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Swiss Ambassador to the United States

“Swiss companies, as a group, are the sixth largest investor in the United States.”



MARTIN NAVILLE
CEO of Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce

“In the last two years, more than \$1.1 billion were invested in ETH start-ups.”



JOËL MESOT
President of ETH Zurich



Panoramic view of Lucerne old town.

Swiss cleantech for a better world

Green solutions developed in Switzerland lead the way as global businesses gear up for major sustainability push.

By MARCO SANTI

First thoughts about Switzerland’s leading products run to cheese, chocolate and watches, but companies gearing their products to green initiatives are certainly becoming a trademark for one of the most sustainable countries in the world.

Indeed, Swiss companies in a wide range of industries have not only embraced sustainability, they have made it a significant part of their core strategy. This isn’t merely

a good business practice or opportunity; it’s enshrined in the country’s constitution, with the aim of “a balanced relationship between nature and its ability to renew itself, on the one hand, and the demands placed by the human race, on the other”.

Like other signatory countries of the Paris Climate Agreement, Switzerland seeks to attain climate neutrality by 2050. This goal, however, seemingly hit a snag in June when voters narrowly rejected a law aiming to cut greenhouse gas emissions which have been rising faster than in other coun-

SWITZERLAND IN NUMBERS



Ranked 3rd in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index

Source: Environmental Performance Index



Named world’s most innovative country for 10 consecutive years

Source: World Intellectual Property Organization



Most patent applications per capita in Europe

Source: The European Patent Office



300+ start-ups founded each year

Source: Swisslinx



3% of GDP spent on R&D each year

Source: Swisslinx

“The key to sustainability is a circular economy. We design our products on a certified cradle-to-cradle basis, so they can be recycled and their overall carbon footprint can be reduced.”



AXEL RITZBERGER
CEO of UTZ Group

tries. The so-called CO2 law was aimed at targeting various emitters such as cars, air traffic and industry, with those reducing their emissions standing to benefit.

Climate change is certainly an important topic for a country where mountains and winter sports are part of the national identity. According to a report issued by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) in 2020, the average temperature has risen by two degrees Celsius and greenhouse gas emissions have increased sixfold between 1900 and 2018, causing glaciers to gradually recede. Facing such climate challenges, Swiss businesses are increasingly embracing sustainability as a business model, with solutions that have a global reach, and thus potentially a significant influence on reducing CO2 emissions and other types of pollution.

Oerlikon CEO Roland Fischer might well be speaking for a number of Swiss companies when he says “sustainability has always been a key element of our business and strategy,” and sees innovation as a way to achieve it. Holcim is one such company pursuing this idea, having combined its sustainability and innovation business portfolios under one executive, and introducing

products such as its “green” concrete with a 30 to 100 percent lower carbon footprint than traditional concrete.

“I have one word for you: plastics”

Those who have seen the film “The Graduate” are likely familiar with the quote “I have one word for you: plastics.” Plastic is becoming a major part of the sustainability conversation and the Paris Climate Agreement is encouraging industries to find new solutions.

The UTZ Group is a family business founded in Switzerland in 1947, with locations currently on three continents, and a particular eye on expanding in the U.S. Plastic is a material offering superior characteristics for packaging in terms of technical and physical considerations in relation to weight and “is only harmful when it is single-use,” according to company CEO Axel Ritzberger. Key to sustainability is a circular economy, and accordingly “UTZ designs products on a certified cradle-to-cradle basis, so they can be recycled and their overall carbon footprint can be reduced”, Ritzberger says. Like counterparts at much larger public companies, UTZ is ramping up investment in the U.S., to the tune of millions of dollars in the “double-digit” range, including a new production site.

Another interesting enterprise is Bern-based BKW, an international energy and infrastructure company offering integrated solutions in energy, buildings and infrastructure. BKW CEO Suzanne Thoma sees challenges posed by customers as an opportunity. “Buildings can be important sources of energy production,” she says, which offers the company a growing market.

New approaches are not coming just from the business world. One only needs to look at the canton of Basel-Stadt, where new and innovative business models are taking shape in several former industrial areas, especially relating to circular economy.

Yale University’s Environmental Performance Index suggests that innovation is good not only for the bottom line, but it also translates into sustainability metrics, with Switzerland ranked third behind Denmark and Luxembourg in 2020’s EPI. By adopting a global outlook, Swiss enterprises are embracing challenges as a business opportunity to make the world more sustainable. ■

By CAROLINE VIEIRA LIMA
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Could any other company boast of having reused almost 50 million tons of waste in a single year? Jan Jenisch, CEO of Holcim, told us how the company—with over \$25 billion in net sales and 70,000 employees—is leveraging its sheer scale to transform global construction into a genuinely sustainable business.

With talk of trillions of dollars in U.S. infrastructure investment this year, how will demand for your products change?

The U.S. is our single most important market—\$6 billion, or 20 percent of sales—especially since our acquisition of Firestone Building Products in January 2021. Another 10 percent of sales are in neighboring Canada. President Biden’s Build Back Better Plan combines economic assistance with sustainability. In order to tackle the latter, they aim to improve energy efficiency, insulation, building standards, and to lower the CO2 footprint in construction, all of which we are perfectly positioned to support, particularly through our Firestone roof insulation product range. The new functionalities offered within the flat roofing segment include insulation, solar, and green roofs. We see our share in a growing U.S. market at above 20 percent, a conservative estimate. The U.S. is our priority for new factories and new product lines, but we also intend to expand to Europe and Latin America with our roof products.

How would you assess your clients’ interest in sustainable products?

There is huge interest. This year saw the global launch of our ECOPact concrete—a product produced with considerably reduced CO2 emissions. Even



JAN JENISCH
CEO of Holcim

Construction leader Holcim set to change the way we build

How has the world’s leading building materials firm become the second biggest waste reuser globally? With the most ambitious 2030 emissions reduction target in the industry, Holcim has put sustainability front and center.

our own sales teams were surprised at the level of demand, and interest is growing with increased awareness among buyers. This is not only a trend in markets with associated CO2

costs, like Europe, but also in the U.S. ECOPact is fully scalable. We can also add up to one-fifth of recycled demolition waste from old concrete or bricks from existing structures,

recycle them in our plant, and add them back into the product. This was first done in Switzerland, since building norms in the country are demanding. This is not yet the case in other markets, where recycled content is usually less than one-fifth, but it’s a great start.

Can you elaborate on Holcim’s best-in-class approach to sustainability?

Sustainability is a challenge for the entire industry. It should not be seen as a race to beat others. We want to be the leader because someone must take the

“In the future we will have a different Holcim, with a stronger division of products, and a vastly reduced CO2 footprint.”

lead. With our pledge for “net zero”, we are fully aligned with the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). We have merged our sustainability and innovation departments under Magali Anderson, our Chief Sustainability and Innovation Officer and one of the ten people on the executive committee. We have 20 projects exploring carbon capture technology, including an ambitious one in the U.S. which has support from government agencies there.


Is the topic of sustainability important to Holcim’s investors?

This has changed over the last two years, and sustainability-related criteria are a key consideration for most investors now. The major rating agencies also take into account the success of companies’ sustainability efforts.

What is Holcim’s brand

HOLCIM IN NUMBERS

 **20 %**
of sales from the U.S.

 **20**
carbon capture projects

 **1912**
year of foundation

 **70,000**
employees

recognition in the U.S. beyond the investor community and your industrial partners?

It is changing because of the growing importance of sustainability. In the past, we were mostly B2B partners for local contractors and construction companies. Through our sustainability-centric products, we are bypassing the contractor and directly specifying the product with homeowners,

civil engineers, and architects. For example, George Washington University decided that ECOPact was the best concrete to build a new residential unit in line with platinum-status LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) specifications. This all means we must put greater effort into our branding and relationships. Firestone has been doing that for a long time because roofing is an essential element of any building, and it not only has an acquisition cost but also requires maintenance.

Where do you want to take Holcim?

The merger from 2015 is complete, we closed the legacy offices, focused on local markets, cleared \$7 billion worth of debt, and took a leadership position to make the company operational again. It would not have been possible to take over a company like Firestone Building Products three years ago because of our balance sheet. But now it’s done, and recently Standard & Poor’s issued a positive outlook on our credit rating. We have done a really great job putting the company on a solid footing. Today we are a different company, and our journey for the years ahead is about transforming to become the leader in innovative and sustainable building solutions. In the future we will have a different Holcim, with a stronger division of solutions and products, and a vastly reduced CO2 footprint. ■



Apple’s headquarters in Cupertino, California, uses Firestone solar roofing



Could green cement be the future of construction?

By KEVIN MARTIN
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Concrete has been used for over 2,000 years, but what will the concrete of the future look like?

Industrial concrete production has become almost synonymous with air pollution. But this is coming to an end, as the largest players in the construction world embrace powerful new methods of production. Enter “green concrete”—more simply put, carbon-neutral concrete manufacturing—the logical result of vastly improved technology used in production. Through a holistic approach to reducing emissions during operations, every effort to minimize corollary pollution is made.

Take ECOPact, a range of green concrete that generates between 30 percent and 100 percent less air contamination compared to regular concrete production. Available since July 2020, such products allow clients to choose the degree to which they want to offset their carbon footprint. In the case of ECOPact, recycled aggregates can also be mixed in, with up to a fifth of the final product being formed from reused materials.

But Green construction is also about incorporating new technology into existing buildings. Solar panels have been added to structures for quite some time, but firms like Firestone Building Products, a leader in sustainable flat roofing solutions, are improving the technology. Utilized on a grand scale by world-class universities and progressive corporates like Apple, IKEA, and Tesla, these functional-but-aesthetically pleasing roof solutions are becoming iconic elements of contemporary architecture. ■



ROLAND FISCHER
CEO of Oerlikon Group

“We enable key industries to reduce their environmental footprint”

From aerospace to automotive, power generation to fiber production, Oerlikon’s technology is crucial for many key sectors. With such a capacity to impact the global economy, the firm’s targets for sustainability are potentially transformative.

If you don’t work in the aerospace, automotive, or fiber production sectors, you might not have heard of Oerlikon, but there is a good chance you are currently wearing clothes made with their technology. Heavily invested in the U.S. market, CEO Roland Fischer tells us how sustainability is a central element of their strategy.

What is Oerlikon’s current standing as a global corporate citizen?

Sustainability has always been a key element of our business and strategy; it is not a new project that we just launched. Perhaps because of our Swiss nature, we never made a big deal out of it. Our solutions enable key industries like automotive, power generation, and aerospace to reduce their environmental footprint. For example, in the aerospace industry, we create

abradable coating systems which allow engines to optimize their compressors and fuel consumption. The aerospace industry reduced CO2 emissions by 25 million tons in 2019 by using our solutions, which is more than half of Switzerland’s annual emissions. To put things into perspective, in 2019 Oerlikon’s total operations produced only 158,000 tons of CO2 emissions. We decided that now is the time to take inventory of everything we do in terms of sustainability

and to publish it as a report. Additionally, we are making a commitment to achieve specific targets by 2030. These include the use of 100 percent renewable energy, and directing 100 per-

“The aerospace industry reduced CO2 emissions by 25 million tons in 2019 by using our solutions, which is more than half of Switzerland’s annual emissions.”

cent of our R&D activities to projects that have a positive sustainability impact.


What is the importance of the U.S. market for the future of Oerlikon?

There is no question that the United States is the biggest and most important growth market for us. Our major investments in recent years were in the U.S. We built a \$55 million state-of-the-art R&D production facility in Huntersville, North Carolina, and another manufacturing facility in Plymouth, Michigan, worth another \$50 million, and we recently announced the opening of another coating center in the U.S. To date, we have 32 sites and a total of 1,200 employees in the U.S. We very much appreciate that the U.S. has rejoined the Paris Climate Accords and World Health Organization under the Biden-Harris Administration, and emphasized engagement with the EU, UK, and other European partners like Switzerland.

How does Oerlikon impact the lives of the average American?

You cannot buy our products on the street or at airports. We are a supplier and provider of technological solutions. Oerlikon’s coatings dramatically change

OERLIKON IN NUMBERS

 **100%** renewables use by 2030

 **5.2%** of revenue invested in R&D

 **32** sites across the U.S.

 **1,200** staff in the U.S.

the function of a product—be it a tool, a drill, or a bearing in a gearbox. End-consumers might not be aware of what we do, but Oerlikon and its sub-brands are very well-known in the aerospace, automotive, and fiber producing industries.

What role could additive manufacturing play in the 4th Industrial Revolution?

We are strong believers in this technology and have made substantial investments, in-

cluding our production sites in the U.S. In the aerospace industry, challenges such as the Boeing 737 MAX crisis have slowed the introduction of new technologies. Additive manufacturing technologies have a very promising future, but it will take time. There are other applications for additive manufacturing technologies in oil and gas, subsea, space activity, or rockets, where weight considerations are essential. It will make up a large share of future production technologies.

How is Oerlikon’s expertise being applied to antiviral technology in the pandemic era?

Currently the U.S. and the world at large are focused on winning the battle against COVID-19. Under the international research program RELIANT, Oerlikon is developing and producing durable antiviral and antibacterial surface solutions for aviation and other industries to allow the safe return of air passengers. Using our many years of expertise in the development of modern materials, we aim to reduce the risk of infection in the passenger cabin from plastic surfaces where frequent contact with plastic components such as armrests can raise the risk of infection. With these materials, we can also reduce aircraft weight to improve fuel efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.■



Skilled staff work with Oerlikon’s Metco Laser Cladding

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GERT DE WINTER
CEO of BALOISE Group

Safe yet innovative

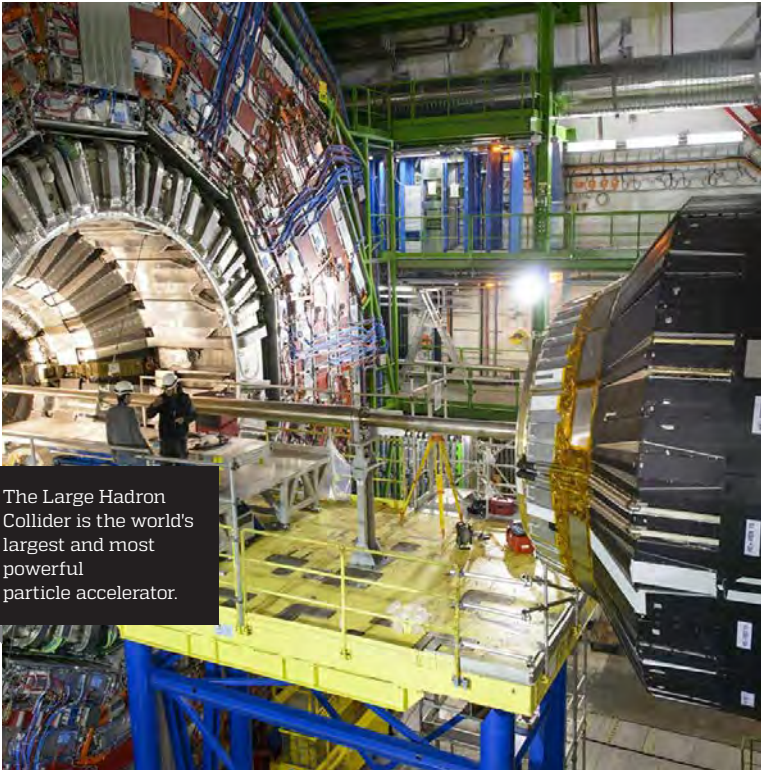
Founded in 1863, the Baloise Group is a byword for safety, as one of Europe's leading insurers. Today, CEO Gert De Winter explains, innovation is central to its operations, as it goes beyond insurance to offer new services for a digital age.

What conclusions did Baloise draw from 2020?

Thanks to our sustainable and successful business model, we delivered a rock-solid 2020 result despite the impact from COVID-19 claims. Our 'Simply Safe' strategy is based on the belief that motivated employees mean satisfied clients, bringing growth and success. We aim to be in the top 10 percent best employers in Europe's financial services industry in 2021, and the top five percent overall in Europe by 2025.

What is the role of innovation in driving Baloise's growth?

We are one of the most innovative players in the European financial industry and want to go beyond insurance. Our mobility and home ecosystems include a portfolio of companies, investments, own developments, and partnerships. The challenge is to make them work as one, generating value for clients. Our core business is used for scaling startups that innovate and generate opportunities for cross- and upselling, meaning more customer contact. ■



The Large Hadron Collider is the world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator.

Innovation nation

Switzerland continuously ranks top as one of world's most innovative nations.

By **MARCO BA**st
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You might be surprised to find that U.S. Vice-President Al Gore didn't invent the internet and Velcro, which gained fame during the Apollo space program, was not a NASA invention, but rather a brainchild of a Swiss engineer Georges de Mestral.

Switzerland has a history of innovation from the things in everyday use to cutting edge physics and technology. Favorable tax structures, world-class universities and a very livable environment make Switzerland an attractive proposition for both companies and talent.

Switzerland boasts two of the world's leading technical schools, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in

Zurich and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL) in Lausanne. ETH was sixth in the QS World University Rankings in 2020, just behind the California Institute of Technology and ahead of the University of Cambridge, while EPFL came in 18th. Both schools come with far lower tuition costs than their U.S. rivals. According to ETH, 21 Nobel Prizes have been awarded to researchers who have had a connection to the school, including Albert Einstein. As ETH's President Joël Mesot explains, "we have the means to take on high-risk research projects that might have an outcome in 20 to 30 years".

This culture of innovation with technologies of global interest is a fundamental reason why the World Intellectual Property Organization named Switzerland the most innovative country in the world for the tenth

consecutive year in their Global Innovation Index 2020.

Switzerland Innovation

Switzerland regularly tops European and global rankings for most innovative country, but that does not mean that it can rest on its laurels.

"There is strong competition," acknowledges Raymond Cron, CEO of Switzerland Innovation, the public-private partnership that provides an ecosystem facilitating the collaboration between leading universities and existing high-tech businesses. "We need to promote the country, making clear its strengths and advantages, but also to offer the right services and incentives to facilitate the transfer of companies' talents and researchers to our innovation parks."

“Switzerland Innovation facilitates collaboration between companies, startups, and universities to find solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges.”



RAYMOND CRON
CEO of Switzerland Innovation

Switzerland Innovation recently added a new park, for a total of six nationwide. As the country's rivals strive to increase their own competitiveness, the organization is more important than ever as what its CEO calls "a breeding ground for innovation" – creating opportunities for established companies, start-ups, and universities in Europe and beyond "to find solutions to some of the world's

most pressing challenges". The U.S. is a particular focus, with a dedicated Switzerland Innovation official now established in Boston and reaching out to companies with a technological bent.

Among the powerful arguments wielded by Switzerland Innovation are the track record of local businesses in constantly improving their products, services, and processes by investing heavily in R&D, and the support provided by the authorities to world-beating research institutes. The result is a high number of patent applications relative to population and a steady stream of innovative products and solutions. Switzerland Innovation builds on and renews that legacy, forming a network of talent and expertise that enables company researchers to collaborate with local scientists to develop marketable products and services. Based near Geneva, the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) is a lure for physicists around the world who engage in research on the Large Hadron Collider. In 2013, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Peter W. Higgs and Francois Englert "for the discovery of a mechanism that contributes to our understanding of the origin of mass of subatomic particles, also referred to as the God's Particle". Similarly, while not a Swiss invention per se, Tim Berners-Lee, a British scientist working at CERN in Lausanne in 1989, is credited with inventing the World Wide Web.

Zooglers

Google is among the companies that have recognized the value proposition in Switzerland, having chosen Zurich for one of the company's largest engineering sites. Google and Zurich have found a synergy to the extent that its employees are referred to as "Zooglers." The site has themed lounges with one having "breathtaking vistas" of the Alps, making it "the real mountain view", relating to Google's global headquarters, which are located in Mountain View, California. ■



DOMINIQUE MÉGRET
Head of Swisscom Ventures

“Technology and money help solve the world's most acute problems”

How has Swisscom Ventures evolved over the years?

We are Switzerland's largest venture capital firm and the venture capital arm of the leading Swiss telecom provider, with \$600 million under management advisory. Since 2007, we invested in over 70 technology companies in Switzerland and in Silicon Valley, offering start-ups access to technical infrastructure and market channels, in addition to financing.

How do you differentiate yourselves from competitors?

In addition to profitability, we help start-ups by adding strategic value, successfully replicating the venture capital model that has had tremendous impact on the development of the U.S. over 50 years.

What are the main synergies between Switzerland and the U.S.?

Establishing a presence in the U.S. is mandatory to reach international investors and scale, but Swiss companies stay close to the local ecosystem to benefit from R&D. U.S. companies choose Switzerland as an ideal European base due to its access to key markets and top local talent. Swisscom has also been named among the world's most sustainable Telcos. ■



THOMAS TARONI
Co-founder, Chairman and CTO of Phoenix Systems

“We connect data centers in the U.S. as well as Switzerland”

By PEDRO AMARAL
pedro@the-businessreport.com

Phoenix Systems offers tailored software and hosting infrastructure from one source. By intertwining both components, they can generate unparalleled efficiencies and security for your business, as Thomas Taroni, its Chairman, explains.

In such a dynamic field, what are your competitive advantages? Coming from the big data space, we are aware of the importance of rock-solid infrastructure. We decided to partner with IBM because of their mainframe technology, which can handle massive

workloads. This partnership is crucial for our success. Our main expertise is in the development of microservices architecture, and our proprietary software is run on IBM LinuxONE servers.

We have data center partners around the globe and we control all relevant processes on behalf of our clients, assuring confidential computing. Most global clients use a combination of clouds from different providers. We attach the missing parts through a confidential computing* product where specific codeware is required to ensure banking or military level security. Confidential computing is important today for everyone who uses the internet, making it a ma-

jor growth field for the future.

What is your experience of working with U.S. stakeholders?

We connect data centers in the U.S. as well as Switzerland, and we have set up local companies to conduct our business. A group structure with companies in both countries makes things seamless, with just a small delay in connectivity because of the long distances. The Americans have an “I want to win” mindset, and I appreciate the Swiss engineering excellence and intelligence in developing products before bringing them to market, so I try to combine the best of both worlds.

How do you envision the company’s growth?

Starting with just one server 12 years ago, today we work through three data centers in Switzerland, and one in Washington DC, Dallas, Hong Kong and Singapore. We manage specific sections in the data centers, creating a network that can scale rapidly. Together with the IBM centers, this allows us to diversify geographically. The secure deployment model we developed in Switzerland can be replicated globally. Despite our organic growth, we kept a start-up spirit; we feel we can invent the next big thing. Having doubled in size yearly since 2015, at some point we will need to raise capital because, instead of 100 new servers, we are looking at buying 10,000 and running an entire server farm. ■

**Confidential computing is a cloud computing technology that isolates sensitive data in a protected CPU enclave during processing.*

Curaden is a fast-growing Swiss company, founded in 1954, which under the Curaprox brand develops oral care products and services. Emphasizing the importance of prevention, the company is determined to change the way people brush their teeth by training dentists and developing innovative toothbrushes and related products. Curaden CEO Ueli Breitschmid, and his daughter and Head of Sales Christine, tell us how crucial oral care is to overall good health, and how their Swiss-engineered solutions make a difference.

How would you assess awareness of the importance of prevention in oral healthcare?

Ueli Breitschmid: Treatment is a booming business, but prevention is not clearly understood. Prevention in oral health is the best way to avert chronic illness and disease. These days it is possible for everybody to keep their teeth and gums clean and healthy for their whole lives, but perfect use of toothbrushes and interdental brushes must be taught by trained professionals. Curaden’s scientific research of the correlation between healthy gums and interdental brushing shows that one might as well not brush their teeth at all if they do not perform perfect interdental brushing.

How is overall health linked to oral health?

Christine Breitschmid: People tend to look at the mouth and other parts of the body in isolation, but a minor injury in the mouth is the perfect entry point for bacteria or viruses to the bloodstream, and this could affect the whole body.



Good health begins in the mouth

Since 1954, Curaden has been at the vanguard of education and product development for dentists and discerning consumers.

U.B: Research has shown that bacteria found in periodontal pockets in the mouth can make their way into the bloodstream. Clots in arteries that can cause heart attacks or an ictus in the brain contained the same bacteria that form as a biofilm in periodontal pockets. Of course, this is usually not an issue with good oral health. So dental health affects overall health, and we were the first company to alert dentists about this. My goal is for the global medical community to learn more about the origins of illnesses and for proper tooth brushing to have a positive effect on national health systems and their cost.

What are the next frontiers for innovation in preventive oral healthcare at Curaden?

U.B: We are looking for ways of using enzymes in oral care and have initiated extensive scientific research. We also aim to transform face-to-face teaching on oral care through our iTOP (individually Trained Oral Prophylaxis) method.

How important is the Switzerland factor for the success of your brands?

U.B: It is very important and even essential in some markets, such as Latin America or countries in the former Soviet Union. Switzerland has tremendous value which, coupled with our quality and design,

creates a community of true fans of our brand. Our sales keep growing, and we are not losing existing customers.

What are your ambitions in the U.S. market?

U.B: We have been present in the U.S. for about 20 years with mixed results, but now we have a specialist who has worked with major oral care brands to expand our presence. Our ambition is to build a strong online presence and develop a robust network of dental professionals who provide strong and credible recommendations.

C.B: We have the right story, products, cool and trendy image, colors, quality, and the Swiss-made factor, which is relevant in the U.S. Price shouldn’t be our focus, but rather attitude, pride, and the

“Prevention in oral health is the best way to avert chronic illness and disease.”

conviction that we have sophisticated products and the right brand story to make dental professionals more successful. Also, there are other target groups beyond dental professionals with a high standing when it comes to health. What matters is credibility, so if we find other groups relevant for our key messages who can act as influencers or multipliers, we can involve them in the business, too. We are not marketing driven, but we try to achieve a push-pull effect so that final consumers also know what they can ask their dental professional for. ■

CURAPROX

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curaden

www.curaprox.us

FAST FACTS
SECTION

1,200+

multinational corporations

Source: Swissinfo.ch



3rd most competitive country in the world

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Rankings

10%

of all European fintech business is located in Switzerland

Source: Switzerland Global Enterprise

20%

of total outward Swiss investment was in the U.S.

Source: Embassy of Switzerland in the United States of America

1 in 3

Swiss start-up founders are non-Swiss

Source: Swiss Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Report

530,000

Swiss employees working to reduce global pollution

Source: Switzerland Global Enterprise

By MARCO BABIC
staff@the-businessreport.com

The United States is a lure for foreign direct investment, and a small fish in a big pond is one of the biggest catches. Despite its relatively small size and a population of around 8.5 million, Switzerland is the sixth biggest investor in the American economy. “Considering we are the size of an average American state, we invest more in FDI in the U.S. than countries 20 times the size of Switzerland”, Swiss Ambassador to the United States Jacques Pitteloud says.

The U.S. received a total of \$120.7 billion in FDI in 2020, aimed at either acquiring, expanding or establishing U.S. business. Switzerland contributed over ten percent of the total, or \$13.8 billion, after Germany with \$20.5 billion and Canada with \$15.2 billion, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

One investor in the U.S. is Swisscom AG, Switzerland’s largest telecom provider, through its venture capital arm Swisscom Ventures. Investing primarily in Silicon Valley, the company offers start-ups access to technical infrastructure, new markets and provides critical financial support. “We are successfully replicating the venture capital model that has had such a tremendous impact on U.S. development for over 50 years”, CEO Dominique Mègret says.

“Build Back Better Plan” offers long-term investment opportunities

Swiss CEOs, business leaders and entrepreneurs are welcoming President Biden’s “Build Back Better Plan” as a long-term opportunity for investment. Holcim CEO Jan Jenisch indicates readiness to support this plan, pointing out that the



Swiss direct investment supports U.S. economy

Despite its relatively small size, Switzerland is the sixth biggest investor in the American economy, and the first when it comes to R&D.

U.S. is a priority for opening new factories and new product lines. Oerlikon is another big company which views the U.S. as an important market. CEO Roland Fischer reels off a list of investments, from a \$55 million production facility in North Carolina to a \$50 million manufacturing plant in Michigan. The company already has 32 facilities and 1,200 employees in the U.S. and hopes for bi- and multilateral engagements on topics of data privacy and taxes, among others. Besides infra-

structure, Swiss companies invest massively in R&D. In fact, “Switzerland is always among the top three in terms of R&D investment in the U.S.” Pitteloud says. Having invested \$10.6 billion in R&D, Swiss affiliates outspent all other countries, according to a report published by the Swiss Embassy in the U.S. in 2020. Swiss companies such as Swisscom, Oerlikon, Holcim, and Phoenix Systems have indeed a lot to offer, from developments in energy efficiency and green

“Swiss companies are uniquely positioned to continue to have outstanding development in the U.S. market.”

MARTIN NAVILLE
CEO of Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce

technology to advances in environment protection, cybersecurity, etc.

“Swiss companies are uniquely positioned to continue to have outstanding development in the U.S. market, which is very open but also very complex and competitive,” CEO of the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce Martin Naville says. “We have the knowledge, the know-how, and the technology that can be of real interest to

the U.S. revival plan”, Pitteloud points out.

Two of a kind economies

One issue of particular interest for Naville is renegotiating the double taxation treaty between Switzerland and the U.S. He explains that the existing tax is essentially “a five percent higher tax rate,” which represents “a very big handicap for an FDI location” and he hopes that establishing a zero percent withholding tax on intra-company dividends will bring Switzerland in line with most of its competitors. Nevertheless, Naville points out that both countries are very similar in terms of innovation strength and global competitiveness, noting “the big success is based on foreign direct investment.”

Speaking about a potential free trade agreement between the

“We have the knowledge, the know-how, and the technology that can be of real interest to the U.S. revival plan.”

JACQUES PITTELOUD
Swiss Ambassador to the United States

U.S. and Switzerland, Naville says that it will not likely be a priority, but cautions that “so long as the EU doesn’t have an agreement, Switzerland doesn’t really need one. Only when the discussion with the EU starts, then it’s too late.” More importantly, over the past 28 years, whether controlled by Democrats or Republicans, political influence on the bilateral business relationship between the two countries has been “empirically low”, Naville observes. ■

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SUZANNE THOMA
CEO for BKW

“Our solutions result in much lower emissions and resource consumption in buildings”

BKW is expanding its focus on energy and resource efficient building planning, setting new standards in sustainable architecture.

What are the key drivers for the company’s growth?

We are in growth markets undergoing transformation, above all energy, buildings, and infrastructure. This has helped us forge ahead with new, profitable business opportunities. Many challenges posed by our customers combine energy and infrastructure aspects. Buildings can be important sources of energy pro-

duction, offering us a growing market. We are active in eight countries, with our key markets being Switzerland, Germany, and Austria, where we are among the top three players in the services business, but still with a comparatively small share. On the energy side we are also in Scandinavia, France and Italy, and gradually expanding elsewhere.

What is your value proposition in terms of sustainability?

We offer practical solutions to create value that combine economic benefits for our customers with their wish to shrink their environmental footprint. Our solutions, such as super-green®, place a fundamental emphasis on energy and resource consumption throughout the entire life cycle of a building, resulting in much lower emissions and resource consumption. We offer management solutions for intermittent energy production, using energy when it is available without compromising the comfort of clients and residents.

What is BKW’s overall approach to innovation?

We take available technology at an early stage and combine it to achieve concrete customer solutions, rather than engaging in basic research. Energy management systems and building automation are key areas and our innovation center is very active in terms of digitalization of the construction industry – enabling a merger of the planning, construction, and operation phases and so reducing resource consumption and cost.

Do you have an active acquisition strategy to enhance value?

In the last seven years, we have bought over a hundred companies, which we then integrate into our network, boosting performance all round. This includes several start-ups in the field of energy management systems, as well as marketing and sales of renewable energy. We will continue to expand in energy, infrastructure, and buildings, remaining focused on our core business and delivering great results for the investors. ■

By **MARCO BABIC**
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I imagine working for a leading global company or an exciting and innovative start-up, then after work heading to the lake for a swim or joining your co-workers for a hike. Then, welcome to Switzerland. Given its culture of innovation and love of the outdoors, the motto for the Swiss might well be “work smart, play hard.”

“New company registrations grew 10% in Lucerne in 2020.”



IVAN BUCK
CEO of Lucerne Business

Switzerland is a vital center for the global or regional headquarters of many foreign entities, with more than 1,200 international companies basing their head office or other central functions here. Nearly three quarters come from North America and Europe, followed by Japan, China and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region. Prominent examples include Biogen, Bombardier, Caterpillar, Dow, DuPont, Google, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Mondelez, Procter & Gamble, and many more.

Swiss cantons lead the way
Switzerland’s 26 federal states, or cantons, are at the forefront of attracting business whether through attractive tax rates, access to nature or a highly skilled workforce.

How Switzerland attracts some of the world’s finest companies

Despite a relatively high cost of living, Switzerland remains a magnet for international headquarters thanks to its unique blend of qualities.



People enjoying the shores of Lake Lucerne at the end of a work day.



Pharma and life sciences find home in the city of Basel.

Lucerne is an excellent illustrative case study. The canton halved its corporate tax rate in 2012 and made fiscal stability and predictability a priority. “When an international company is happy with its settlement process, it becomes a great ambassador for Lucerne”, Ivan Buck, CEO of Lucerne Business, points out. The public-private partnership brings together companies and municipalities, promotes the canton and supports start-ups.

Zug has the lowest corporate

tax rate at 11.91 percent, followed closely by Lucerne and Basel Stadt at 12.32 and 13.04 percent respectively, according to PWC’s international tax comparison report for 2020.

In addition to a favorable tax rate, Buck praises the education system in the canton, as well as its proximity to ETH in Zurich, which is easily accessible through excellent infrastructure. “Lucerne offers an excellent quality of life. When Adidas moved its global commercial operations from Amsterdam to Lucerne last year, it was impor-

tant that more than one third of their employees moved as well. That is only possible if employees are happy in the new location,” Buck says.

While the cantons do compete against each other, Buck is happy when a company chooses Switzerland as a location since that also benefits Lucerne. Buck says that they are supportive of the “Crypto Valley” blockchain ecosystem in Zug, since employees may choose to live in Lucerne or companies based there might use suppliers in Lucerne.

Basel-Stadt: Pharma powerhouse aiming to become green capital

The country’s smallest canton, Basel-Stadt, is experimenting and innovating its way into the future and aims to be a global role model as a green city without sacrificing its economy.

Former industrial sites are now dedicated to innovative business models to help develop clean technology in concert

“We want to be a global role model as a green city.”



BEAT JANS
President of the Executive Council of Basel-Stadt

with its existing major business of pharma and life sciences. These companies are the economic backbone of the canton which, despite its small size, accounts for 20 percent of Swiss exports.

“Strong links between business and academia make for a very favorable environment for start-ups”, says Beat Jans, President of the Executive Council. Like other cantons, quality of life is important to Basel-Stadt, and Jans points out that “we are allocating more space to pedestrians, adding green areas and promoting the use of electric vehicles. We want to be a global role model as a green city, demonstrating the economic benefits while attracting companies and driving innovation”. ■



EHL's new and eco-friendly Lausanne campus to be inaugurated in 2022.

EHL extends service excellence beyond hospitality industry

Alumni of the best hospitality management university in the world are now in demand across a variety of sectors.

Often described as the birthplace of hospitality, Switzerland has not only a world-class hotel and tourism industry but most of the world's leading hospitality management schools, with Lausanne-based École Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL) consistently ranked as the best.

In this year's QS Top University global rankings, Swiss institutions filled four of the top seven places for Hospitality & Leisure Management, and EHL was once more number one. With a network of 30,000 alumni in 150 countries, EHL boasts a 96 per cent employment rate among recent graduates. It is constantly setting new standards, building on a legacy of almost a century and a half. EHL was the world's

first hospitality school, founded in 1893 to meet a new demand for more rigorously trained staff, at a time when grand hotels were being opened in Switzerland to cater to European royalty and the rich.

Over the decades, the attention to detail, discretion and other qualities also associated with other leading Swiss industries such as watchmaking and banking have become so integral to EHL that its students are now in demand in a range of sectors.

"Half our graduates find jobs in the classic hospitality industry while the rest work in other service industries such as insurance, banking, consulting or the luxury sector just to name a few", Group CEO Michel Rochat says. "These sectors can also be considered hospitality because they are all customer-facing.

“Half our graduates find jobs in the hotel industry; the rest in consulting, banking and luxury.”



MICHEL ROCHAT
CEO of EHL Group

Soft skills make the difference."

EHL is also regularly ranked among Switzerland's top five business schools, with part of

its success arising from the mix of high-quality academic study and internships that it offers.

"The secret recipe of EHL is the link between the industry and the university", Rochat explains. "Students must experience what is real life, and then return to campus, bringing fresh ideas."

Having three campuses that offer different experiences makes it possible for EHL to set benchmarks for best practice and to generate diverse perspectives.

"Asia is the market of tomorrow, and Singapore is the Switzerland of Asia," Rochat says of EHL's new, third campus. The original, Lausanne campus is on the classic U.S. model – with modern classrooms, Michelin-starred training restaurant, pedagogical garden, pool, wellness area, sports fields and student accommodation all on one site, while the campus in Chur-Passugg is a 150-year-old hotel resort site nestled in the Swiss Alps.

"In Singapore, the student accommodations, sports facilities and other units are dotted around the city. "We have classrooms with state-of-the-art technology, an expansive on-site dining room and numerous breakout spaces for students, but the campus really is the city itself," Rochat summarizes.

During times of unprecedented challenges for the industry, EHL is thriving, adapting its methods and leveraging the situation to bring forward planned changes. "It was easy for us because we were ready to switch to digital learning," Rochat explains.

Looking forward, he sees a good proportion of teaching remaining online as it increases flexibility and familiarizes students with digital work environments.■

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