

Delivering An Unparalleled Sleep Experience

An Interview with Jan Ryde, Chief Executive Officer, Hästens

EDITORS' NOTE Jan Ryde is the fifth-generation family member to lead the powerhouse bed manufacturer that has been operating since 1852. Ryde studied industrial engineering and management at Sweden's Linköping Institute of Technology, where he received a Master of Science degree before commencing doctoral studies in business. As an Associate Professor, he earned among the highest student rankings at Linköping University, where he taught business for several years prior to taking the helm at Hästens.



Jan Ryde

As with every employee – regardless of their ultimate role in the company – Ryde began as an apprentice, learning and contributing to each step in the process of hand-making a Hästens bed. Ryde is honored not only that the sixth generation has joined the family business, but that multiple generations of other families continue to spend their careers at Hästens, dedicated to improving people's lives by helping them sleep beautifully.

COMPANY BRIEF Six generations of master craftsmen have led Hästens (bastens.com) to where it is now – a family company still driven by the virtues of sleep and humble pride over its craft. Each generation has played its part in shaping Hästens, overcoming challenges on the way. From humble, honest beginnings, Hästens has grown into one of the world's most prestigious brands.

Will you highlight the history of Hästens and how the company has evolved?

Hästens has a rich history running back through six generations and was founded by Pehr Adolf Janson in 1852. He started the company because he noticed that people who were the best at serving others and people who can produce and make the best products were the most successful. We use the same values today and focus on creating the best possible products and experiences for our customers. Through this, we are convinced that by making our customers' lives better, we make the world a better, more joyful and loving place. For Hästens, we are proud to be a world-class international family-run business operating in over 45 countries and a Purveyor to the Royal Court of Sweden. We have over 250 independent resellers in Europe, Asia, America, and Africa and continue to enter new markets.

In 1978, the Hästens Blue Check was first introduced together with the 2000T bed, and it immediately created emotional reactions. My father, Jack Ryde, the fourth generation family owner and CEO, was dedicated to creating a distinct, bold, and timeless pattern to represent the Hästens brand, where the bed becomes a centerpiece in the bedroom. This year, we have launched the new Hästens 2000T, which is a testament to pursuing mastery in creating the finest sleep experiences, showcasing key improvements that elevate our craftsmanship, the comfort for our customers, and our aesthetics to new heights. This launch represents a significant evolutionary step beyond our continuous enhancements, delivering an unparalleled sleep experience.

What have been the keys to Hästens' industry leadership decade after decade?

At Hästens, we have a singular mission: to make our world a better place by creating the most wonderful beds in the world. We sell our

beds in more than 50 countries on five continents. We believe that our name is synonymous with the utmost levels of mastery and craftsmanship, and we find this in continuously perfecting the art of handmade craftsmanship. Hästens holds a unique place in people's hearts and minds because our vision, passion, and intense devotion to quality result in beds that are like no others – gorgeous beds designed for peaceful, restorative sleep that can create health and happiness.

How do you describe Hästens' culture and values?

Love and abundance choose those who are focused on helping others have a better life, and that is the culture and values at Hästens. At Hästens, there is no limit to what a team member can become, what we can make together, or how much joy, love, abundance, and gratitude we can create. We hire for life because we're on a mission. It is vital for us to bring people on board who want to share that mission. At the same time, we don't compare ourselves to other companies because we're not remotely like



Hästens bedding (above and opposite page)



them, and we don't want to be like anyone else. As soon as we start comparing ourselves to the kinds of factories that operate in other parts of the market, then we become them. You can't make such comparisons without using their metrics. This is also why we don't consider ourselves to be in competition with those other companies. We don't wish to get pulled away from our own metrics of quality craftsmanship, mastery, love, service, and making the best bed we can to enrich our customers' lives. This philosophy of love is the cornerstone, guiding us to create not just the best products, but experiences that embody care, quality, and a deep commitment to the well-being of all we touch, ensuring our journey is always driven by the heart.

Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Hästens?

As CEO, I facilitate the growth of the company by bringing together the right people at the right time, allowing them to bring their talents and gifts to the table in order to serve and lift up others, and to grow the company. For Hästens, we realize more people have increased their attention to the value of sleep and having the best bed benefit from great sleep over the past years. This makes it more important than ever that we give our customers their best sleep possible – it's a priority for them. Numerous studies have shown that sleep has a significant impact on the immune system, health, and quality of life. Hence, we are truly relentless and absolutely focused on never compromising in our pursuit to create the best products, so we continuously evolve and improve our products. The population's general awareness of the importance of sleep for overall well-being and one's own performance has also increased, so now it's more important than ever that we support our customers' best sleep possible. This is the greatest opportunity for growth for Hästens.

How important is it for Hästens to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?

For Hästens, building a diverse and inclusive workforce is important. Hästens is an English-speaking company, both in our offices and on the production floor. That decision was made in the 1990s, when we first began to export our beds, because we can't have two cultures within the organization. If we were only Swedish speaking, we couldn't have easy conversations with visiting vendors and customers from abroad. There would always be the need for someone to translate, which would interfere with the flow of spontaneous conversation. Also, we hire people from all over the world.

What are your views on Hästens' responsibility to be engaged in the communities it serves and a force for good in society?

At Hästens, we are on a mission of making the world a better, more peaceful, joyful, loving place and making people's lives better by providing the best beds and adjacent products for sleep. We want the whole world to wake up well-rested and truly be awake for the first time in their lives. In this sense, we love to be perceived as a contributor to the well-being and performance of our esteemed customers. For our beds, we only use what we consider to be the finest natural materials, sustainably produced and ethically sourced, so that those materials can be given a new life one day.

What interested you in writing the book, *When Business Is Love*, and what are the key messages you wanted to convey in the book?

The intention of this book is to spread love, joy, peace, and abundance to serve,

guide, and support humanity so we may all have better lives, enjoy more love, experience more joy, and feel more peace. My purpose is not just to make your life better. My purpose is to make the entire world a better place. When love, joy, peace, and success are abundant, everything is easier. I encourage people to read the book because it's meant to be transformational. When you go buy and read the book, *When Business is Love*, you will find the answers to all your questions.

What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?

Hästens is an international matrix organization that operates, to some extent, on consensus. This is one of the keys to our effective leadership. At the same time, we're still a private, family-owned company, which provides us with all the flexibility we need. In a dynamic, living matrix organization like ours, there is synergy. My role is not so much to be a steward or a guardian as to be a guide. I am here, obviously, to protect, to guard, and to guide Hästens, as well as to feed and nourish it, because we are a living company, a living organization.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

I would like to share the Hästens family's greatest legacy to young people beginning their careers which is, "To learn and master a profession of your choosing that will let you give people something they need. And by doing so, you will always be able to look after the ones you love." ●

