space for companies to look up and focus more on strategic planning and development measures for the future. This trend was clearly visible at this year’s fair, manifested both in greater engagement by the exhibitors and in the visitors’ strong interest in the inspiration arenas and programme of stage presentations.

“This year is a really good trade fair year,” commented Björn Karlsson, CEO of the exhibitor Weland Solutions. “We’re still experiencing a boom but people are starting to talk about what changes they need to make to keep up, maintain their volumes and so on. It’s clear that many companies are sending more of their people to visit the fair.”

*Strength in numbers*

Connected products and digital transformation. Electrification and tomorrow’s skills supply. Smart and sustainable materials. As usual, the industry’s hottest topics engaged its gathered forces – on the stages, among the exhibitors and in the innovation arenas such as the popular Subcontractor InnoDex. Together with 1,122 exhibitors from 28 countries, all this once again confirmed Elmia Subcontractor’s position as northern Europe’s leading trade fair for industry suppliers.

“Our goal is to prepare the ground by creating the best possible conditions for fruitful meetings, deals and development, so the industry can continue to be strong in the future too. It’s impressive to see the great expertise and driving force among the exhibitors,” said Gabriella Banehag, Business Manager of Elmia Subcontractor.

*New partnerships for a strong, connected future*

To remain strongly competitive, there is a clear need for formal cooperation between the established manufacturing companies and companies with new-technology expertise. This theme was very noticeable at the inspiration arena Subcontractor IoT Arena, which featured real-life cases with both the manufacturers and the suppliers present.

“You can create whole new customer values. More and more people are understanding this, and we’re seeing a growing interest among the fair’s visitors. But there are still many people who need to understand what fantastic tools digitalisation offers and how much you can increase your competitiveness,” said Magnus Mörstam, coordinator of Subcontractor IoT Arena.

This topic was also discussed on the fair’s main stage, where Per Ericson, Senior Vice President Business Development of Husqvarna Group, spoke of how important it is to be curious, whatever the size of your company.

“A successful company must retain its curiosity. We don’t need to know everything but we need to be able to learn everything and to learn from others,” he said. “This means we must work closely with each other so that together we can create something good. We need to have suppliers who can come to us and tell us what we haven’t thought of.”

*Investment in skills*

The supply of skills in the future continues to be a significant challenge. Accordingly, this year the fair increased its focus on the next generation, to encourage its interest in technology and in the industry as a workplace. These measures, which were welcomed by the industry, included companies that pitched their businesses to students, the Swedish championship in CNC turning, and the inspirational robotics enthusiast Simone Giertz, who has almost two million followers on YouTube, speaking on stage to a packed audience.

“The mere fact that students are coming here shows that the image of the industry as a workplace is changing,” commented Fredrik Sidahl, CEO of the Scandinavian Automotive Supplier Association (FKG). “This fair is a smorgasbord for them, with all the exhibitors who are at the absolute cutting edge of technology and electronics.”

*Ambassador – a profitable investment*

The overall impression of the fair is that Swedish industry is bubbling with the desire to develop. Like many others, Daniel Larsson, CEO of the prototype manufacturer Unnaryd Modell, feels that the weakening economic trend can enable companies to invest more time in their development work.

“We’re extremely satisfied with this year’s fair,” he said. “We’ve had more visitors to our stand than before, with many good meetings, and we’ve made a lot of new contacts. Many people recognised me from the ads and banners, because we’re one of this year’s ambassadors for the fair. We’ll see what that can bring us in the form of new partnerships.”

*Quotes:*

“I visit the fair every year. This year it was great – I’ve met my existing customers and gained some new, interesting leads. Next year I want to take part in the matchmaking event Subcontractor Connect, which I think is a really smart way to find new suppliers.”

*Emma Stangdell, strategic purchaser, Itab Sweden (Visitor)*

“This is the first time we’re exhibiting here at Elmia Subcontractor. Because we want to develop our business here in Sweden, it’s the most logical fair to go to.”

*Cebastian Doepel, Director, Business Development & Compound Teknikum, Finland (Exhibitor)*

“I believe very much in face-to-face meetings. Everything’s becoming more digital these days, and so it’s important to meet. It’s also good that Elmia’s helping with this. It lets us find purchasers and they can find us. And it’s also extremely time efficient.”

*Anders Tingström****,*** *CEO of Colmeo and participant in Subcontractor Connect (Visitor)*

“As a design engineer, I always find InnoDex interesting. It’s visionary and exciting because the materials are not established ones. I also found a supplier who could give me samples for an upcoming project. Within a short time, I was able to gain a lot of useful knowledge. It was extremely efficient and good.”

*Maria Persson, Technical Responsible Design Engineer, Soft Seating Kinnarps AB (Visitor)*

“This is absolutely a business-generating place, with a terrific mix of visitors and customers. It gives us a good opportunity to broaden our contact network.”

*Fredrik Falkenström, CEO OEM Motor (Exhibitor)*