



Microsoft

Partners in Learning »

## Sweden ITN portal helps develop digital classrooms

### Sweden

#### Customer Profile

150,000 teachers in Sweden continually look for creative ways to help educate their students.

#### Situation

Swedish teachers wanted to develop a digital culture within their classrooms that used 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills.

#### Solution

Sweden launched ITN Sweden in June 2006.

#### Benefits

- 2,200 teachers registered for community
- 100 communities formed
- 86,000 unique visitors each month
- 100 VCTs, 3 softbooks, and 50 lesson plans posted
- 100 forums with 2,720 topics accessible through portal
- 1,936,000 page views per month

*"They are building community, collaborating, and sharing content with their peers. This is just the beginning. The potential for integrating ICT into other parts of their studies is incredible."*

—Eva Holm, Manager, Sweden ITN Portal

An Innovative Teachers Network (ITN) portal fostered by Microsoft Sweden helps teachers in Sweden communicate and exchange ideas with a global community of educators.



#### Situation

To provide the best environment for learning, teachers strive to find creative ways to keep their students active and engaged in their lessons. In Sweden, teachers were looking to better incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century learning tools into their curriculum to accomplish their classroom goals. However, many of the 150,000 teachers in Sweden had very limited resources to communicate with peers outside of their own community to help them in their endeavors. In addition, they often felt that they lacked the time to efficiently use the software necessary to effectively incorporate digital culture in the classroom. The teachers wanted a way to better communicate innovative ideas to each other as well as better connect their classrooms to the outside world.

#### Solution

Turning to Microsoft Sweden, the country established an ITN portal in June 2006. ITN is part of the Microsoft Partners in Learning initiative. The goal of ITN is to create a collaborative workspace and Web office for educators that is accessible worldwide. The Swedish ITN is built on Microsoft® Office SharePoint® Server 2007, simplifying customization. In addition to teachers, the ITN also welcomes school leaders, students, parents, and publishers. Anyone participating can join forums or create their own Wikis and blogs to share their successes and thoughts. Each community within the portal contains announcements, events, calendar,

“The Madagascar project on the illegal animal trade, hosted on Sweden’s Innovative Teachers Network, is a showcase for collaboration, community building, and content for ITNs around the world.”

—David Walddon, Academic Manager,  
Microsoft Worldwide Public Sector

workspaces, a document library, a discussion board, and a link library. “It gives teachers a platform to use the same skills as their students use every day,” says Eva Holm, manager for the Swedish portal. “You can’t understand students if you don’t think the same way.”

The pilot group had 100 teachers, many of whom had completed Peer Coaching training programs, also part of the Partners in Learning initiative. The teachers made their own Web offices and libraries. They created 25 open communities and 5 private ones. As of June 2007, there are now 2,000 participating members and more than 100 communities.

#### Benefits

ITN provides a global teachers Web office that brings the world to Sweden and Sweden to the world. “It’s like a Swedish bridge to an international world,” says Holm. For educators inexperienced with the virtual room, ITN offers an outlet to get them onto the Internet and into digital society. For educators looking for creative inspiration, they can contact others with the same interests around the world or use their own workspaces to introduce themselves. For parents, it is an easier and more effective way to collaborate with their children’s school.

#### How it can scale

Ten countries in Europe are currently collaborating with Swedish teachers. The ITN has attracted everyone from actors to Microsoft educators to answer questions about technology. “No one knew about each other before ITN,” says Holm. “With ITN, it’s as if they live next door. No one else can offer this in Sweden today.”

#### Global collaboration? celebrating biodiversity

Birgitta “Bitte” Kajler educates animal keepers at Spånga Gymnasium, an upper secondary school in Sweden. To help her students understand the complex problems that influence biodiversity and our environment, she began corresponding with a “twin school” in Madagascar. Prior to ITN, Kajler found communication slow and frustrating. Because she did not have any class PCs, she would correspond at Internet cafés. She eventually asked for and received a Webcam to Madagascar so that she could teach, communicate, and educate through the MSN® network service. This evolved to cell phones and text messages. She can now connect to a speaker phone, so her class gets first-person lessons from Africa every Saturday morning.

Kajler used ITN to build a Web office that contains her own workspace in the community as well as Web rooms of her own for teachers and students in the project. Through ITN, other schools, including those in Thailand and Mozambique, have asked to collaborate with her. Her students are also collaborating with the Stockholm Zoo. As a result of her efforts, she was awarded the Grand Prize for Innovative Teacher 2007 in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

#### Developing new educational material

Bonnier Education, a Swedish publisher, is collaborating with ITN Sweden on book

guides for a Web library. The publisher has offered to print for free, in multiple languages, a special edition of a book on Madagascar containing photos taken by Madagascar teachers and text written in collaboration with Spånga Gymnasium in Stockholm. Outside of printing costs, all proceeds go to Madagascar. An X-book will also be created that connects to the printed version. The hard book will guide readers to the ITN and will include instructions on how to find the X-book guide in the Web library. The X-book will not be available for download, but can be used online.

Although this Web library will start in Sweden, the ultimate goal is for other countries to link into it. For teachers, these type of technological advances that link to traditional forms of printed material offer new ways to develop educational material in different mediums. A future project includes an X-book in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Music in Sweden. "These X-books can inspire teachers in ITN to build their own digital library," says Holm. "They start with an idea, convert it into a lesson plan, and then when it's time, publish them in our shared library."

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Published September 2007

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