Making Switzerland a leading digital innovation hub

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Digital transformation has been happening for a while and is now accelerating considerably. As a small country without natural resources, Switzerland has always relied on innovation; it is in the national interest to keep up with today's technology and speed. The initiative digitalswitzerland was born out of the urgency to change and to remain highly competitive.

Interdisciplinary collaboration to bring Switzerland forward

In less than three years, digitalswitzerland has brought together more than 100 companies, organisations, academia and regions, and succeeded in creating a unique cross-sector collaboration between the diverse actors. Over 100 members, with one vision: Making Switzerland a leading digital innovation hub. Worldwide! Since digital transformation is disrupting all industries, digitalswitzerland chose an interdisciplinary approach and so focuses its actions on the following project pillars: politico-economic environment, education & talent, corporate enablement, startup enablement and public dialogue. Additionally, in the coming months, the association aims to increase the international visibility of Switzerland.

digitalswitzerland walks the talk

First and foremost, digitalswitzerland strives towards maximum impact: its initiatives should do nothing less than bring the country forward. To foster more innovation and push for concrete outcomes, digitalswitzerland brought together players from all sectors with different know-how and provided a common platform to push ideas, the „digitalswitzerland challenge": Within the challenge, cross-sector teams place their ideas as bets and have one year to implement their innovative ambitions. Out of this competition resulted, for example,

Magical performance with new technologies during the first Swiss Digital Day in 2017
Source: digitalswitzerland

the development of an app, with which it is possible to measure blood pressure directly, and a company registration system using a digitized blockchain process to radically shrink the time it takes to do the necessary administration (2 hours instead of up to several weeks).

Another concrete cross-collaboration project is the so-called startup bootcamps, where startups and established companies come together to exchange and, in the best cases, to start working together towards a proof of concept. The bigger and, in most cases, less agile enterprises benefit from the more dynamic startups, which bring in a fresh and more creative approach to traditional business models.

New ways of thinking and cross-collaboration to tackle the challenges of digitalization

There exists no panacea that universally solves the challenges governments, business and economies face with regard to digital transformation. Strategies such as waiting until 'the storm is over' or 'let's see what the others are doing' probably won't help either. So digitalswitzerland has taken a pro-active approach and wants to encourage all players to take new paths or try out new ideas. One such idea is the Digital Day, a day dedicated to the general public. Because if the public at large is not on board, transformation won't happen. During the Digital Day, the Swiss can experience what the digital revolution means in concrete terms for everybody. This public dialogue was launched in 2017 and will take place again on October 25, 2018. This time, it will happen in all regions of the country and has a focus on specific topics, such as health, data or mobility. Companies, associations or other players in these sectors will demonstrate how they tackle the challenges of digital transformation and what the implications are for the broader public.

Lino Guzzella, President of ETH Zurich, Michael Hengartner, President of the University of Zurich and Johann Schneider-Ammann, Federal Council of Switzerland during the first Swiss Digital Day in 2017, Source: digitalswitzerland

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