



Personal profile IKEA of Sweden

“My colleagues and I need to push for curiosity and creativity in everything we do.”

Marcus Engman, Design Manager, IKEA Range and Supply.

MY BACKGROUND

I was born in 1966 and raised in Älmhult, Sweden. I started working part-time at the IKEA store in weekend and summer breaks in high school. During the mid-1980s I was a home furnishing apprentice to IKEA interior designer Mary Ekmark. Then I had roles like Communications & Interior Design Manager in Swedish stores, Global Range Strategist and Marketing Manager (Retail) for IKEA Sweden. I was with IKEA for 12 years before founding my own retail agency Kollo in 2000. In 2012, I returned to IKEA as Head of Design.

WHAT I DO AT IKEA

One part is driving a coherent experience for people engaging with IKEA in everything from how we build our range and design products to how it all meets the customers. To do this, my colleagues and I need to push for curiosity and creativity in everything we do. So every day we challenge the status quo and the boundaries of what is possible. I also build a strong network of creatives outside IKEA because there's a lot we don't know and want to learn.

WHAT INSPIRES ME

Anything new. People. Products. Places. I've always loved music, but lately I've become very curious about it. Architecture, too – there are really inspiring things happening now in parts of Asia and Africa.

MY THOUGHTS ON DEMOCRATIC DESIGN

It's a great tool for designing products with maximum value and reach. Even better – it allows us, inside IKEA and outside, to have a common language around what good design is. Without that we can't agree nor disagree – with that we have the same starting point and then development is easier.

WHY I LOVE WORKING AT IKEA

First, the opportunity to drive real change and fulfil our vision – a dream for anyone working with design. Second, the people. Passionate, open and just plain fun. Then the luxury of having experts around when doing development.

A FAVOURITE IKEA PROJECT

Always the latest thing, since I'm a sucker for change. But right now I'm very inspired by an open source platform for comfort we did with three design schools and Tom Dixon.

HOW IKEA CAN STAY INNOVATIVE

The prerequisite is being curious. Then we have to side with people. There's a difference between observing people and using data about their behaviour and really siding with people, doing things on their terms. Also, stop thinking we can do everything alone. Be open and work with the best – the ones that challenge you, that add knowledge and skills you don't have. Always staying true to our vision and values. That means daring to do what really changes things – makes things better for the majority. Even if that challenges our ways and conventions in production, design, retailing, communication. Have the fun funnel approach – do a lot, fail a lot and be keen to learn and change.

MY BIGGEST MISTAKE

Numerous. Risk taking comes with my job and tasks. Mistakes and learning from them is what development is all about. One of the biggest mistakes lately is that some of our collections didn't reach the many – because we didn't succeed with the low price.