

Photo text:

Johan Liljenberg and Kristian Lövendahl are aiming to become managers at Handheld. But to pursue a career and go out into the world, they came to the little town of Lidköping.

Photo: SÖREN TURESSON

Ready for a world-wide career

Johan and Kristian came to Lidköping to get a qualified job

Do young people have to leave Lidköping to get a qualified job?

If that's the case, then Johan and Kristian are two brilliant exceptions.

Because they actually moved here to start a career that takes them out into the world.

When Handheld, a company that sells computers and mobile phones for use in harsh conditions, were looking for two new trainees, they were amazed at the great level of interest.

"If we had received 35 replies, we would have been really pleased. But we got 131 applications of whom only a couple were from Skaraborg", observes Hans Karlsson from ExportstiftelsenITM worldwide Foundation that is responsible for on-the-job business training.

Most of them had a highly qualified university education behind them. And many had graduated from foreign universities.

Johan and Kristian had both studied in Australia, unbeknown to each other. They met for the first time on January 18 to start their traineeship.

They both nod in agreement to the question whether they were surprised to see a traineeship in a little town called Lidköping.

"Absolutely" they reply unanimously.

"Programmes of this kind are offered by Ericsson and similar companies", says Johan Liljenberg.

"Handheld shows that smaller companies can start a trainee programme too", adds his colleague Kristian Lövendahl.

In October, the advertisement had been placed. In December, Kristian was invited to interviews in Stockholm, Göteborg and Lidköping.

He has family in Onsala and saw the proximity as a big plus – an hour and 45 minutes by car. He found a place to live in Lidköping and expects to commute on a weekly basis.

Johan, who is originally from Kristianstad, had never dreamt that he would end up in Lidköping. But it could well become his home town – or a place from which to explore the world.

When we meet the two lads at Handheld's office, they have just read Monday's article in NLT in which three secondary school girls discuss their future plans.

"It's not as if the world's best job can be found here in Lidköping", says one of the girls.

All three are intent on making a career and don't think that can be done in Lidköping.

But two lads who had never lived in Lidköping before have just started their careers in the very same small town.

The trainee programme ends in September with a three-month trip to the USA.

They don't know exactly what field they will be working in after that, but the idea is that each will be responsible for a particular geographical area in the world where Handheld has market interests. And they are already project leaders for two potential regions.

"It all depends on how the job works out", says Johan. "We have a year to travel around the world. But I might well feel happy in Lidköping and will want to work here."

Already two days after our visit, they are off on a skiing trip to Austria where the company is meeting its partners.

“I’ve never skiied before”, says Johan with a laugh.

Maybe he can learn some of the basics from Kristian, who has been snowboarding all his life.

He also loves surfing, which he had plenty of opportunity to do during his five years as a student in Brisbane in Australia. When we mention that he can also surf the waves at Framnäs, his eyes light up.

”It’s my impression that Lidköping is a pleasant town near Lake Vänern. It seems to be a really nice summer resort. It will be great to get my bike out after the spring thaw.”

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Photo text:

In NLT on Monday.

“Handheld shows that smaller companies can start a trainee programme”

KRISTIAN LÖVENDAHL, trainee