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Nationality: Swiss

Net worth: we did not ask :-)

Known for: Farmy.ch, students.ch, Swiss Life Lab, Panaman Consulting

Passion: "value our time and happiness more than economic success"

Hello Adrian, you have been quite an Internet entrepreneur in Switzerland. You founded and exited several companies and now are an active startup investor and consulting corporations through your consultancy panaman.com. Tell us about your secret to be a successful entrepreneur in Switzerland please.

Obviously, there is not one single success factor, but a set of skills and also favorable circumstances and – I believe – sometimes just pure luck. Being a focused strong personality helps, as well as being at the right time at the right place. When I invest in a company, I first look at the team and secondly at the bet they are making. For example, Farmy.ch 's bet, 5 years ago, was that people will buy more and more local, organic food online. They were right.

Now, the Unicorn Switzerland event is about creating large high-tech success stories. Large meaning jobs in the hundreds or thousands. One buzzword for this is unicorns. Why did we not have them yet in Switzerland?

First of all: Switzerland is small. We have 4 languages, our own currency and are not in the EU. That might be good for us as a country, but it's rather hindering to scale a company very fast. Secondly, we have a huge risk aversion

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years and around 80 million investment capital. In Switzerland, many have the money, but few have the guts to fund that.

What could be done in Switzerland to loosen up this “risk aversion”. Do you see this as a cultural problem as well? We just don’t have the DNA needed? Re. size, well Israel is then an exception? They are smaller than Switzerland and only surrounded by enemies.

Culture can change and I think it is happening in Switzerland. There are several growth funds now with impressive firepower (e.g. Aravis Growth or the Swiss Entrepreneurs Fund) that are actively financing ventures in their growth phase. And I think that - with a mixed outlook on the stock markets – more money will flow into startups and private equity. I’m not a specialist on the Israeli startup culture, but I think they might take bigger risks, have a huge competitive advantage in the military / IT security area and have a closer relationship to the US and US capital markets to scale their companies.

Statistics show that all of Europe is lagging behind the US, Israel and China also in relative terms. We just don’t create enough of them. Do you share the opinion that we need them in order to keep our full employment in the future?

Not necessarily. To have the focus solely on unicorns can also have its downsides. Too many companies don’t get funded, because they don’t tick all the unicorn boxes, but would otherwise be good prospering companies. Often not employment, but greed is a main driver. To have a billion-dollar exit is nice as an investor but is not necessarily the best driver for employment or long-term success in a company.

Where shall the jobs then come from if not from large high-tech success stories? I don’t think the financial services industry will create them rather cut thousands. Or you envision a country with thousands of small companies with 10-50 employees?

The employee per revenue ratio is massively smaller in the new tech stars companies such as Google or Facebook compared to “bricks and mortar” companies. I actually don’t think that there is a productive job for everybody in the future. Personally, I believe we might have a much more sustainable and satisfying life / work balance, where few companies generate a lot of tax revenue, which will be re-distributed in one form or another. Also, I hope that we will measure economic growth and personal consumption less and value

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nursing or teaching will have a higher value than they have now. My next entrepreneurial bet will be on this development. I think a big change is coming to consumer behavior. People want more sustainable, more meaningful and honest products and services and will define themselves less through what they work and more through who they are.

You now also have a mandate as CEO of the Swiss Life Lab and are investing into startups there. What are the main goals of this in terms of securing or creating jobs?

I think to be innovative and learn from startups helps large corporations to secure or adapt their business models and become ready for the future. Digitalization means more than just more IT. It's a driver for customer centricity and a force for information transparency. It puts a lot of emphasis on the importance of customer experience of your products, services and the way you are engaging with your customers. Startups help us to learn this and they can help to transform a company, hence securing jobs and wealth well into the future.

Thanks a lot Adrian. We look forward to having you at the event.

EVENT DETAILS

Date: March 28, 2019, in the morning

Location: Holiday Inn, Messe Zürich

Website: <https://www.unicorn-swiss.ch/>

Partner event : "5. Silicon Valley meets Switzerland" - www.svms-event.ch

Sign on early as seats are limited

[Tickets & Website](#)
