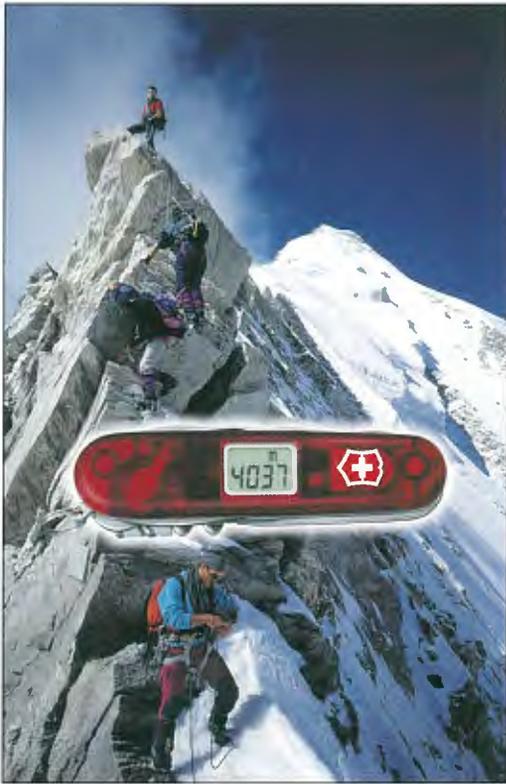




# VICTORINOX



## THE MARKET

Victorinox pocket knives, “the original Swiss Army Knives”, sell in more than 100 countries around the world. The largest customers are the United States and Germany. Of the 34,000 Swiss Army Knives and 43,000 other pocket tools and the same number of kitchen knives produced each day, 90 per cent are exported.

The earliest known folding knife is Roman, from the first century AD. The concept of a knife which incorporated its own sheath was attractive, and since then the world’s craftsmen have made literally thousands of variations on the theme. Many of the features available on Swiss Army Knives are not new. Knives produced in places like Maniago, Venice, and in Nogent in France offered attachments like scissors years before Karl Elsener sold his first knife to a Swiss Army officer.

The big difference is that whereas a pocket knife, no matter how sophisticated and advanced, is a pocket knife, the Victorinox Swiss Army Knife is an internationally recognised brand.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Victorinox is the largest employer in the Swiss Canton of Schwyz, and also the largest cutlery manufacturer in Europe.

Although the company now produces a huge range of products, the best-sellers around the world are still the many versions of the Classic knife

including the Standard, the Huntsman and the SwissChamp. Second, however, is the SwissCard, a radical move away from Karl Elsener’s original design. This plastic credit card, ideal for the executive, contains a blade, scissors, pin, nail file, screw-driver, pen, ruler, toothpick and tweezers.

## HISTORY

Folding knives go back to the Romans. By the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the Swiss Army first conceived of its multi-purpose tool, knives with different kinds of attachments were being made all over the world. The specifications of the knife the Swiss Army wanted were not particularly unusual, but the final result was elegant in its simplicity. Unfortunately there was no major knife production in Switzerland at the time, and so the army turned to a well-established steel producing centre. The knife was actually made in Solingen, in Germany.

Karl Elsener organised the Association of Swiss Master Cutlers and managed to win the contract to supply the knives. First deliveries were in 1891. But while the Swiss knives were good, the cutlers could not compete on price; a huge German factory could always make things more cheaply than a group of individual Swiss craftsmen. The others dropped away and eventually Elsener was left alone to struggle with the project. He almost went bankrupt, but this failure was to set the stage for his eventual success.

Elsener developed other multipurpose knives, and in 1897 he registered the design that was to make his fortune – the Officers’ and Sports Knife. It was lighter and more elegant than the Soldiers’ knife, and while the army still refused to buy it, individual officers were only too happy to pay a little extra for its higher quality.



With sales booming, Elsener faced a flood of imitations from Germany. He retained his market by constant innovation and by ensuring that his knives were of the highest quality, and in 1909 he found the perfect way of distinguishing his knives from those of imitators. He convinced the Swiss government to allow him to feature the country’s emblem,

the cross, on his products.

In the same year his mother died and he took her name, Victoria, as his company name. Elsener died in 1918, and in 1923 the company changed



ves and sells more than a quarter of its the USA, the acknowledged home of the nife. There are over 200 different styles, include promotional issues there are many s, including knives with the signatures of dents.

**DUCT**

iginal Swiss Soldier's Knife had four ents – blade, tin opener, punch and ver. Each has its own story. blade is obvious. Every soldier will have s for a knife, and it was not only Swiss who were being issued with single-bladed knives. The other nts are more specific. ut 1810, when food : preserved in sealed is, these were made of with a coating of tin side. They were ideal ations, but unfortunately you chisel and a heavy hammer them. When lighter tins, ere easier to open, were d fifty years later it made it soldiers should each own tin opener. 9, the army of the deration introduced e, which was issued iers. To disassemble or cleaning required iver, something that not normally carry ey had no other use

ge time, the Swiss ed horse and sturdy n ponies for transporting men and it, and the leather harness with which they tipped had a way of wearing out or It was useful for the men to be able to ning repairs, and a sharp, strong punch is eful tool for such work.

ot take a major conceptual jump to decide e four tools would be best and most tly fitted into the same space, and the f the Swiss Army Knife was born. Karl

The range of knives produced by Victorinox is extraordinary and growing all the time as new uses are identified. Some of the latest novelties are kits designed especially for in-line skaters, for mountain bikers (including a puncture repair kit), for golfers and the Cyber Tool for computer and electronics freaks.

Victorinox Swiss Army brand watches have recently been introduced, combining the two precision products for which Swiss craftsmen have become justly famous.



**PROMOTION**

The company sponsors many enterprises including a bobsledding team, the Victorinox hot air balloon, sailing and ultralight teams and the Flight Training Adventure Camps for young people.

Interestingly, much of the advertising that features Swiss Army Knives is actually produced by and for other companies. The Swiss Army Knife has been used as a symbol of versatility and quality in advertising by companies as diverse as Citroen and Toyota, Ricoh and Ocean Cruise AG, Springfield Armory and Minolta.

But probably the most effective promotion for the brand, apart from word of mouth, was the American television action series

'MacGyver'. Richard Dean Anderson played this former Special Forces Agent who saved the world each week on TV, not with a gun but with his trusty Swiss Army Knife.

**BRAND VALUES**

The Swiss Army Knife has become a symbol of fine design and craftsmanship throughout the world and the company has built on this reputation with the development of other products.

But the values of the Elsener family, which still owns the company now called Victorinox after nearly 120 years, go beyond the product itself. It has always been their goal to provide meaningful employment to the people of their home town and canton. According to senior managing director Karl Elsener, every person needs useful work and the opportunity to create meaning in their life. Victorinox offers workplaces as a contribution to the welfare of the people, and everything else, even the quality of their products, serves this purpose.

**THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT VICTORINOX**

- British climbers Doug Scott and Dougal Haston reached the top of Mt Everest only because Doug was able to free Dougal's iced-up oxygen system with his Swiss Army Knife.
- As early as 1978, NASA ordered 50 Swiss Army Knives for use by astronauts. The only modification was a Velcro strip to stop the knife from flying out of the astronaut's pocket.
- Aboard an Indian Airlines flight from Bombay to Bangalore, a child who was choking on a hard lolly was saved when a doctor performed a tracheotomy with a sharp Swiss Army Knife provided by another passenger.
- American President Lyndon B Johnson presented 4000 Swiss Army Knives engraved with his initials to guests at the White House.
- Professor John Ross, a Canadian surgeon, had his surgical bone saw stolen while working in a remote part of Uganda. For six months, until he could get a new saw, he used the saw on his Swiss Army Knife to perform amputations.
- Mountain climber Chris Bonnington said that he used every single blade on his Swiss Army Knife during his ascent of Annapurna in the Himalayas, except for the fish scaler.
- An American Admiral, flying a combat aircraft at high altitude across the Atlantic, was able to repair his broken oxygen mask only because he had his Swiss Army Knife with him. He landed safely.

