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EDS PERSPECTIVE: MICHAEL SOHLMAN ON THE NOBEL PRIZE AND INNOVATION

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Sharing a common drive to recognize innovation – a business issue EDS clients face every day – EDS signed a three-year sponsorship agreement with the Nobel Prize Series in March 2007. The pact calls for EDS to serve as the official technology services provider to [Nobelprize.org](#), an award-winning site that attracts 30 million visitors annually.

On Dec. 10, the 2007 Nobel Prize Award Ceremony for Physiology or Medicine, Literature, Chemistry, Physics, and for Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel takes place in Stockholm, Sweden, as it has since 1901. The Nobel Peace Prize is also presented that day in Oslo, Norway.

EDS supports two entities of the Nobel organization, Nobel Media and Nobel Web – its media and technology arms. Together, EDS and Nobel are developing content and educational programs to help increase understanding of the disciplines covered by the Nobel Prize, and to highlight the role of technology.

Michael Sohlman has served as executive director of the Nobel Foundation since 1992. Born in Stockholm, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Uppsala and completed postgraduate studies at the universities of Uppsala and Stockholm. He has served as director of the budget for the Ministry of Finance, under-secretary of state for the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry for Foreign Affairs, under-secretary of state for Foreign Trade.

In an interview, Sohlman discusses the legacy of the Nobel Prize and EDS' corporate sponsorship.

What role does the Nobel Prize play in society?

The Nobel Prize is an international award administered by the Nobel Foundation. The prestige of the award is very high. Why is that? Over the last century, the Nobel Prize has identified a number of contributions to modern society. That is one reason. The other is the combination of awards, which mirror the philosophy of Alfred Nobel, but mainly the values of enlightenment, and trust in the potential of scientific, cultural and political endeavors.

Then, you have the tradition of all the names which are on the list. Also, the prize awarders, the Nobel committees – they have been able to keep abreast of the developments and have conveyed a strong impression of integrity and independence.

“The Nobel Prizes are certainly leading to innovations but they are fundamental discoveries, actually.”

– Michael Sohlman, Nobel Foundation executive director

Explain the relationship between the Nobel Foundation and EDS.

I think we have found common ground with common purposes. EDS has signed a sponsorship agreement with Nobel Media to become a Global Sponsor of the Nobel Prize Series, and with Nobel Web to become its Global Technology Services Partner. The three-year agreement will enable EDS to apply its technology expertise for the benefit of the Nobel Prize Series and the organization's Web technologies, including supporting the development of content on Nobelprize.org .

As part of the partnership, EDS will collaborate with the Nobel Prize Series to develop content and educational programs focused on increasing understanding of the disciplines covered by the Nobel Prize. EDS will also support the placement of Nobel content on television networks, with emphasis on increasing distribution and coverage.

I am chairman of those two Nobel units. And we appreciate very much the arrangements with EDS. We look forward to being able to share in the deep expertise which EDS has acquired when it comes to new solutions in order to develop further our already well established Internet presence. For a site of this nature, in itself, it's rather unique. We haven't seen much of the same character – this combination of huge volumes of information about science, literature, the Peace Prize, etc., and the educational documents which we have been developing. So it's rather unique. And we hope to see the corporation further enhancing our outreach. We look forward to a strong partnership with EDS.

Describe the important role that the Nobel Laureates play in innovation and cutting-edge thinking.

Each vintage or year is special with unique personalities. This year, one can say the scientific prizes are almost always prizes in fundamental sciences, but the direct benefit and use of those discoveries is much easier than usual to explain. For example, there is the physics prize and the giant magnetic resistance effect which makes it possible for us to carry days and nights of music in a small device in a pocket, and so on. So, the practical and concrete use is easier than usual to convey to the broad public. That also goes for the chemistry prize and the medical technique developed for fundamental medical research.

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The Nobel Prizes are certainly leading to innovations but they are fundamental discoveries, actually. I can quote a museum director who was once interviewed in a banquet hall. If he could point to something related to the prize, he said, half of the public viewing the event on TV and half of the audience in the hall wouldn't be here without penicillin. That's just one example.

What takes place during the Nobel ceremonies?

It is considered Nobel Week in Stockholm. To the public, it sends a message about the importance of science, culture, literature and the quest for peace. In Stockholm, there are a number of activities, lectures by the Laureates, seminars, meetings with colleagues and last but not least, visits to schools where students who are interested in natural sciences or literature get the opportunity to interact with the Laureates.

The ceremonies are quite traditional and formal. There is the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony and the Nobel Banquet. There's nothing comparable in the Swedish year. In Sweden, we have this discipline that on certain days, the national flag is raised, such as the birthday of the king, and the 10th of December for Nobel. The whole country celebrates. The same goes for Norway.

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