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# Surpassing expectations

With the right vision and attitude, great things can be achieved, says CellMark's energetic President and CEO Fredrik Anderson.

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A curious mind and a love of learning has taken Fredrik Anderson on an interesting life journey. The CEO of CellMark still remembers the joy he experienced when hearing stories of well-travelled friends and family, and this led him to seek out similar opportunities for himself. As a child he learned to play the violin, at age 20 he took up singing lessons — “despite not having the voice for it,” he quips — and at 35 he decided he wanted to learn all there was to know about gardening. He studied psychology and anthropology simply because he was curious about the topics. He was also lucky enough to work in a vast array of countries, from France to China, the Philippines, and the Middle East.

“I have always had this urge to learn and I think curiosity is essential for progress,” says Fredrik. “Only when you look beyond yourself can you know if there is room for improvement. Curiosity is a blessing and it plays a big role in many people’s lives, including my own.” >>



Name Fredrik Anderson  
Company CellMark  
Position CEO  
HQ Gothenburg, Sweden  
Employees 750

Born and raised in the Swedish city of Gothenburg, Fredrik jumped at the chance to move to Karlstad at age 23 to start his professional career in an administration role with a transport company. He stayed there for about three years and throughout that time kept pushing for the opportunity to move abroad; however, he was never given the opportunity to do so. He then decided to move back to Gothenburg where he joined Skandia, a leading insurance company in Sweden. He spent a couple of years working as a marine cargo underwriter and continued to push hard for the chance to work with the Group overseas. Finally, in the late 1980s, his dreams came true when he was transferred to Paris, France.

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“I spent four years there and the last two of those were as the office manager for Skandia’s French operations,” he recalls. “I then reached a point where I felt insurance was no longer a challenge. I was curious about what else was out there for me, so I moved back home to Sweden and I joined Elof Hansson, a trading company with operations similar to CellMark. That position enabled me to travel even more. I went to South East Asia, China, the Philippines, Pakistan, the Middle East, Jordan, and Syria. The curiosity I had about the world largely became satisfied, and at the same time my love and curiosity for people and culture grew significantly.”

In 2001, Fredrik joined CellMark in the pulp sales division, and two years later he was asked to move to Singapore with the mandate to look after the marketing



of a pulp mill there. While doing that he also built up CellMark’s pulp business in China. By 2008, Fredrik had returned to Sweden to become the pulp division leader and that’s when his curiosity for things kicked up another notch. “When I moved home it drove me to say: ‘We need to innovate.’” he says. “So we kicked off initiatives on renewable energy. We started to get

involved in the process of turning waste into energy, and this was all developed under the pulp division, which I was leading.” >>

*“CellMark has been an exceptional partner to Flambeau River Papers for ten years. They always go the extra mile to ensure both organisations succeed in a challenging market. CellMark’s industry know-how and innovative solutions are instrumental in our success.” - William ‘Butch’ Johnson, CEO, Flambeau River Papers*



**Leverage our global power and strength to surpass expectations.**





Subsequently, in September 2014, Fredrik was promoted to the CEO position at CellMark and since then he has been leading the company forward on a positive growth trajectory.

CellMark's origins date back to 1984 when it was founded in Sweden as a trading house in forest products and a distributor of raw materials for the pulp and paper industries. Throughout its life it has expanded its portfolio significantly to also work in the chemical, metals, and energy sectors. Today, it has a truly global network with sixty-five offices in thirty countries around the world.

"If you look back to the early days of CellMark, it was funded by seventeen people who left another trading company to do a new deal, as they called it," Fredrik notes. "At that time, 80 per cent of the business was in trading pulp and that has a bit of a heritage in Gothenburg, with a number



of trading houses or marketers for the product there. That's how it all started. Nowadays we have a great platform which covers everything from waste-to-energy, to spirulina algae, and food supplements. We also operate as a global meeting place for local entrepreneurs who want to reach worldwide markets through our outsourcing services."

CellMark has a series of guiding principles which act as the bedrock for

all of its operations, with people at the core of it all. The company ensures it empowers its staff to be creative and decisive; it cares about the welfare, health, and well-being of its people; it builds strong, agile teams which align towards common goals; it supports and promotes open dialogues; and, it develops tools, training, and guardrails to facilitate sustainable growth. In addition to those commonly-shared values, CellMark has a culture that is

dedicated to surpassing expectations, celebrating the success stories of its employees, its CSR operations, and ultimately being a people-centric organisation.

"We have now developed fifty cultural ambassadors which we call our 'guiding principle ambassadors,'" Fredrik says. "They have all been trained to connect and integrate their personal values with our corporate guiding principles and share this training with all employees globally. The effectiveness of this is tremendous. If we had chosen a different path instead and just announced to our employees, 'Hey, this is our mission, vision, and values' and then put them on the wall for people to follow, I don't think that many of our staff would actually have been able to fully relate to those values.

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– Fredrik Anderson

"When I first incorporated these principles into the daily life of the company, lots of people questioned it because they thought we were just here to make money. I said, 'Yes we are, but having that as our only driver doesn't work. We need something more.' If you look at the companies without clear values, over a twenty-year period on the New York Stock Exchange they generated a 191-per-cent return. In comparison, companies with clear

values actually generated about 580 per cent. That's a 400-per-cent better return on shareholder value, so it's a no-brainer. It makes me very happy that my colleagues try their best to live out the CellMark vision every day."

According to Fredrik, innovation is hugely important to CellMark's operations. This is something that is nurtured and supported by the business in order to deliver more value and a better service to customers. Fredrik shares that by listening closely and setting benchmarks, CellMark is able to grow its capacity to become more creative and generate new ideas.

"How do you detect the needs and requirements of your customers?" he asks. "You have to listen, so that's exactly what we do. We also keep the >>

dialogue going by asking how we can surpass our customers' expectations. We have started to benchmark our innovation capacity. People have in fact created algorithms to measure the innovation capacity within a company. We challenge ourselves by measuring that and we also measure it from the outside where we ask colleagues, participants, partners, customers, and suppliers about how they perceive CellMark.

"It's always interesting when we compare the areas where we are perceived as being very innovative by people on the outside, with what we see as the areas we are not being innovative enough in. When you perceive yourself to be inferior to what the world around you perceives you as, then that's a sure way to continuously surpass expectations.

"We are an incubator for ideas, and we work with external partners — the universities, researchers, creative speakers, and innovation managers around the globe. Our guiding principles say that we always strive to empower people. We allow our teams to be creative and decisive and when that works to its full potential, then the outcome is a whole lot of new ideas being generated. Innovation has to be in the veins and the DNA of the company, and when you enhance this, that's when the magic actually happens.

"If we don't listen to the needs of our partners, and if we cannot combine their input with our people's input, then there isn't as much room to grow in terms of creativity. I think that listening skills and storytelling is an important part of our culture. If we are listening to the expectations of our customers, and are able to share the stories internally, this will eventually lead to innovation and creative



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development of new concepts and solutions. Ultimately, creativity is not that difficult, and it can be taught."

For this reason, CellMark makes it a priority to invest in the training and development of staff, making use of various educational methods, including online tools. Fredrik says this has been a big focus area for him ever since he took on the CEO role. "We have just

completed an employee survey, where we asked employees to propose their ideas and tell us what improvements they believed could be made within the organisation. We got everyone to do that anonymously. We are also involved in the 'Great Place to Work' survey.

"We try to listen to what our staff want and we train everyone so that they can become better at their jobs. We ask

them: 'Do you have an area where you want to grow? Do you need information? What do you need as training so that you can take responsibility and feel empowered for your own personal development?' We encourage interactive learning because we believe that the broader your mindset is, then the better the possibility of you being able to innovate becomes."

Through this commitment to aligning the team with the CellMark guiding principles, the focus on training, and the promotion of innovation, Fredrik believes that the business is well placed for a highly successful future.

"As management, we are here to serve the people of CellMark, to allow them to grow the company to its full potential, which in turn creates commitment and self-satisfaction," he

notes. "You smile when you go to the office, you are happy when you go home; it works.

"There's a French professor called Isaac Getz who has written on the theme, 'liberate your company'. If you look at a global average, roughly 20 per cent of the people in any given company are motivated. Then there are about 20 per cent of the workforce who pull strongly in the opposite direction; they destroy what the top 20 per cent are trying to achieve. Then in the middle you have the people who come to the office and say, 'It's okay, I get my salary, I do my tasks'. My target over the next few years is to have eliminated the bottom 20 per cent who are dragging the team down. If I can take away the 20 per cent who are obstructive, get them on board and positive, and then double the highly-motivated staff to 40 per cent, there is great potential for us.

"If you have one person who pulls forward and three who pull backwards, what happens is you get zero growth and zero creativity. I think if you don't have clear values then you cannot identify this and that is why our guiding principles are so important. I want passion, innovation, commitment, and I want pride."

Importantly, Fredrik recognises the need to lead from the front and to walk the talk. "I believe an effective leader is someone who has a practical and sincere approach to life in general. They have to be genuine, they have to have integrity, they have to live by their words. I think if you have a love for people, then people will love you back. That's one of my fundamental values, in addition to curiosity, and this drives me in everything I do." ■

