

Behind the Win: Changing the Game With Handelsbanken



Four years ago, we lost most of our debit portfolio with Handelsbanken. Two years ago, the team suffered another setback, this time with the loss of the commercial portfolio. Nobody thought a total comeback was possible. But the Nordic-Baltic team has now signed an eight-year deal with the bank, leading to a game-changing flip in the region. Here's how it was done...

Building Trust to Renew a Partnership

Trust is key to any successful partnership, so the team took a different approach to renew MasterCard's relationship with the bank. A small and agile core team focused on listening to the client's needs and developing a crisp, high-quality response to the bank's RFP. The objective was to exceed the customer's expectations and respond very quickly to every request.

Peter Olbing, head of the core negotiation team explains: "Since each Handelsbanken branch has a strong influence on any decision, we needed to not only win the approval of the central management team and traditional card contacts – but also the approval of the branches. It was all about understanding and respecting their culture."

A Responsive Approach

Although the deal appealed to Handelsbanken from a financial perspective, cost alone is rarely enough to secure a deal of this size. Our decentralized structure with strong central support enabled the team to be responsive to the bank's needs and great effort went into aligning our proposal with the key requirements of the RFP. Handelsbanken has a card business across eight markets and wanted to be treated as a group. Acquiring was not to be forgotten, and the team's ability to deliver and follow-up was crucial in proving MasterCard as the best choice as a long-term partner.

Becoming the Leading Consumer Debit Brand in Sweden

This eight-year contract wins MasterCard 100 percent of the Handelsbank debit and credit consumer portfolio across the eight countries of the Nordic & Baltic region as well as the UK,

Netherlands and Poland. It represents significant revenues and will strengthen our market share across the Nordics. In the second quarter, 350,000 credit cards will be migrated to MasterCard followed by 900,000 debit cards in the third and fourth quarters. This will mean a 100 percent consumer share in Sweden by the end of 2014, making MasterCard the leading brand in the country for the first time in history.

A Broad Long-Term Partnership

Bart Willaert, cluster manager, Nordics and Baltics, sees plenty of opportunity in this new partnership: “As a start, Handelsbanken will be using our excellent Nordic Advisors team for the first time. The bank also aims to become the first big contactless portfolio in Sweden which would accelerate momentum towards a cashless society.”

Bart adds: “We also have opportunity to package our new MasterCard assets and solutions and have already started a very encouraging processing opportunity with Trevica to extend our partnership beyond the core brand and switching, into issuing processing across multiple markets.”

Photo above: Handelsbanken headquarters in Stockholm.