

**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. In ten years’ time, our foundation wants to see at least twenty such 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 Diehl, CEO of Audatic. Making our shortlist alone is already considered a seal of quality that enjoys high credibility far beyond 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?**

This 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.