W.A. DE VIGIER
STIFTUNG

30 JAHRE
30 ANS
30 YEARS

SUPPORT FOR STARTUPS
Dear Readers,

When the W.A. de Vigier Prize was awarded for the first time 30 years ago, many of this year’s prize winners were just learning to walk. Back then, nobody was talking about startup promotion. But then came Bill de Vigier, who knew from his own experience just how important seed money could be. His goal was to pave the way for young Swiss entrepreneurs. For three decades, the W.A. de Vigier Foundation has awarded the highest endowed startup prize in Switzerland and it will continue to do so in the future. This magazine is one way in which we celebrate the past 30 years, as we remember Bill and his spirit, share inspiring success stories and thank all of you.

Bill de Vigier was a visionary. With his flexible metal scaffold product called Acrow Props, he built an internationally successful company and transformed the construction industry. His progressive thinking was also reflected in his introduction of the principle of «equal pay for equal work» in the 1940s. And as I’ve already mentioned, he was one of the very first people in our country to highlight the institutional promotion of startups. Bill was a man inspired by challenges who was not primarily motivated by material values. «A company is only as strong as the people behind it», he used to say. We uphold this maxim and pay close attention to the personality of the CEOs when selecting our Top 16. We look beyond the startups’ innovative ideas, to assess the people behind them. We are looking for strong characters who are capable of stepping back if someone on the team presents a better idea or is more qualified for a specific business task. We seek courageous and persistent leaders who can keep their ego in check – and that’s a rare mix.

Looking more closely at the ideas submitted, we ask ourselves: How many people does this innovation serve? What is the actual benefit of this idea for our society and the environment? Does the idea have the potential to be highly profitable? The solutions we promote should touch as many lives as possible over a long period of time, revolutionize industries and give us a glimmer of hope for the future.

And this is exactly what continues to inspire me personally in my work with startups: Every year I am amazed at how many bright minds passionately work on solutions for a better world. These young people have courage and give courage. And we want to make their ideas fly.

Enjoy the read.

Regula Buob
Managing Director W.A. de Vigier Foundation
INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL BORER
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION BOARD

What motivated you to take over the chairmanship of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation?
As a medical doctor, investor and shareholder, I am obviously interested in innovative ideas. In my role as president of the foundation board and as a juror, I especially enjoy the interaction with highly exciting young entrepreneurs. To also be able to support them is a very meaningful task. Together with the other board members, the managing director, our experts, ambassadors and the founding family, we keep Bill de Vigier’s spirit alive. That’s a true honor for me.

What goals have you pursued for the foundation since you took office?
Fortunately, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel, as the purpose of the foundation is clearly defined. Rather, we are continuing a very successful tradition. Personally, I always like to think about the overarching goal of promoting Swiss entrepreneurship. By this I mean that we are playing a part in that effort along with other institutions and complementing each other. In recent years, the focus has shifted from the submitted idea to the character of the CEO, i.e. the person behind the idea. We are not only looking for groundbreaking products and business ideas for the Swiss economy, but also for honorable and decent entrepreneurs who can serve as role models for other young entrepreneurs.

What future do you envision for the W.A. de Vigier Foundation in the Swiss startup ecosystem?
I have already mentioned that our foundation strongly focuses on the entrepreneurial personality. We do this because we need more pioneers in our country, people like Bill de Vigier – real role models who change society both with their ideas and with their spirit. And we also need CEOs who, if successful, will invest in startups again, not only with their money, but also with their know-how. This mechanism is not yet working optimally in Switzerland. Of course, the mechanism is not yet working optimally in Switzerland. In ten years’ time, our foundation wants to see at least twenty shining examples on the stage of the Swiss economy, who were once among the Top 10 in the race for the W.A. de Vigier Award.

How do you measure your success as a foundation?
The most direct evidence of the success of our commitment can be seen in the reports of the startups we support. We hear time and time again that investors call out of nowhere after a startup has been shortlisted as a Top 16 by our foundation board. This is exactly what recently happened to Peter Delhi, CEO of Audato. Making our shortlist alone is already considered a seal of quality that enjoys high credibility for both the Swiss border. In fact, in the past ten years all startups from the Top 10 have received follow-up financing. We make an effort to keep in touch with our alumni and are always happy to help. In addition to the prize money, coaching and leadership training, the access to our network is also crucial for the startups. The members of the foundation board have many connections, and our experts and ambassadors have also been able to open many doors. To quantify our success in numbers, I can say that the 118 award-winning startups to date have created an estimated 3,000 jobs.

When does a pitch really spark your interest and enthusiasm?
It is certainly different for each member of the foundation board. I am particularly excited when the person and the idea are closely interwoven and the person in front of us is both grounded and visionary. We are often faced with very young people who need the confidence to handle huge financing rounds. The jury members don’t always agree, either. We negotiate and argue hard, based on the available expertise, fact sheets, assessments, presentations and the submitted motivation videos. Our foundation board is privileged to take some risk in selecting groundbreaking ideas and does so completely independently. It’s a bit like pearl diving.

What is the future of the W.A. de Vigier Award?
The W.A. de Vigier Foundation was founded in 1987 by William Alfons de Vigier, an entrepreneur from Solothurn, whom everyone called Bill for short. The foundation actively promotes the Swiss economy by providing seed money and know-how to young people with innovative business ideas.

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Dr. Manuel Aschwanetti, CEO Optature (Winner 2009)

At age 24, Bill went to London with 50 pounds in his pocket and a good idea in mind. He experienced firsthand how difficult it was to turn a good idea into a business that would be successful with young, imaginative people. At the age of 89, Bill de Vigier accepted the «Solothurn Entrepreneur Award 2000». And it was in Solothurn where he bid farewell to the world two years later.

Narah de Vigier, wife and honorary member of the foundation board

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THE FIRST SWISS STARTUP AWARD
ABOUT THE FOUNDATION’S HISTORY

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William A. de Vigier was born on January 22, 1912 in the Sommerhaus Castle in Solothurn, Switzerland. His father was a respected local lawyer and his mother, Berthe de Vigier, a celebrated opera soprano. William A. de Vigier was an unparallelled businessman, who was appointed “Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE)” by Queen Elizabeth II in 1978. He was also awarded the honorary title of “Chevalier du Grand Ordre Suídois Nordstern” and “Grand Commander of Star of Africa (Liberia).”

De Vigier’s successes were recognized in various countries, even by the English Royal Family. As one of Britain’s most successful foreign entrepreneurs, he was appointed the limited potential of Switzerland and England, the larger entrepreneur de Vigier bravely sought new territories. He smartly founded Acrow Corp of America in the USA. More than 100 additional branches followed, including in South America, Iraq, South Africa, India and New Zealand. Acrow expanded its business activities worldwide with numerous products, primarily for the more efficient handling of construction projects. In the USA, for example, Acrow became an important manufacturer of steel bridge plates and girders; in Great Britain, the company produced equipment for the North Sea oil industry and emergency cooling systems for Polaris submarines. Acquisitions in the 1970s made Acrow one of the largest suppliers of mobile cranes and excavators.

At the height of his entrepreneurial career, Bill de Vigier led a global steel group with over 10,000 employees. Bill de Vigier also served on the board of directors of British Airways from 1973 to 1978. As a member of the first British trade delegation to Beijing in 1977, he helped negotiate landing rights for the airline in China.

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Bill de Vigier was an unparalleled businessman, who found inspiration in challenges. His sociability and cordiality shaped his character, and yet at the same time he was a tough businessman. He enjoyed talking to the taxi driver in New York, to the saleswoman in a Paris jeweller’s shop or to his butcher in Solothurn. He was always interested in the lives of others.

Closely connected to his homeland

Bill de Vigier was a member of the board of directors of 45 companies, including Vigier Zement. Although London was his business base, Solothurn always remained his true home, where he spent many summers at Schloss Sommerhaus and where he invested a large part of his time and assets in the W.A. de Vigier Foundation, which supports young Swiss entrepreneurs with the necessary seed capital. He still had an active lifestyle in his late eighties, travelled a lot and played tennis passionately. About Bill’s private life: In 1939 he married Betty Kendall-Quary, with whom he had two daughters, Jeannette and Anne. After the death of his first wife, he married Norah Bradley, who is still an active supporter of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation.

William A. de Vigier was an unequalled salesman who thrived on challenge.»

Financial Times 2003
11 million in seed money awarded

18 successful exits and M&A since 2002

3,000 jobs created

10 years only 5 bankruptcies

Over 200 applications per year since 2010

20% female applicants

75% of the startups prevail in the market
It all started at a family get-together when the two Studer brothers discussed more efficient ways of counting passengers at airports. Together with Markus Herrli, the brothers founded Xovis in 2008. The Bernese company sold sensors and evaluation software to airports around the world. Xovis continued to develop its sensor technology over the years and the breakthrough came in 2012 with the switch from monovision to 3D sensors, which could cover areas of up to 100 m². Suddenly the demand skyrocketed. Xovis adapted its technology for other customer segments such as shopping malls, museums and other crowded places. In 2016 Xovis made a successful exit, with the three founders Christian and David Studer as well as Markus Herrli staying on board as the management team. A weatherproof outdoor solution was added to the product portfolio and the US branch in Boston opened its doors. To celebrate its 10th anniversary, the company added AI elements to its 3D sensors, setting a new benchmark at the interface of people tracking and in-store analysis. Currently, Xovis' technology is making a significant contribution to the development of fully automated, cashier-free stores. Xovis wants to give something back to the startup ecosystem and this year donates a W.A. de Vigier Award in the amount of CHF 40,000.

AVA
25 pregnancies per day worldwide
Winner 2015

Ava is a femtech company based in Zurich and San Francisco. The company was founded in 2014 by Pascal Koenig, Lea von Bidder, Philipp Tholen and Peter Stein. Ava develops a fertility tracker worn on the wrist that calculates the fertile days in real time using various parameters and an algorithm. The method is protected by several patents. Shortly after the market launch in July 2016, a Series A financing round followed at the end of 2016. In spring 2018, Ava received USD 30 million in new investments. According to Pascal Koenig, the capital will be invested primarily in research and development. Ava has secured USD 42.6 million in investments to date. In autumn 2018, Ava received the Swiss Startup Award for the second time in a row. A jury of experts found Ava to be the most promising startup with the greatest international growth potential. Ava's long-term vision is to accompany women through their entire reproductive lifespan using database, clinically proven technology. At the end of 2018, Ava expanded and opened its first subsidiary in Asia. The Hong Kong site will meet local needs and conquer the Asian continent.

L.E.S.S.
The smart alternative to LED
Winner 2013

L.E.S.S. is a Lausanne-based cleantech company founded in 2012, known for its innovative lighting technologies. The company has developed nanoactive optical glass fibers with the diameter of a human hair, which produce bright, uniform light and require much less space and power than LED. The precision of the light exceeds all standards. Yann Tissot and Simon Rivier won all the important competitions in the Swiss startup scene and financed the initial phase with the prize money. In April 2015, the two founders concluded a financing round with CHF 3 million. This drove the marketing of the revolutionary lighting system forward. The company’s entry into the billion-dollar automatic image processing lighting market was sealed. L.E.S.S. recently entered the market for automotive exterior lighting. The thinness, the flexibility and the three-dimensional lighting properties of L.E.S.S.’ technology allow for the creation of unprecedented car lighting signatures. The first applications were exhibited at Geneva International Motor Show 2017.

ABIONIC
Better and faster diagnoses
Winner 2011

Abionic is originally a medtech startup from Lausanne and was founded in 2010 by Dr. Nicolas Durand and Dr. Ivan Mitriki as an EPFL spin-off. Abionic developed the abioSCOPE, an intuitive rapid diagnostic device that provides reliable results in clinical laboratories and at the point of care within a very short time and thus improves medical diagnoses. The first abioSCOPE applications are rapid tests for allergies, iron deficiency diseases and sepsis. Especially for sepsis, where one minute can decide between life and death, rapid diagnoses are of great importance. With abioSCOPE, Abionic markets the world’s only device that can diagnose sepsis within five minutes. In 2015, the first asthma and respiratory allergy devices were launched. In the same year, Abionic opened its US branch in Boston. Two years later, the company received U.S. Food and Drug Administration registration for rapid diagnostic testing. In spring 2018, Abionic completed its third financing round of CHF 20 million. The headquarters remain in Lausanne.
SUCCESS STORIES

SELEXIS
Key technology at the interface of scientific innovation and the production of life-saving drugs
Winner 2001

Selexis, a Geneva-based biotech company founded in 2001, develops breakthrough technologies to accelerate the development of highly productive mammalian cell lines for research, preclinical, clinical and industrial protein drug production. The SUREtechnology platform developed by Selexis enables the fast, stable and cost-effective production of almost all recombinant proteins. This highly specialized technology and the company’s expertise enable Selexis’ global customers to bring more innovative and effective drugs to market. In June 2017, Selexis was acquired by the Japanese company JSR Life Sciences Corporation. After the very successful exit, the founders Igor Fisch and Nicola Mermod and their core team will continue in their roles.

NEEO
A single remote control for all devices
Winner 2015

The startup NEEO from Solothurn developed a system that connects and controls all electronic devices in a home with just one remote control. NEEO consists of two individual parts: The «brain» as a control centre with an elegant aluminum case and a touchscreen remote control. The system is compatible with up to 60,000 devices of different generations from the past ten years. Raphael Oberholzer and Oliver Studer spent a year developing their idea after the company was founded in 2014. At the beginning of 2015, they raised the actual seed capital on Kickstarter. Within 29 days, they collected over USD 15 million from more than 60,000 supporters worldwide. This marked a record for a Swiss project and enabled the first round of production. Millions more were added through a financing round with private investors in the USA and Switzerland. NEEO remote controls entered the market in 2017. NEEO founded a subsidiary in the Silicon Valley, where the design, marketing and sales department were based. In February 2019, NEEO was bought by the American company Control4. Control4 is one of the world’s leading suppliers of automation and network systems for households and businesses. The 35-person team is currently conquering the US market.

SPOTLIGHTS

CUTISS
Despite surgical interventions, people with skin injuries suffer from disfiguring, restrictive scars and often have to undergo further surgeries. CUTISS takes a tissue sample from a discreet spot and grows relatively large quantities of personalized and healthy skin in a short period of time. Scarring after transplantation is minimal and the patient’s quality of life improves.

SUPERCOMPUTING SYSTEMS
With more than 120 engineers, SCS carries out feasibility studies, system designs and sophisticated hardware and software developments on behalf of its customers. SCS covers a broad spectrum of services from control platforms and database applications, sensor technology and high performance computing, digital image processing to signal analysis and processing.

AUDATIC
Hearing aids often let their wearers down in noisy situations. Audatic uses the latest methods of artificial intelligence to filter out annoying background noise and significantly enhance the listening experience. Hearing aid users can control and adjust the system via their smartphone, such that whether they are in a restaurant, on the road or on a business trip – thanks to Audatic’s technology, they can once again participate in conversations with more joy and self-confidence.

MOLECULAR PARTNERS
Molecular Partners is a biopharmaceutical company dedicated to advancing modern medicine and significantly improving the management of serious diseases. The Zurich-based company is developing a new class of potent, specific and versatile small protein therapies called DARPin® Therapeutics. Molecular Partners is the first W.A. de Vigier Award winner to be listed on the stock exchange.

PIAVITA
PiaVita developed a veterinary device for measuring vital data on horses. The animal wears the device as a belt on its fur. For the first time, medically precise measurements in the animal’s natural environment are possible - completely stress-free, from a distance and around the clock. The 35-person team is currently conquering the US market.

GETYOURGUIDE
GetYourGuide, with offices in Zurich, Berlin and Las Vegas, is the largest booking platform for tours, attractions and excursions. Almost 20 million tickets sold, 30,000 tourist experiences in 3,000 destinations around the world, 500 employees and four financing rounds totalling USD 160 million to date testify to its great success.

FEMTOPRINT
FEMTOprint from Ticino developed a 3D printing platform for the high-precision production of glass micro parts with optical, fluidic and mechanical properties. The target markets are the precision mechanics and watchmaking industries, optics and photonics, natural sciences, biomed and medtech, microelectronics and R&D centres.

HOCOMA
Hocoma has grown from a startup to a global leader in the development, production and marketing of robotic and sensor-based devices for functional movement therapy. The versatile products are used successfully in clinics and research institutes all over the world. In 2017, Hocoma merged with DIH International of Hong Kong and entered into a partnership with Motek. Today Hocoma employs 150 people in 25 countries.
MEMBERS OF THE FOUNDATION BOARD 1987 TO TODAY

B
Baldesberger, Fides P. 2004 – 2012
Bischof, Pirmin 2012 – today
Borer, Daniel 2013 – today

C
Cerutti, Peter 1991 – 1993

D
de Vigier, Bill (founder) 1987 – 1998
de Vigier, Jeanette 1987 – 2011
(de Vigier, Jeanette) (Honorary Member)
de Vigier, Norah (Honorary Member)

F
Froidevaux, Charles 1988 – 2010

G
Graf, Beat 1996 – today
Grisard, Felix 2013 – today

H
Hoffmann, Sven 2005 – today

J
Jornod, Etienne 2010 – 2012

K
Kunz, Felix 2013 – 2018

N
Nicod, Alain 2013 – today

P
Petignat, Guy 2013 – today

R
Rappold, Jörg N. 1987 – 2004

S
Scheidegger, Urs 1987 – 2013
Strebel, Jean-Claude 1987 – 1999
Suter, Moritz 1998 – 2013
Sweetbaum-de Vigier, Anne 1987 – 2013
(Sweetbaum-de Vigier, Anne) (Honorary Member)

T
Thamke, Ernst 1993 – 2003

U
Uhrmann, Ernst 1987 – 2013

Z
Zwygart, Franz 1987 – 1994

Management 1987 until today
(In alphabetical order)

Bubb, Regula 2015 – today
Graf, Beat 1997 – 1999
Vuilleumier, Jean Pierre 2009 – 2015

OUR FIRST-CLASS EXPERTS
Battaglia, Reto
Blarer, Stefan
Bouwmi, Jasper
Brand, Christian
Brunner, Peter
Cattaneo, Stefano
Cleessen, Ulrich
Dibendurfer, Thomas
Gerster, Bernhard
Gobrecht, Jens
Guenat, Olivier
Gygax, Ruedi
Harmschmidt, Jost
Hell, Matthias
Mazza, Edouard
Moser, Markus
Reinert, Felix
Richner, Peter
Sauter, Michael
Schwab, Wilfried
Seth, Anil
Signist, Martin
Vidarius, Heiko
Weber, Christine
Zambrino, Franco

OUR ESTEEMED AMBASSADORS
Bagnoud, Frédéric
Baldas, Artur
Baldegger, Rico
Barberi, Alcide
Blancher, Michel
Burckhardt, Peter A.
Christen, Gert
Christie, Jurgen
Frischmehrt, Peter
Gantenbein, Pascal
Hausammann, René
Heimann, Thomas
Henggeker, Wolfgang
Holling, Matthias
Kaiser, Fabian
Lallement, Jean-Philippe
Lebret, Hervé
Lingg, Hansruedi
Martin-Garcia, Jesus
Mettler, Heimann
Millard, John
Nydfigel, Nathalie
Reutmann, Herbert
Schiliger, Folkirk
Schumann, Thomas
Selim, Barbel
Siegwart, Roland
Simeon, Alex
Walker, Joseph

A BIG THANK YOU
# Winners and Top 10

## Winners

**2019**
- PXL Vision AG
- Scowo AG
- Swiss Motion Technologies SA
- T3 Pharmaceuticals AG
- Vetorex AG
- Mirrakoi SA
- MOBBOT SA
- PharmaBiome AG
- Pomic Medical AG
- Sleepiz AG

**2018**
- nanoleq GmbH
- MyoSwiss AG
- AUDATIC GmbH
- intVoll

**2017**
- SUN Bioscience SA
- certus molecular diagnostics ag
- CUTISS AG
- Optimo Medical AG
- Skypull SA
- Vlbwife GmbH

**2016**
- Gamaya SA
- NanoLife SA
- Peripal AG
- Pregnolia AG
- UrbanAlps AG
- AVA AG
- ComfyLight AG
- Flyability SA
- 1Drop Diagnostics Sàrl

**2015**
- caliscon AG
- Geosatis SA
- Memedis AG
- SWISS MEDENDI SA
- Visionarity AG

**2014**
- Amphasys AG
- Gastros AG
- L.E.S.S. SA
- Newscron SA
- SWISSsto12 SA

**2013**
- Adimicso AG
- Skybotix AG
- VISsee AG
- Aimago SA
- greenTEG AG
- nanotion AG
- Squirrel (Nektoon AG)
- Pearltect AG
- Celerotom AG
- MOTILIS MEDICA SA
- Optotune AG
- SUN_D
- Zurich Instruments AG

**2012**
- Advanced Metal Technology AG
- Bazzio AG
- Epithelix Sàrl
- MEISTERfilter AG
- Nanovis GmbH
- Arktis Radiation Detectors Ltd

**2011**
- Howasau AG
- meteobelux AG
- Redbiotec AG
- Snowpulse SA
- HeiQ Materials AG
- spinomix SA
- Stakraft AG

**2008**
- Advanced Metal Technology AG
- Bazzio AG
- Epithelix Sàrl
- MEISTERfilter AG
- Nanovis GmbH
- Arktis Radiation Detectors Ltd

## Top 10

**2018**
- ACUBE Technology Ltd.
- AgroSustain GmbH
- hemotune AG
- Sensoryx AG
- Touchless Automation GmbH

**2017**
- Cortexia SA
- CyanoGuard AG
- Irsweep AG
- MaxWell Biosystems AG
- Privately SA

**2016**
- EcoRobotix AG
- FEMTOprint AG
- Inositec AG
- PaVita AG
- Vid Systems AG

**2015**
- Versantis AG
- ScanTrust SA
- rcmicro AG
- Lunaphore Technologies SA
- Avance Medical Sàrl

**2014**
- OsmoBlue Sàrl
- ProVitaTec
- helmedica AG
- Glycemic AG
- ActLight SA

**2013**
- Ampard AG
- Gonnado GmbH
- Monolitix AG
- Orphanbiotec AG
- Winterthur Instruments AG
- Bcom Ltd
- KB Medical

**2012**
- taboobreaker
- Altolight AG
- CASscination AG
- compliantconcept AG
- daCarbo AG
- Pain-Hawk

**2010**
- Dacuda AG
- RehaxOne Sàrl
- Aquatis Medical Devices and Systems
- NetGuardians
- HighStep Systems AG

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**W.A. de Vigier Stiftung**

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