





PATRIK RISING
works in Stockholm with
management and IT
architecture.

FRIDA OLSSON WESSELY
is a test analyst within the
financial industry in Stockholm.

JENNY WÄRN
is a project manager in
Gothenburg within the
automobile industry.

A GOOD REPUTATION AND A **GENEROUS HEART**

WHAT MAKES A WORKPLACE PRODUCTIVE? WHICH COMPONENTS CREATE THE FERTILE ENVIRONMENT NEEDED TO BE CREATIVE AND TO STAND OUT IN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT? HOW DO WE SUCCESSFULLY RELEASE THE CREATIVE TALENT OF EACH OF OUR EMPLOYEES? WE SAT DOWN WITH FIVE HIQ EMPLOYEES TO FLESH OUT THESE IDEAS.

This turned out to be a conversation where the word ‘challenge’ came up frequently. It became clear that the HiQ’s culture encourages employees to take on challenges, and this helps creativity come to the fore. In fact, it’s not possible to talk about HiQ without talking about ‘culture’. HiQ encompasses both hearts and minds, it would seem. Both staff and customers testify to HiQ’s strong culture and shared values as something that binds the company together and makes everything work that much more smoothly. What might otherwise be little more than high-sounding rhetoric in a company document with no relation to employees’ day-to-day work is something that everyone HiQ is committed to. Below are the reflections of five employees on HiQ as a company: its culture, projects and people.

Patrik Rising, Consultant at HiQ. Patrik studied mathematics at Stockholm University before coming to HiQ. He has worked as a consultant for

a number of different companies in both Sweden and England over the course of his career. Patrik arrived at HiQ five years ago and currently works with administration and IT architecture. For the past six months he’s been working as a project manager at a bank.

‘I met a HiQ employee at a football match through a former colleague. When I mentioned that I wanted to work for a company that was more focused on development, he helped me come in contact with the right people at HiQ.

Frida Olsson Wesley had a similar experience at a time when she was looking for new challenges in her professional life.. Today, Frida works at HiQ in Stockholm.

‘A friend of mine was working at HiQ and encouraged me to apply for a job here. I was looking for an exciting company to work for and found HiQ, with its involvement in social activities and the knowledge network with HiCollege, to fit the bill perfectly.

NIRA BIAUDET
works with sales
in Espoo.

CHRISTIAN SVERRHAG
is a certified engineer with a focus
on computer technology in Lund.

Frida is originally a certified engineer specialising in engineering physics. After working as a radiation protection inspector at the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (SSI) and a short stint in London as a quality assurance analyst, Frida is now a consultant within the testing division at HiQ. At present, she is working as a test analyst within the financial sector.

Development and challenges are recurring themes throughout the conversations. These two elements attracted **Jenny Wärn** to HiQ, too. Today Jenny works at HiQ in Gothenburg as a consultant and project manager working within the automotive industry. She has been at HiQ since 2007.

For **Nira Biaudet** in Helsinki the story was a bit different, though, even if it's easy to see that Nira also likes a challenge. She settled on HiQ as a result of her interest in sailing. While studying, Nira was also a competitive yachtswoman who spent entire summers on boats. After her fourth year of studying, she decided that it was time to do something related to her studies in economics.

'I started looking around and was immediately attracted by the trimaran HiQ had on its website. So I sent in an application. The next day I was asked to come to an interview and was practically hired on the spot as a project manager, where my first assignment was to arrange sailing trips for customers in Finland.

Before coming to HiQ, **Christian Sverrhag** (a certified engineer specialising in computer technology) had worked as a consultant at several consultancy firms after graduating.

'I had decided to look for something new and heard very positive things about HiQ. So, in fact, it was the only job I applied for.'

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION OF HiQ?

Patrik Rising says that he immediately sensed great deal of energy and determination within the company. It was simply organised and was a company driven by the customer's wishes. But Patrik also thought that the company was very mouldable within the framework of the values that guide HiQ.

'These values differentiated HiQ from the other companies I had been in contact with, and these same values keep me working for the company today.'

Jenny Wärn says her first impression of HiQ was of a professional, serious and responsible company. She feels she helps maintain this atmosphere today, but also wants to stress that HiQ is a warm and caring group of individuals for her who also have a light-hearted side.

'In terms of the work itself it wasn't so different than what I was used to, so I was able to find my feet quickly at HiQ. On the other hand, I was pleasantly surprised that they were such a great bunch of people.'

Nira Biaudet, who was attracted by HiQ's involvement in sailing, remembers that she experienced the company as being both sporty and cool. This first impression has remained unchanged during her time with the company. Nira feels that time has passed very quickly since she first joined HiQ in April 2007.

'I was able to find my feet quickly at HiQ, and I was pleasantly surprised that they were such a great bunch of people.'

For Frida Olsson Wesley, it was the opportunity for advancement that she remembers most strongly from the time when she started at HiQ.

'I noticed that there were opportunities for development through things like the skills network and HiCollege. I feel even more strongly today that there are many ways I can influence my own situation – through both personal development and through being involved in internal operations here at HiQ.'

Christian Sverrhag compared his other experiences in the consultancy industry and immediately recognised that HiQ was an open-minded company that preferred direct communication and embraced good corporate values. What's more, HiQ was also a company with a very good reputation in the industry.

'I still feel that way about HiQ. In fact, I think it's possible that our good reputation in the industry might have become even stronger. HiQ's handling of the financial crisis proves that it has a long-term mind-set. Moreover, it's clear that the company always puts the consultant and the customer first. I work for Sweden's best IT consultancy firm.'

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT HIQ?

'What's surprised me most about HiQ is its flat organisational structure. Decision processes are short. When I look around at our competitors, it feels like we who work at HiQ have a much stronger connection to our workplace and to our company. We get together, for a start. That's rare at other companies. At other companies, you're always working out with the customer. Actually, another thing that has surprised me here is that it's so easy to have your voice heard all the way up to management. That's something really special. It means we can implement solutions very quickly and easily. The same is true for recruiting; we are able to quickly get the ear of management if we discover a new talent that we'd like to employ.' 'At HiQ we solve all potential problems very quickly,' says Frida Olsson Wesley.

Christian Sverrhag feels that HiQ has solid, genuine values.

'Many other companies have the dubious habit of talking about the company as a family and that their employees are a team. Unfortunately, winning mottoes like these don't always reflect the

reality,' says Christian.

For Nira Biaudet, it's about the cultural differences between Sweden and Finland.

'Here in Finland we're known for being a bit more hierarchical, so HiQ certainly differs here. But things work well. As a company, HiQ works incredibly fast and with great flexibility. The most important thing is that we're able to help customers quickly. So hang-ups with hierarchies tends to fall by the wayside,' explains Nira.

Patrik feels that his time at HiQ has been free of surprises. After five years at the company he has gained many new colleagues, though all of them have quickly found their place in the company culture and, in truth, these new additions to the family haven't affected the work at HiQ. This just goes to show how strong the culture is at HiQ. Because the infrastructure is so small, a lot of responsibility is left to you as an employee.

'You have to learn to find contacts and shortcuts on your own. This suits me a lot better than if it was all determined by procedure,' Patrik reveals.

Jenny Wörn makes a point of mentioning the group-wide conference held in the autumn. It was a memorable experience for her – just the fact that everything worked so well given that all 900 employees were present. HiQ's values – 'RSSJ' – were highlighted at the event: Results, Responsibility, Simplicity and Joy. For Jenny, these values summarise HiQ's culture very well; that's exactly the way she experiences the company. 'You're expected to take responsibility and deliver results at the same time as the work is simple, fun and uncomplicated.'

WHAT IS WORK LIKE WITHIN YOUR PROJECTS?

Jenny has served as project manager for the development of a credit management system for use in Europe and eventually intended for launch globally. It's been an exciting project because the project group was spread out across several countries and many offices across Europe.

'I have had both positive and negative experiences during this project and can conclude that clear communication between the members of the project group can never be too highly valued, especially when the group is international.'

Christian Sverrhag emphasises the atmos-

phere at HiQ: it's such a pleasant atmosphere and management tries to keep the team together and give them the chance to learn from one another's experience.

Nira points out that HiQ is always prepared to go the extra mile when they meet new customers.

'I think we're in almost in a class of our own in demonstrating technical solutions up-front, as we have done for a number of customers. This creates immediate interest and we plan to expand this practice further in the future.'

Because he works with development projects and manages development assignments, Patrik is often the only consultant from HiQ at the customer's workplace. Because commissions are often classified, it is difficult to bounce ideas off of colleagues.

'Because of this, we try to work together with skills development networks as a means of support within the company and it works well, but it's always up to me to push forward and make things happen. For me, it's important to feel that I'm the one driving my consultancy assignment, not some administrative function or method. This makes me a better consultant and helps me avoid get bogged down so often.'

Frida has worked at HiQ for a year and has only completed one project, but she agrees that HiQ's consultants drive their own consultancy assignments forward, a method that always benefits the customer in the long term. On the other hand, her first project involved a number of major challenges.

'We went into the project with quite low initial values, if I can put it that way. No one thought that the quality of the project would be any good. It was an uphill battle, to be sure, and the test manager had to work quite hard to gain the customer's confidence. But, in just a very short time we succeeded in increasing their confidence considerably and achieving important priority. In the end, the customer was very satisfied. This was because testing and quality were highlighted as important aspects of the project, but also because the test manager was so competent and dared to speak up and get involved.'

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH AN OUTSIDER ABOUT HIQ?

'I'd tell them about the informal atmosphere at HiQ,' says Patrik. 'Because there's such a flat structure here, I feel like I can go in to the most senior managers at any time and say what's on my mind. That's important to me.'

Frida would like to relate how HiQ staff help one another a lot internally.

'As I see it, it's part of HiQ's culture to put the project first. The project always comes before the person. But that also means that we always help one another. We have fun and are enthusiastic. I think that rubs off on our customers. Another thing is that it's so simple. I'm about to go on maternity leave and it has been the most natural thing in the world to get it organised. That's worth a lot and shows that there are both hearts AND minds here.'

Jenny talks about HiQ's values: She feels that the company's values permeate the entire organisation at all levels – from consultants to managers to salespeople – which is not always the case at consultancy firms.

Nira wants to talk about HiQ from an international perspective.

'HiQ has grown rapidly in Finland in recent years. Working with new deals, I notice that. Rapid expansion puts pressure on the organisation while, at the same time, the Swedish and Finnish business cultures meet. But, in fact, it works just wonderfully. So, I guess I would choose to highlight how we combine the best of Finland and Sweden,' explains Nira.

'I would emphasise our flexibility and the opportunity I have to move on to projects in areas where I would like to develop my skills,' adds Christian Sverrhag. That's the great part about being a consultant – getting to experience many different operations and challenges. The fact that HiQ has been named Sweden's best IT consultancy firm by the business journal *Veckans Affärer* four years in a row is not something I consider to be a product of chance. We have a positive spiral where we attract talented consultants, which gives us a good reputation, which means our customers have confidence in us.' ■

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