

HARALD PIHL

— a family of people and metals

*"We strive to be the best possible employer."
- Jonas Pihl*



Think of Scandinavian design, and your mind fills with images of modern, calm, relaxed spaces that are both functional and fun. Such an atmosphere permeates the offices of HARALD PIHL in Sweden, where the enthusiastic and talented team of professionals lighten up their coffee breaks with laughs over table tennis. It's a vibrant and cheerful atmosphere that has been created with input from the whole team and in 2022 they have an extra reason to celebrate as it's the company's 110th anniversary. Stainless Steel World spoke to Managing Director Jonas Pihl about the people who are at the beating heart of this family-owned company, whose well-being is his top priority.

By Joanne McIntyre

While 2021 was a hugely successful year for special metal supplier HARALD PIHL – turnover increased by 300% in Germany and by 200% in China – when Stainless Steel World spoke to Jonas, he was full of enthusiasm for his team and their personal successes. "We've always referred to the HARALD PIHL team as a family. Now our focus is on extending that family to include our suppliers and our customers. Usually, during negotiations, you are positioned on opposite sides of the table.



The team has created an atmosphere where everybody's ideas are valued and embraced.

By developing a deeper, cooperative relationship with our partners, we can create beneficial solutions for everyone. It simply requires an open-minded approach and straightforward discussions. By keeping the agenda transparent, discussing what we can do for each other and agreeing on how we work together, we can form a long term relationship. For us, this conversation must include important issues such as the environment and human rights, not just prices. If a supplier can help us to meet our needs, we will do business with them forever. These relationships create loyalty because they're based on integrity and honesty."

Good people, good company

Integrity and honesty are the cornerstones on which the HARALD PIHL team operate. "My grandfather founded this business 110 years ago this year, and we have always had a strong focus on ethical work practices. We're only interested in conducting business with honest, reputable suppliers and customers who share our

values," explains Jonas. "We refuse to take shortcuts and we avoid any hint of corruption at all times; how we behave in business is vitally important as it has a lasting effect on so many people around the world. We are an ethical company, and we hope to inspire our family of suppliers and customers to be the same." "We strongly believe we can have a positive influence in the world by



From pink ribbons to Movember

With a great company comes great responsibility, and the HARALD PIHL family generously devote their time to support good causes. A regular beneficiary is the Pink Ribbon campaign, which raises money and awareness for breast cancer. In 2021 the company headquarters were lit up with pink lights to highlight the companies fund-raising activities.

The family also takes part in 'Movember', where colleagues grow moustaches each November to raise awareness for men's health issues such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and suicide. The company is also a great supporter of UNICEF, donating a portion of every sale to the charity. "This means that all our customers, suppliers and partners are indirectly contributing by helping children in need. All contributions are counted and three bags of nutritional peanut paste a day may be all that is needed to save the life of a malnourished child. We hope we can inspire others to get involved in similar initiatives." The team has big plans to expand their philanthropic activities; check the company's LinkedIn page to see the latest updates.



The enormous product range at HARALD PIHL included nickel-based alloys, heat and corrosion resistant alloys, titanium and titanium alloys, copper alloys and stainless steel.

carefully choosing suppliers who share our business values. Every single product we sell is certified, and its origin can be traced to a reputable manufacturer.”

A safe, fun workspace

It’s evident that Jonas provides a safe, friendly and welcoming workspace for his family of employees. However, he continues to add features that help them achieve a healthy and happy work/life balance. “I see it as a personal challenge to constantly find ways to make our business a more interesting and fun to work. We may not have the ball-pits that Google has, but we’ve installed



With the largest stock in Europe, customers to know they are dealing with a trustworthy company that will always deliver, even in these uncertain times.

improvements such as charging stations for electric cars and social areas. We’re also installing a child care facility so that if an employees’ child has a day off school, they can bring them to work instead of staying home to care for them. We often ask our team how to make the working space more attractive and enjoyable, and place a lot of importance on these ‘soft’ values.”

An inclusive employer of experts

Jonas’s business philosophy imbues the company with a strong sense of identity that embraces innovation, flexibility and inclusiveness. “We’ve created an atmosphere here where everybody’s ideas are valued

and embraced,” explains Jonas. “It is fantastic to see how everyone understands this philosophy and is enthusiastic about contributing ideas on how to do things better tomorrow than we do today. So many good ideas have come from our people; it’s truly a team effort.” The organisation within HARALD PIHL is very ‘flat’, i.e. non-hierarchical. “It’s important to us that everybody feels they are on the same level. My team know they can call me at any time with a question, big or small. We strive to be not only a fully inclusive employer, but also the best possible employer.” By offering such an innovative and enjoyable work environment, the

Excelling in waterjet cutting

HARALD PIHL’s waterjet cutters are a young, highly proficient team that operates with super efficiency. “They have the most complex procedure in the company, yet they achieve it by delivering parts to customers with less than 0,5% error while maintaining a delivery time of just three days,” Jonas says proudly. “I doubt that anyone else in the business can match them.” “The team operates two waterjet cutters, enabling us to offer customers very short lead times for their orders. Both waterjet cutters work 24/7 providing custom-cut products to our clients.” Abrasive waterjet cutting is an inherently environmentally friendly process. Unlike traditional mechanical cutting systems, waterjet cutting requires no cooling or lubricating oils, so there are no chemically contaminated chips to dispose of. Unlike thermal processes such as plasma or laser, waterjet generates no toxic fumes during the cutting process. The cutting “tools” (water and garnet abrasive) are environmentally benign and available worldwide. The minimal scrap is free of chemical contamination and can be recycled, which results in raw material, energy, and cost savings for recyclable materials such as aluminium, steel, and titanium. “It is of great importance for us to give our customers the best product possible without compromise. A high quality, cost-effective product with minimum impact on the environment is a win-win situation for everyone; us as a company, our customers and the planet.”



Harald Pihl provides an inclusive, fun and professional work environment for its family of staff.

company is also able to recruit top staff from a variety of disciplines. “We have a very high level of education across all disciplines. The sales team mostly have a Master of Science, while the rest have also very high education.” There is certainly no doubting the professionalism of the team, who are experts at their tasks and continue to innovate and excel.

Sustainability and CO₂ reduction

Last year HARALD PIHL achieved certification ISO 14001, which specifies the requirements for an environmental management system that an organisation can use to enhance its environmental performance. Environmental performance is a topic close to Jonas’ heart, and he is striving to make his company not just CO₂ neutral but actually achieve a CO₂ negative status. “It’s hard work, but we are determined. Ultimately our aim is that if you purchase materials from us, it will actually be good for the environment.”

Rapid expansion, global success

The past twelve months has been a time of an unprecedented phase of expansion for HARALD PIHL. “We’ve taken on several high-level professionals to achieve this growth while ensuring the company’s core values and culture are maintained,” explains Jonas, “and are still actively recruiting new team members in all our offices around the globe, from Sweden, Germany and China, to India, Turkey and Vietnam. Our ambition is to be the best in both the ‘soft’ values such as the environment, inclusiveness, etc and the

‘hard’ values such as business deals. Significant investments in digitalisation are helping us to grow and expand across several geographies efficiently.” The German market is one that the company is particularly thriving in. “We felt so confident in the German market that during the Covid pandemic, we opened a purpose-built warehouse and office facility in Krefeld to serve that market with greater efficiency and focus. The Krefeld team increased from five to eleven members in the past year, while turnover increased by 300% - a fantastic result!” “Looking ahead, we expect to achieve even stronger expansion in the German market in the coming years as we are adding many new alloys and new dimensions of materials to the already extensive inventory. These include our dual stocks of titanium for both premium and industrial applications.” The HARALD PIHL warehouse and office in Suzhou, China, also booked a record year in 2021.

“We’ve seen rapid expansion in our Chinese office, primarily from our aerospace customers. Turnover has increased by over 200% in twelve months and shows no sign of slowing down.”

Largest stock of Ni & Ti alloys in Europe

HARALD PIHL has stocked and trade sheet, plate, strip, bar, wire, tube, pipe and welding material for over a century. Today, its stock includes nickel-based alloys, heat and corrosion resistant alloys, titanium and titanium alloys, copper alloys and stainless steel, among other materials. Jonas is justifiably proud of the company’s track with over 99% of stock materials being delivered on time from their truly enormous stock. “We have the largest stock in Europe, and in these times of supply chain disturbances, it’s important for customers to know they are dealing with a trustworthy company that will always deliver. This creates stability for our customers in uncertain times.”

Facts & Figures

Name:	HARALD PIHL AB
Founded:	1912
Headquarters:	Taby, Sweden
Subsidiaries:	HARALD PIHL GmbH, Germany (sales office, warehouse); HARALD PIHL Suzhou, China (sales office, warehouse); Q-Metal, Denmark Representation by Euraccai s.r.l. in Italy
Offices:	China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Norway, Poland, Turkey, UK, Vietnam.
Employees:	52
Products:	Nickel alloys, titanium, stainless steel, welding materials, copper alloys
Website:	www.haraldpihl.com