

# A customer gives Electrolux something to think about

**Early vacuum cleaners were bucket-shaped machines that were heavy and awkward to manoeuvre, until one customer gave Electrolux the insight to mount the vacuum on a type of sled.**

## **A salesman pays a home visit**

Although not expecting visitors that morning in 1922, Maria Eriksson, a young housewife, answered the doorbell when it rang. She was surprised to see the Electrolux salesman was standing in front of her, the same man that had been here to sell the machine to their family about six months ago. Maria had been using the LUX 1 for the housework and was actually quite grateful to have such a modern cleaning contraption.

“Forgive me for disturbing you. I just wanted to ask how you were enjoying the vacuum cleaner, Mrs. Eriksson,” he said.

Maria Eriksson let the salesman in. The two talked for a short while, the salesman jotted down notes, thanked her for her time and went on his way.

## **Two days later**

The salesman’s name was Kurt Linder, and he – along with the entire Electrolux sales team – was in the habit of visiting the head office of Electrolux on the last Friday of every month. Their purpose was to report from the field any issues and provide insight to the engineers. Axel Wenner-Gren, the CEO, made a point of attending the Friday meetings. “We wouldn’t be where we are today if it weren’t for the customers. Our biggest priority is to make sure we keep them happy,” he would say.

## **What Maria said**

Kurt Linder stood before the group. “I know we’ve made the vacuum as light as we could, but it is still too heavy. I know we have done all we can to lighten it, since this comment has come up before but one young woman said something that stuck. She said it is the lifting that makes it difficult, not the weight. She said that she sometimes puts it on its side and drags it.”

### Thoughtfulness

Suddenly a light went on in the head of Wenner-Gren. “Why can’t we make a vacuum that glides through the house that follows the user? It could move like a sled,” he said. With pen in hand, he made a rough sketch in which he repositioned the traditionally shaped bucket by sketching the vacuum laying on its side. To the bottom of the vacuum he attached sled-like runners. “Our next model should look like this,” Wenner-Gren explained.

### A new era for vacuum cleaners

In 1924 the Model V was launched based on the insight from one consumer. It was the first vacuum to carry the name Electrolux. The runners on the bottom of the machine made it an immediate success and were in use on all Electrolux vacuums well into the 1960s. Through the years the company continued to rely on customer insight incorporating features such as the self-winding cord, leather shoulder straps, and longer hoses.

