SHAPING THE FUTURE
VENTURE KICK
10 YEARS OF IMPACT ON THE STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

1 Setting the agenda
2 The nature of Venture Kick startups
4 The Venture Kick startup experience
8 Venture Kick support model
10 Global Shapers that got the kick
22 Achievements at a glance
24 The Venture Kick jury experience
28 10 years of driving innovation
38 The Venture Kick board experience
40 The donors of Venture Kick
42 Venture Kick organization
44 The Venture Kick management experience
SETTING THE AGENDA

AMBITIOUS VISION

Venture Kick was launched in 2007 with the vision to double the number of spin-offs at Swiss universities, to accelerate the time-to-market and to raise the attractiveness of these young companies to professional investors. Venture Kick offers a nine month kicking process in order to effectively support young entrepreneurs with high-potential business ideas on their journey from science to market.

We identify, structure and promote promising businesses with a unique approach and program. The focus on business development, which means that we focus on customers and not technology, and the tightly structured program, results in flourishing development of the entrepreneurs. The jury, consisting of investors and entrepreneurs, plays a major role in the highly competitive selection process. The 522 startup projects supported over Venture Kick’s 10 years has resulted in 351 active high-tech companies that have raised more than CHF 1,808 million and created 4,748 jobs.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Venture Kick is a philanthropic initiative of a private consortium. Being private and independent we understand our role to also be one of an agenda setter and catalyst. We initiate innovation, progress and discourse within the Swiss ecosystem by enabling the untried, daring the unpopular and focusing on existing and future gaps. We have done so from the start with our approach under the keyword “kicking”. We made another step in 2013 by implementing our unique equity model, creating a giving back culture for our entrepreneurs to support the next generation. Every country needs successful entrepreneurs and role models for the prosperity of its economy and society – giving back is a vital part of making sure that Switzerland will remain a global innovation leader.

EXEMPLARY COLLABORATION

Starting small in 2007 we had a big vision and believed in the business potential of great science at Swiss universities. With this mindset, from the first day we built Venture Kick as an independent organization with a structure and governance designed for growth. This mainly means welcoming an increasing number of collaboration partners to step in and be an equal part of our successful initiative. Meanwhile, Venture Kick is an enterprise from 13 private partners, foundations, private individuals and corporates all sharing the same vision of supporting the next generation of successful entrepreneurs for the prosperity of Switzerland’s economy and society.

Dr. Pascale Vonmont
Strategy Board, Venture Kick
CEO, Gebert Rüf Stiftung

Dr. Suzanne Schenk
Strategy Board, Venture Kick
Deputy CEO, Ernst Göhner Stiftung
THE NATURE OF VENTURE KICK STARTUPS

Entrepreneurs are at the heart of innovation. So for our 10 Year anniversary, we wanted to share more about the nature of the 522 founders’ teams we’ve supported in the past 10 years. We also used the opportunity to look at the patent situation, which has a particular importance in our mission to bring science to markets.

We have to remember that all startups and all founding teams are different and can’t be summarized in statistics, so we are not looking at an “average” profile of a startup, but an overall picture, with some expected results, and others which come as more surprising.

NUMBERS OF PATENTS

The existence and role of patents as a key part of the intellectual assets is confirmed by the numbers, with an average of three or more patents granted or applied per company, with 65% of companies holding one or more patents, of those, 31% building a portfolio of five or more patents. What is interesting is to see only 14% of these companies owning three or four patents, most probably reflecting the spectrum of supported technology fields and related patenting strategies: some startups don’t really need patents, or only in a limited scope, whereas others build and invest in a patent portfolio. With almost 1,200 patents granted or applied for, Venture Kick startups can be seen as solid innovation assets for Switzerland and underline its position as a deep tech initiative.

NUMBERS OF PATENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Patents granted</th>
<th>Total Number of Patents applied</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>818</td>
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Average Patents granted or applied per company: 3.08

DISTRIBUTION OF PATENTS AMONGST COMPANIES WITH APPLIED OR GRANTED PATENTS

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Patents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>31%</td>
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FOUNDING TEAM COMPOSITION

With 79% of our startups counting international members within their founding teams, a well-known fact is emphasized: there is a high presence of foreign nationals in high-tech entrepreneurship. 26% of the teams consist of foreigners only, showing the key role of international profiles in Switzerland.

The vast majority (93%) of Venture Kick projects have two or more founders: “it’s often better to launch with co-founders” according to common wisdom. At the other end of the scale, a third of the teams have five founders or more, increasing to 60% if you include teams of four founders, which is higher than the usual perception of the majority of teams having two or three founders. Note that not all founders are operational, however it shows that a lot of brain power goes into the founding teams.

DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONALITIES IN FOUNDING TEAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Swiss</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only International</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>53%</td>
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NUMBER OF FOUNDERS PER TEAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Founders</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Founder</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Founders</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Founders</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Founders</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Founders</td>
<td>33%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

INCREASING THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Technology startups are predominantly created by men, this is true worldwide, and it is also the case in Venture Kick. Several statistics place the number of startups led by women at around 10%. Looking at the complete founders’ teams within Venture Kick, we actually found that 25% comprise women, including 3% with only women, which shows that women are more present than expected, yet more in the background. Increasing the number and presence of female founders is now a key topic on the agenda, so we look forward to seeing how this evolves over the next few years.
Sabrina Badir and her startup, Pregnolia, are recent graduates of the Venture Kick program, having received their kick in 2016. Pregnolia are developing a tool that will help to predict the risk of preterm birth, thereby reducing the need for invasive therapies and hospitalization.

Why did you choose the entrepreneurial path?
For me it was the natural consequence of my academic path. During my PhD I created a tool that had the potential to move into clinics and help medical practitioners, as well as future moms. So founding a company to perform the next step and bring the device to the market was the natural choice, and I took it as a personal challenge in order to truly complete the work I started at ETH Zurich.

What need does Pregnolia fill, and how are you different from your competitors?
Pregnolia is developing a novel tool to ultimately predict the risk of a pregnancy terminating spontaneously before term. The current methods based on ultrasound measurements have very low predictive capabilities and effectively do very little to address this medical problem. Pregnolia’s device takes an innovative approach and looks at the problem in a totally different way: currently the gold standard is to measure the length of the cervix, but we are monitoring the stiffness of the cervical tissue. The goal is to better characterize the mechanical properties of the cervix and look for early signs that the cervix is incapable of sustaining the pregnancy to term.

You were a member of the venture leaders Life Science team in 2016, too: Can you tell us about the best highlights of the investors’ roadshow in the Boston area? What was the main thing you got out of it?
Boston is a world center for biomedical innovation, so I saw it as an invaluable opportunity to establish contacts and understand the reality of the American market. The medical device field is highly regulated and its economics depend on many local factors such as regulatory aspects and insurance coverage. I had the opportunity to engage directly with experts to further expand my knowledge and meet with investors to understand how the business case should be presented in front of US investors.

In addition, the opportunity to share the experience with fellow Swiss entrepreneurs was very valuable and enjoyable.

What are the next steps for Pregnolia now?
Pregnolia is now working hard on completing the development of our first product and entering the industrialization phase. Then we need to obtain the required regulatory certification, which will allow us to bring our product to the European market.

What advice would you give to researchers who are considering founding their own startup?
Above all, I would say be persistent and reach out. While at the large scale research is a community-based endeavor, the daily life of individual researchers can be very focused on their own projects. When stepping into the entrepreneurial world, there are many other things that we need to quickly learn and understand, and the best way to do it is to talk to as many knowledgeable people as we can. And of course, be prepared to climb over many walls and overcome many obstacles. That’s where the persistence comes in!

www.pregnolia.com
InSphero has been in business for eight years, how did you carve out a niche for yourselves in the market?

From day 1, we listened to our customers in the pharmaceutical industry to learn how they would like to use our technology to improve their daily work life. This strive for understanding customer needs and wants has guided us in correctly positioning our technology and in developing products that fit the market. We combined these products with a high level of scientific competence which we share in our industry partnerships with our customers.

“Venture Kick laid the foundation for our customer and market focus before we even founded the company.”

Jan Lichtenberg, Co-founder of InSphero

You won the final of Venture Kick in 2008: What did the program bring to you and to InSphero? Nine years later do you still feel a lasting impact?

Venture Kick laid the foundation for our customer and market focus before we even founded the company. The program encouraged us to engage in business relationships early on and to see our company and solutions through the eyes of the customer. This approach has become part of our company DNA and still guides us every day.

Did winning the Venture Kick final give you a boost in terms of the CV of the business?

Winning the final of a competition after the long and thorough vetting process that Venture Kick is known for resulted in a lot of visibility and credibility. This was key for our Series A financing round which we closed a year later.

You were on the venture leaders Life Science team in 2010: In 2013 you established the north American branch of InSphero, how instrumental was venture leaders in your success in the USA?

During the 14-day program, all of us got infected by the US virus. The drive, risk taking, and blue-sky thinking impressed us – and we took a lot of it back home. Equally as importantly, it became clear that we needed to setup a subsidiary in the US and to grow our business in the largest geographic market in our sector with an experienced and entrepreneurial team. Today, we have eight employees in the US and produce our 3D InSight™ Microtissues for the US in our Brunswick facility.

You were recognized as the EY “Entrepreneur of the year” in the category of “Emerging Entrepreneur” in 2015, what does this award mean to you?

The EY “Entrepreneur of the Year” award is one of the most prestigious recognitions for entrepreneurs in Switzerland. The endorsement for our work as a team at InSphero – and this is how I regard this award – by a jury of seasoned and successful entrepreneurs was and is a great honor, and I work hard to live up to it every day.

What are the next steps for InSphero now?

We have recently expanded our portfolio with new disease models which will help to fight epidemic diseases such as diabetes and liver fibrosis. Our team is currently building partnerships with leading companies worldwide to enable them to identify new drugs to fight these diseases using our unique discovery platforms. In a partnership with Charles River Laboratories, one of the largest CROs in the world, we are improving the development of novel anti-cancer drugs, a new and exciting application for our technology. And, finally we are combining multiple organs on a microfluidic cartridge the size of a postcard to mimic the complexity of the human body for even more predictive results.

What advice would you give to researchers who are considering founding their own startup?

Begin with sales and business development immediately – do not delay this core activity “until the product is ready”. Understanding the customer is key to creating the right product, right positioning and right messaging.

www.insphero.com
VENTURE KICK SUPPORT MODEL

MUCH MORE THAN JUST MONEY

Every year, Venture Kick selects and supports more than 60 high potential entrepreneurs by offering them a structured entrepreneurial path towards building a winning new venture. Presenting in front of experts at each stage to obtain the funding, getting “kicking feedback” and learning about the execution of building a startup during the kickers camps are at the core of the Venture Kick experience. On top of that, the startups benefit from exchanges with other venture kickers and access to a broad network of experienced entrepreneurs and investors.

A FULLY FLEDGED SUPPORT SYSTEM

Beyond the very important financial support, which can reach up to CHF 130,000 in pre-seed capital, entrepreneurs benefit from a critical push and orientation to help them reach their maximum potential during a competitive and time-driven process. Venture Kick takes place over a period of approximately nine months and at each stage only 50% of the presented projects are eligible for support.

This unique experience is an instrumental part of building solid foundations.

MONEY FOR YOUR STARTUP

CHF 130,000

The Venture Kick funding track starts by presenting innovative business ideas to get the first CHF 10,000. It continues by showing solid business cases for CHF 20,000 and finishes by presenting the startup for the final kick of CHF 100,000.

PUSH TO GET TRACTION

KICKERS CAMPS

After each session, startup founders are coached by proven entrepreneurs. The opportunity to exchange with other young entrepreneurs can also be very useful to improve startups’ strategic approaches to customers and investors.

EXPOSURE TO INVESTORS

POWER NETWORK

Behind Venture Kick, the greatest network of investors and industry innovation experts in Switzerland awaits the participants. This allows them to benefit from direct feedback and get media coverage on top of attracting more investors.
A UNIQUE ENTREPRENEURIAL AND PHILANTHROPIC MODEL TO SUPPORT STARTUPS

Venture Kick financial support is a combination of grants and adaptive equity participation supporting founders in their first stage. Stage 1 (CHF 10,000) and stage 2 (CHF 20,000) are granted as non-repayable loans, with a moral pledge of giving back the amount received or more to support future Venture Kick projects in case of success.

At stage 3 (CHF 100,000), the Venture Kick Foundation adopts an adaptive equity participation model, using the valuation obtained at the first significant funding round as reference.

All proceeds from subsequent sale of shares are exclusively reinvested to support the next generation of promising entrepreneurs.

The main objective of the support model is to strengthen and clarify Venture Kick’s philanthropic and entrepreneurial philosophy: the subsequent success of supported startups directly benefits future generations of entrepreneurs and thus society. At the same time, the model contributes to the long-term success of Venture Kick, helping to secure support for many more innovative projects at Swiss universities.
GLOBAL SHAPERS
THAT GOT THE KICK
10 startups from the past 10 years that have the power to change the world. As voted for by the general public.
FIGHT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE WITH NOVEL DRUGS

Today, the infectious disease tuberculosis (TB) is a leading cause of death globally. It is caused by a bacterium, called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which is present – mostly in a latent form – in nearly one third of the world’s population. One of its threatening particularities is that it has become antibiotic-resistant due to its ability to adapt and the overuse of antibiotics.

For years now, scientists have searched for new ways to fight tuberculosis. In fact, it was believed to be on the decline for some decades. But World Health Organization (WHO) reports show there are 10 million new cases of active TB every year with about 1.4m people dying annually from the disease. The neglected illness has now once again become a global threat.

SMALL MOLECULES TO FIGHT SUPERBUGS

Spun out of ETH Zurich in 2008, BioVersys closed the first financing round and moved to its own facilities in 2011. The Basel-based pharmaceutical company has the technological expertise and solid IP to address unmet medical need for new treatments of life-threatening bacterial infections. Its research and development has led to an award-winning technology, called TRIC, whereby small molecules modulate the behavior of bacteria to deprive them of their resistance mechanisms, their strategies to hide from antibiotics and attack mechanisms causing human disease.

In addition to tuberculosis, BioVersys’ pipeline also targets deadly, resistant, hospital acquired infections (nosocomial diseases) caused by *Staphylococci, Acinetobacter or Enterobacteriaceae*. “Our long term objective is to develop drugs against superbugs. We want to offer a long term and sustainable relief from the burden for humankind that is caused by highly resistant bacteria”, explains CEO Marc Gitzinger.

“BioVersys would probably not exist without Venture Kick.”

Marc Gitzinger, CEO of BioVersys

Despite being the second-most common cause of death from infectious diseases (behind HIV), the global market size for TB is “only” $350m as the disease mostly affects the poorest regions of the world. It might look like a tiny market by Pharma standards, but BioVersys’ team of 11 is convinced of the importance of making a difference for these patients. The other infections that BioVersys addresses thanks to its technology, fit the standard market potential for pharma products designed for high income countries.

ON ITS WAY FROM LAB TO PATIENT

In 2014, BioVersys started a project in collaboration with Lille University and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to develop a preclinical candidate for the treatment of tuberculosis. The project has proven successful as BioVersys will start clinical development in 2019. The start-up has attracted CHF 20m total investment from Swiss and international investors since its creation. Over recent years, the company has also proven its capacity to become a global company by establishing collaborations with many international partners. BioVersys’ products address a truly global market spanning from high income countries all the way to the poorest.

BioVersys has also counted on the support of Venture Kick from the very beginning to get the magic out of the lab and into the next phase: “BioVersys would probably not exist without Venture Kick. It was the first money we received and without this we would not have been able to get off the ground. In addition to the money, the coaching and the contacts gained through the program really kick-started our company”.

www.bioversys.com
DISRUPT BARCODE SCANNING WITH SIMPLE SMARTPHONES

Over the past few years, Swiss startups have established a solid reputation worldwide in IT technologies. One of these startups is the Zurich based company Scandit, which has found a disruptive way to replace barcode scanners with smart mobile apps and devices (e.g. smartphones or tablets), enabling the company to compete against major market players such as Motorola, Honeywell International or Zebra Technologies.

With globalization and the increasing digitalization of trading worldwide, barcode scanning has become a critical backbone of pretty much all commercial activities today. In recent years, barcode scanning has been increasingly adopted across various product or service industries such as logistics, security, identification, retail, self-check in or check out, healthcare and transportation. Every day, more than 100 billion barcode scanning operations are processed in retail stores worldwide. The global barcode scanning market is predicted to grow from $5.2bn in 2017 to $6.5bn by 2020, and these numbers only represent the "hardware" (or device) side of things: in the field of scanning software apps, along with mobile image recognition, where Scandit is also active, even greater market opportunities can be addressed.

TRANSFORM BUSINESSES ACROSS THE WORLD

Although barcode scanning is used at a larger scale by businesses today, companies still make use of dedicated barcode scanners and expensive lifetime support packages to read and process data. The idea of Scandit, which emerged from a group of PhD graduates and former researchers from ETH Zurich, MIT and IBM Research in 2008, was simple enough: instead of using an expensive proprietary scanner, use a smartphone camera to capture barcodes which can then be decoded using specially developed software embedded in an app. The technology has reached incredible levels of accuracy and affordability with the potential to undercut competition. For example, a mobile device equipped with Scandit’s software can scan a barcode from over two meters away, even in low light; or scan multiple barcodes at once, something which traditional dedicated barcode scanners cannot do. Beyond revolutionizing barcode scanning, Scandit’s technology has the potential to transform customers’ business processes entirely. Through a new application, called Keyboard Wedge, retail or logistics companies can use Scandit’s barcode scanning function to deliver data to their existing data management system (e.g. ERP, WMS or POS). No further modifications, development or integration costs are implied. To date, Scandit has enabled the transformation of thousands of businesses worldwide such as Cardinal Health, Coop, Louis Vuitton, NASA, and Verizon Wireless. For the Swiss supermarket giant Coop Group in particular, Scandit has enabled self-scanning and checkout of its clients’ purchases. Coop has also deployed Scandit’s solutions internally for stock and order management as well as intralogistics purposes.

“Venture Kick provided critical support to get Scandit off the ground.”
Samuel Müller, CEO of Scandit

Funds for further global expansion

Since the initial business was founded in 2009, Scandit has been stepping up efforts to become a truly global company which counts over 75 employees today. Early in 2017, Scandit raised $7.5m in Series A (in addition to $5.5m in 2014) to expand its international footprint and open new sales offices across Europe and the US. Scandit CEO, Samuel Müller, could also count on the support of Venture Kick from the very beginning to empower the entire organization: “Venture Kick provided critical support to help us validate our initial product offering, refine our business plan and get Scandit off the ground.”
The global transportation sector is undergoing radical changes driven by customer requirements, technology advancements and increasingly strict regulations. Recently, lightweight materials have moved up on the agenda as a key area for further reach, reduced emissions and increased sustainability.

Realizing this, Fribourg startup Bcomp decided to leverage its expertise in high performance lightweight materials. It therefore brought cost-efficient and high-performance materials to the automotive industry to replace or reinforce carbon fiber, glass fiber or aluminum. Plus, the materials are renewable, based on European flax and FSC labeled balsa.

BORN FROM LIGHTWEIGHT SKI CORES, TOWARDS THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The step may seem far-fetched for a company born six years ago out of a garage quest for the perfect ski. Knowing the story it’s not: since its inception, Bcomp has developed a unique knowledge of lightweight natural fiber materials for high performance uses. The bCores are the most highly engineered ski cores on the market and can be found in top brands such as Faction, Stöckli and K2. They are also found in snowboards, surfboards, skateboards – and a variety of other board sports. The balsa/flax cores have exceptional damping properties, high stability and light weight, meaning more fun for the users.

Motorsports prove a natural stepping stone for the high-tech company: low weight and performance are at the very heart of racing. By using powerRibs in car body parts, the stiffness increases at the same weight, and reduces dangerous shattering by carbon in a crash scenario. A partnership with the Tesla-based Electric GT Championship makes for an exciting 2018.

Meanwhile, in the Blue Factory workshop, Bcomp engineers are working on sample interior pieces for major global car brands. powerRibs’ reinforcement together with ampliTex technological fabrics can cut weight, costs and emissions in line production. For Bcomp it is essential to challenge the preconception of natural fibers as a compromise on performance. “We compete on performance”, says CEO Dr. Christian Fischer, “then we are renewable, too”.

VENTURE KICK HELPED BCOMP TO FIRMLY ESTABLISH ITSELF IN THE SPORTS- AND LEISURE MARKETS AS A FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER GROWTH.”

Christian Fischer, CEO of Bcomp

THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY, HYPERLOOP COMPETITION AND THE FUTURE

The workshop is something of a Santa’s grotto and provides the means for new product development, testing, building prototypes, and hand-made production for luxury brands within lifestyle and fashion. Upstairs, another Bcomp engineer is calculating on a screen and smiles “Well, there are projects with the European Space Agency, as well as for commercial carriers, but that is all I can say for now.” Apart from the well-established sports applications, Bcomp materials are already found in, for example, the first all-natural car monocoque, in the Swiss Loop pod at SpaceX HyperLoop, as well as in canoes, travel items and even guitars.

From 2012 – 2016 Bcomp has held its position in the TOP 10 of the TOP 100 Swiss startups, and took in CHF 3m financing in 2017 to scale up and focus towards the automotive industry. Thanks to early funding from Venture Kick, the company could “firmly establish itself in the sports- and leisure markets as a foundation for further growth”, explains Dr. Christian Fischer.

www.bcomp.ch
BETTER, BRIGHTER LIGHTS

Founded at EPFL in 2012, L.E.S.S. has developed a novel lighting technology which is far superior in many respects to the LED lights that have supplanted conventional light bulbs on the market. Indeed, LED technology takes up too much space and produces uneven light beams. Although they are more energy-efficient than light bulbs, they still leave much to be desired: 60% of the electrical power is converted into heat rather than light when integrated into an illumination system.

The alternative technology of L.E.S.S. (Light Efficient SystemS) is based on a single nanoactive optical fiber. This nanofiber is comparable to neon tube lighting – except that it is thinner than a human hair and provides brighter, more uniform light. Until now, L.E.S.S. has proven successful in the market of quality control, which is crucial in the manufacture of watches or medical implants, for example. In these industries, it is critical to detect, measure and evaluate defects in the manufactured elements as effectively as possible, either with the naked eye or under the microscope. And there is currently no better tool available for this than the uniform light from L.E.S.S. Several Swiss watch manufacturers have turned to the new nanofibers from Lausanne, as have companies in Germany and Japan. “Thanks to our brighter lights, all our customers could reduce their inspection time and enhance the quality of their products,” explains L.E.S.S. CEO Yann Tissot.

BREAK INTO THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

And now this technology is making its way into our cars. The major benefits are that L.E.S.S. products use less energy and weigh only half as much as conventional car lights. They thus open up completely new possibilities in relation to the design of car lighting. The unique combination of these assets make them particularly appealing to manufacturers of electric cars. A major breakthrough for L.E.S.S. was the unveiling of a concept car from a large German manufacturer at the Geneva International Motor Show 2017, and at the Frankfurt fair in September 2017. The manufacturer, which produces more than two million vehicles every year, also announced that this concept would go into series production. L.E.S.S. also works with additional car and headlamp manufacturers.

“Venture Kick trusted us at a time when we didn’t have a lot of concrete results.”
Yann Tissot, CEO of L.E.S.S.

BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER IN THE INDUSTRY

The young company with 12 employees is now set to become a fully-fledged market player. In 2018, L.E.S.S. expects to produce several thousand quality control products in its first market. Yet this is just the beginning; now entering the automotive industry, the challenge will be to supply the necessary quantities to fill their customers’ needs. The production forecast is set to reach millions by 2022. For this the team plans a second round of financing in the double-digit million range [L.E.S.S. raised CHF 3m in 2015]. Over 30 employees will work for L.E.S.S. next year, and more than 400 by 2022.

In 2015 and 2016, L.E.S.S. was ranked first in TOP 100 Swiss Startups Award, and the startup is still in the TOP 3 today. Things have taken off, with the support of Venture Kick: “Venture Kick trusted us at the very early stage, at a time when we didn’t have a lot of concrete results. It has just been an incredible support”, says CEO Dr. Yann Tissot. If everything goes as planned L.E.S.S. has the potential to achieve a turnover of “several hundred million francs” within the next five years and become a major player in the lighting industry.

www.less-optics.com
With increasingly aged populations, more and more people are striving to retain youthful beauty and an ageless appearance. In 2016 alone, over 19 million facial anti-aging injections were conducted. It is no wonder that the global market for professional aesthetic products is estimated to continue its double-digit growth, from $8.4bn in 2016 to reach $14bn by 2021. This represents a huge opportunity for the founders of PB&B, who have always been fascinated by aesthetics.

FAT: THE FUTURE OF NATURAL AESTHETICS AND PLASTIC SURGERY

With age, facial fat tissues lose volume, an inevitable process which causes sagging and wrinkles. The Lausanne based startup PB&B set out to reverse this process thanks to a facial rejuvenating injection solution using biodegradable microspheres. These microspheres are loaded with natural lipids (oleic acid, which is naturally present in the body) and then injected into facial fat tissues to naturally replenish lost volume. The technique developed by PB&B can actually achieve the very good looking results of fat transfer (a technique where fat is taken from the body and re-injected into a different area), but without having to take and use any of the patient’s own fat. PB&B’s solution also provides longer lasting results, up to 20 months, compared to other dermal filling techniques such as hyaluronic acid.

Following successful R&D tests of its facial injection solution, PB&B will soon be able to expand its development pipeline with body shaping injections. Their aim is to pioneer plastic surgery towards a natural and minimally invasive technique replacing fat transfer, silicone implants or surgery. Many aesthetics and plastic surgery professionals worldwide have already expressed their interest in PB&B’s innovative solution.

“Venture Kick gave us the momentum to turn an idea perceived as impossible into a company raising millions in capital.”

Anthony Aho, CEO of PB&B

GREAT MOMENTUM FROM IDEA TO CLINICAL TESTING

Formed at EPF Lausanne in 2013, PB&B collaborated with scientists, universities, plastic surgeons and hospitals such as the University Hospital of Geneva (HUG) to test and optimize its novel rejuvenating technology. Work has been steady in the past few years, and so has momentum: in 2017, a seasoned clinical trials director joined PB&B’s three co-founders. The company was also able to scale-up production in the US and win a strategic Chinese investor and partner to accelerate market entry in China. In total, PB&B has raised CHF 4m to date and is now looking for additional funds for clinical testing, which will start in 2018, and the development of its product pipeline.

PB&B’s idea was also backed really early on by Venture Kick, among others: “PB&B received the support of Venture Kick in a domain where no one had ever stepped before” explains CEO Anthony Aho. “The program gave us the momentum to turn an idea perceived as impossible into an ambitious company attracting top tier international scientists, doctors and investors”. If everything goes as planned, PB&B could well make a difference in a market worth billions of dollars globally.
depending on the result, make their purchase safe in the knowledge that what they are buying is authentic.

For brands, the process also serves to build trust with their customers – and retain it. Once a consumer has scanned a ScanTrust code, brands can directly engage their consumers with educational content, warranty registrations, promotional events, etc.

"The program is a phenomenal way to meet investors, gain visibility and grow your startup on a global level."

Nathan Anderson, CEO and Co-Founder of ScanTrust

GLOBAL PIRACY, GLOBAL COMPANY

In 2015, ScanTrust closed a CHF 1.4m round of initial seed funding and currently has offices in Lausanne, Shanghai and Bangkok. In 2017, the company announced two very large deals: the first with Leybold, who will use ScanTrust’s QR codes on all products globally; and the second with the National Seeds Institute of Argentina (INASE) for security stamp labels to protect farmers against counterfeit seeds. Millions of labels are already on the market, with expansion into more crop varieties planned for 2018. A number of other deals have been signed with Global Fortune 1000 companies. ScanTrust is also a new member of Hyperledger, a project of the Linux Foundation that is a global alliance of companies that collaborate to advance cross-industry blockchain technologies in industries such as finance, banking, IoT, supply chain, manufacturing and techology.

Venture Kick has been a vital part of ScanTrust’s growth, with the startup winning the program’s final in 2014, and participating in a high-powered international investor’s roadshow in the US the same year. CTO and Co-Founder Justin Picard said: “Venture Kick is a unique program for startups: the structure of the process allows measurement of the progress made and the kickers camps are opportunities to address difficult questions. The program is a phenomenal way to meet investors, gain visibility and grow your startup on a global level.”

www.scantrust.com
FLYABILITY: SAFE DRONE FOR INACCESSIBLE PLACES

Drones are cool, but are they safe? Flying robots are steadily being incorporated into a wide variety of industries, with global sales of drones reaching $8.5bn in 2016 and expected to surpass $12bn by 2021. This growth has caught the attention of industries where inspection is often a costly and time-consuming activity, with inspection robots in the oil & gas industry alone expected to reach a market value of $2.85bn in 2025. In the fast-growing industry of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), there are two critical issues which often prevent industry players from deploying the technology: collision and injury risks. Current products on the market are often difficult to control, not safe to be flown near people or prone to collision and it is these limitations that hold back the inspection drone market.

INSECT-INSPIRED DRONES FOR INACCESSIBLE PLACES

Spun off from EPFL in 2014, Flyability’s inspection drone, Elios, came about after a group of PhD graduates and engineers looked to nature to understand how to make UAVs more robust. In studying insects, they saw that avoiding collisions is not necessary, and that their drone, much like the insects studied, just need to be able to recover from crashes quickly and move on. Thus the world’s first collision-tolerant drone was born. By using a unique cage and gimbal system, flight in complex, cluttered or indoor spaces is made possible and, therefore, Elios unleashes the potential for UAVs to be used where previously impossible. By sending Elios into industrial inspection for the energy, heavy industries, oil and gas, or maritime industries, companies can safely inspect their assets without having to send their human workers into small, cramped and often dangerous environments. Alongside industrial inspection, Flyability is also working with search and rescue teams to assess emergency situations, such as those after an earthquake, as first responders to quickly and safely locate victims. Only three years after incorporation, Flyability has already been adopted by more than 250 companies across a wide range of sectors.

SUCCESS STORY

In 2014, Flyability announced the completion of the first external round of equity capital from European and Swiss business angels. In February 2015, the team won the $1m prize in the prestigious UAE Drones for Good Competition in Dubai. The company achieved sales of CHF 2m in 2016, predicted to triple in 2017. This success story was also made possible thanks to Venture Kick: “When launching a startup in Switzerland, Venture Kick is for many entrepreneurs the support needed to ‘survive’ during the first precious months and prepare for the next steps. Furthermore, the pathway to each stage of Venture Kick is recognized as a serious pledge by Swiss business angels.” says CEO Patrick Thévoz. Additionally, for two consecutive years Flyability was elected in the TOP 3 of the TOP 100 Swiss Startup Award. They also flew to China in 2017 to meet potential investors as part of venture leaders China.

“The pathway to each stage of Venture Kick is recognized as a serious pledge by Swiss business angels.”
Patrick Thévoz, CEO of Flyability

www.flyability.com
NEW THERAPIES FOR ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANT BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Increasing prevalence of antibiotic resistance has made intestinal infections such as *Clostridium difficile* infection (CDI) unresponsive to standard antibiotic treatment and thus life threatening. This constantly increasing burden has an estimated cost of $4.5bn in the developed world alone. Fecal Microbiota Transplant (FMT) is currently the only life-saving therapy for antibiotic-resistant, recurrent CDI with reported success rates of over 90% throughout the world. This experimental therapy involves the transplantation of feces from a healthy donor to the infected patient, thereby restoring the intestinal microbiome (a.k.a microflora) of the patient and suppressing the growth of the disease-causing bacterium, *C. difficile*.

The success of FMT has delivered long expected proof that intestinal microbes can successfully be used as therapeutics, paving the way for a new field of modern medicine. However, the use of fecal material harbors the risk of transmission of detrimental microbes or viruses. Furthermore, the microbiome has been linked to a multitude of conditions including chronic intestinal inflammations and metabolic disorders, that are currently poorly understood and could lead to unexpected adverse reactions within the patient.

MICROBIOTA THERAPY, THE NEW STANDARD FOR THE TREATMENT OF INTESTINAL DISEASES

Despite the success of FMT, the development of defined bacterial products to replace this experimental procedure is currently limited by a lack of ability to cultivate most health-promoting gut bacteria and missing biotechnological processes to produce such products that not only consist of sensitive bacteria but are mixes thereof.

PharmaBiome has developed a technology platform for the isolation, characterization and cultivation of intestinal bacteria, the fundamental building blocks for successful development of intestinal therapeutics. Through in-depth knowledge of the individual microbes, PharmaBiome has assembled a defined set of bacteria combining the key functions of a healthy intestinal microbiome. This lead product represents an alternative to the use of fecal material in the treatment of CDI, replacing the experimental FMT with a controlled, reproducible and safe treatment.

Microbiome therapeutics targeting CDI had an estimated market value of $200-400m in 2015, already reflecting the potential of microbiome-based therapies that is predicted to be worth over $12bn by 2030. Founded in 2015 as a spin-off of ETH Zurich, and having already filed their first patent, PharmaBiome is well on its way to becoming a high-powered player in this market. In fact the team does not plan to stop at *C. difficile*, there are a multitude of microbiome-related diseases that are still waiting for an adequate and safe therapy, opening the company up to a predicted market of $4.2bn by 2022.

“Venture Kick has accelerated our venture by giving us the key ingredients and network to successfully develop an innovative startup company.”

Tomas de Wouters, CEO of PharmaBiome

BUILDING AN EXTENSIVE PORTFOLIO

In 2017 PharmaBiome filed its first patent, closed a pre-seed round and was nominated in the TOP 100 Startups for the second time. PharmaBiome also won the Venture Kick final last year and was part of the venture leaders Life Science program in 2016. PharmaBiome CEO Tomas de Wouters adds: “Venture Kick has accelerated our venture by giving us the key ingredients and network to successfully develop an innovative startup company.”

www.pharmabiome.com
There is an increasing demand to develop therapeutics targeting the brain, with the global neuroscience market valued at $24bn in 2013 and estimated to reach over $31bn by 2020. This demand means that the technologies used by researchers must continuously advance to obtain more elaborate test results ever faster and more efficiently. One of the key challenges is to screen the function of individual neurons and their capability to form networks. A technique called extracellular recording is often used in research laboratories to record the electrical activity of neurons and other electrogenic cells. By recording this data as new drugs are applied, researchers can understand the efficacy of their treatments.

The ETH Zurich spin-off founded in September 2016, MaxWell Biosystems AG, takes the concept of extracellular recording and pushes it a step further. Usually microelectrode arrays with only tens of electrodes measure the average activity across groups of cells. MaxWell Biosystems have developed a high-density microelectrode array featuring 26,400 electrodes, which enables electrical imaging – recording the activity of individual cells at sub-cellular resolution, such that the response of every cell to a given therapy can be assessed.

ASSESSING THE CLINICAL POTENTIAL OF DRUGS TO FIGHT BRAIN DISEASES MORE EFFICIENTLY

The MaxOne system, MaxWell Biosystems’ first commercial product, provides unprecedented live-cell electrical imaging, enabling users to analyze the function of every cell in the network. MaxOne drastically shortens the phenotype characterization of identified cells (e.g. genetically-modified cells that model a disease) from several months to a few weeks. Through MaxOne and the multi-well platform, MaxTwo, MaxWell Biosystems aims to advance neuroscience research and to accelerate drug discovery. Only one year after founding, both MaxOne and MaxTwo are available to order internationally, and the startup is already working towards their next generation of products.

Combining MaxWell Biosystems’ electrophysiology platform with human induced pluripotent stem cell (h-iPSC) technology enables accurate and fast analysis of human neurons, including cells from patients, and their responses to drugs in vitro. New assays based on the combination of MaxWell Biosystems’ platform and h-iPSCs also contribute to a significant reduction of animal use during testing.

“Thanks to the extensive experience of the Venture Kick team, the program significantly helped us to focus on developing our business, gaining visibility and getting things moving fast.”

Urs Frey, co-founder and CEO of MaxWell Biosystems

TAKING CELL-IMAGERY WORLDWIDE

In 2017, during the Venture Kick program, MaxWell Biosystems launched MaxOne and made its first sales in several European countries and Japan, to customers such as the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Germany, Aarhus University in Denmark, and the Kyoto University-based institute of the Nobel Laureate for iPSCs, Dr. Shinya Yamanaka, in Japan. As winners of the venture leaders Life Science prize, they were part of the Swiss National Startup team who flew to Boston to meet investors and business experts to further advance their expansion into the US and other international markets. On top of all of these achievements, MaxWell Biosystems was recognized as one of the TOP 100 Swiss startups of 2017.

With the help of Venture Kick, 2017 has been a big year for MaxWell Biosystems: “Thanks to the extensive experience of the Venture Kick team, the program significantly helped us to focus on developing our business, gaining visibility and getting things moving fast. And the kickers camps turned out to not only be intense work, but a lot of fun, too,” says Urs Frey, co-founder and CEO of MaxWell Biosystems.
EARLY LYMPHEDEMA DIAGNOSIS USING MICRONEEDLES

According to the World Health Organization, cancer is one of the world’s leading causes of death worldwide, with over 14 million new cases in 2012, and expected to rise by 70% in the next two decades. Lymphedema is a frequently occurring and serious side effect of many cancer therapies. It is a chronic and progressive condition, expressed through swelling of a limb and caused by a blockage in the lymphatic system. Lymphedema is often diagnosed too late, which leads to decreased quality of life for the patient and high-cost treatments. Dicronis has developed the earliest possible lymphedema detection system to date, enabling tracking of lymphatic functions for early diagnosis. Early detection allows for early intervention and prevention while slowing down progression of the condition.

GREAT IMPROVEMENT OF PROGNOSIS AND PATIENTS’ QUALITY OF LIFE

The first product in Dicronis’ pipeline, Lymphit, measures patients’ lymphatic function in a safe, home-based and highly scalable manner, meaning that physicians are able to remotely monitor multiple patients and provide an early diagnosis. Through the use of fluorescent microneedles, Lymphit can monitor lymphatic function on the skin no matter where the patient is, meaning that doctors have access to reliable up-to-date information on which to base an early diagnosis, even while the patient is asymptomatic. By enabling such early diagnoses, Dicronis hope to give doctors the tools to slow down the progression of the condition and improve quality of life and prognosis of patients.

“The program is specifically structured for a growing startup, and by having fixed deadlines and objectives, it helped us keep the focus on the most relevant aspects of the business case.”

Patrizia Marschalková, CEO of Dicronis

OUT OF THE LAB AND INTO THE MARKETPLACE

Dicronis was part of this year’s venture leaders Life Science team, taking part in the high-powered investors and business roadshow in Boston. The team was also awarded the second stage of Venture Kick. After less than one year in business, Dicronis has filed its first patent and been awarded an ETH Pioneer Fellowship worth CHF 150,000. Next, Dicronis aims at raising CHF 1.5m by the end of Q2 2018, in order to complete the first in human study of Lymphit and further develop the second product in the pipeline. CEO Patrizia Marschalková explains that Venture Kick played a key part in the first year of the startup: “The Venture Kick team had an important role in guiding Dicronis through our first year. The program is specifically structured for a growing startup, and by having fixed deadlines and objectives, it helped us keep the focus on the most relevant aspects of the business case. We had also the unique opportunity to work and learn in strict contact with teams of other startups during the intensive kickers-camps.”

ww.dicronis.com
Launched in 2007, Venture Kick provides Swiss startup projects with pre-seed capital, coaching and access to professional investors. Selected members from a jury pool with more than a hundred leading startup experts in Switzerland evaluate 20 startup projects during three sessions every month.

Since the program’s inception, various juries have held 310 sessions in total and been presented with 1,015 entrepreneurial projects.

The selected startup projects received not only pre-seed capital, but also introductions to investors and hands-on coaching during 314 kickers camps.

No less than 55 Venture Kick supported startups were listed among Switzerland’s 2017 TOP100 Startup ranking (startup.ch), nine even made it to the TOP10 and three venture kickers were on the podium.

Out of the 522 startup projects, supported with a cumulative CHF 21,000,000, to date 392 have incorporated their companies with another 20 projects active.

By November 2017 more than CHF 1,808,000,000 has been invested in the supported startups (awards; grants; equity investments from founders, business angels, venture capitalists or corporate investors; loans; equity transactions and exits). The startups have created 4,748 active jobs.

The average age of incorporated companies is currently 54 months. Incorporation takes place typically five months after the first successful presentation. Hence the numbers of incorporated companies, money raised and jobs created are growing steadily.
HIGH SURVIVAL RATE AND STRONG GROWTH

Statistics show that after five years at least 50% of all startup companies turn inactive. The Venture Kick population shows a much higher survival rate. From 392 supported projects in the timeframe of 2007 – 2011, only 41, representing 10.5%, disappeared.

Looking at the jobs created, the Venture Kick startups start growing strong after year 4 of incorporation. This goes in line with the fact that most of the startups still need to get their technologies market ready in the first years and bring investors onboard to hire additional staff. The population of companies starting in 2007 – 2011 have created 23 jobs on average and keep hiring.

The data also shows that the jury does a good job in selecting the best projects. From the 108 projects which have been supported with the maximum amount of CHF 130,000 since 2007, only seven have stopped and the remaining 101 startups have created 23 jobs on average. Whereas, from the 274 projects that only received CHF 10,000, 197 are still active and have generally created seven workplaces each.

VENTURE KICK STARTUPS ATTRACT GROWING AMOUNTS OF MONEY

Although it is a tough challenge for startups to get funded by investors, successful Venture Kick startups are obviously able to attract funds.

CHF 1,808,000,000 from different sources has been invested in Venture Kick startups, whereas equity investments with a cumulative CHF 1,103,000,000 from Business Angels and Venture Capitalists represent by far the primary source of funding.

Looking at the money invested per active project, numbers are low in the first three years, with an average of CHF 574,000, but then grow sharply in the following years.

The Venture Kick startups of 2007 – 2011 received CHF 9,444,000 per company, whereas those of 2012 – 2014 already account for total money invested of CHF 2,904,000 on average.

The jury does a good job in identifying and choosing the future highflyers: The total amount of money invested in the 108 startups that were supported with the maximum amount of CHF 130,000 (stage 3) represents CHF 764,496,000. With CHF 6,912,000 per startup, this is close to three times as much as the average investment for a winner of stage 1.
How did you first get involved with Venture Kick? What attracted you to being on the jury?

As president of Business Angels and a jury member there, I noticed how many promising startups had passed through Venture Kick. That made me curious about the initiative and I immediately accepted when I was asked to become a jury member.

In your career, you are heavily involved with financing startups. What makes you decide to fund one startup over another?

Firstly, the dimensions have to fit, i.e. a manageable investment volume and geographical closeness. Secondly, we look at the sector of industry; does it match with our competences and can we give appropriate advice and support? And finally, we ask: is there a customer need and is the market large enough and scalable, plus is the idea exceptional and can it be protected?

How does the interaction with other jury members work? Do you ever have disagreements on who should receive funding? If so, how are these resolved?

At the end of each presentation we evaluate the startups based on people and project quality. We start with an individual reflection followed by a discussion within the jury. Sometimes we have different opinions at first but by sharing the arguments both for and against, we always come to an agreement.

Aside from just the cash investment, what do you think Venture Kick support means?

Presenting in front of investors means having overcome the first hurdle. Receiving the money is nice, but having passed the different stages of Venture Kick gives you full credibility. It means that you have achieved a certain level of quality which helps in the financial valuation of the first round, in finding the right investors, and in hiring competent employees or selling to first customers.

What changes have you seen in Venture Kick during these 10 years? Do you see different types of startups coming through?

ICTs, including fintech startups, have increased substantially. I also see more startups with female founders than 10 years ago, but it’s still a very low number.

“Having passed the different stages of Venture Kick gives you full credibility.”
Carole Ackermann, president of Business Angel Switzerland (BAS)

How important do you think it is for Swiss startups to move into international markets? How does Venture Kick facilitate this process?

Many well-known Swiss companies were forced to compete in the world market at a very early stage in order to secure their existence. Still today, this is one of the success factors for many young companies – to face a big market, far beyond Swiss borders – and to find one’s way. Venture Kick is a great program to prepare startups to enter into foreign markets.

Technology is a notoriously male-dominated work environment, what do you think are the biggest challenges to women in this domain, and what can the people reading this article do to help redress the balance?

The first thing is an interest in technology. This curiosity starts at a very early age at home and continues at school. Engagement, education and empowerment of girls who are passionate
about technology has a huge impact. Actively supporting women in technology by offering platforms to exchange ideas or connect with other female founders and introducing a culture where entrepreneurship is valued as being as interesting as any other job in a big corporate company is also very important. Female role models are definitely missing; personally, I support female founders whenever I can.

**Venture Kick has attracted CHF 3m funding for start-ups this year, what do you think attracts this support from donors?**

Behind many of the donors are personalities with a close relationship to Switzerland. They see the potential we have in creating jobs; jobs with a high added value. They know that these kinds of jobs are required to make sure that Switzerland plays an important part on the global stage, and to secure its social wealth. They trust Venture Kick to kick start entrepreneurial success.

**What would you like to see in Venture Kick’s future?**

The team at Venture Kick does an excellent job and I hope that they receive even more funding. My hopes are that the Venture Kick initiative helps startups to keep up with “hungry” international competitors, attracts more risk-taking investors to finance, reduces the fear of failure in society and supports collaboration with the smartest on earth.
What first attracted you to being on the Venture Kick jury?

There were four main reasons; firstly Venture Kick was (and still is) an excellent initiative for promoting startups in Switzerland and is an enterprise that deserves to be supported.

Secondly, I felt that the whole Venture Kick process is extremely helpful for startups, as they do not just receive money, but also excellent coaching.

Thirdly, I was impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment from Beat, Jordi and the whole Venture Kick team – it made me feel that this was something that was going to be long lasting and make an impact. Finally, as jury members we can make a contribution to something that is significant and relevant for the economy of our country.

What changes have you seen in Venture Kick during these 10 years? Do you see different types of startups coming through?

In the last decade, Venture Kick has been able to attract significant additional donors, giving a much bigger funding “runway” to the projects. That’s a very positive development. Also, at the beginning, the stage 3 “kick” was a grant, now that has been changed to an adaptive equity participation, meaning that Venture Kick takes a participation in the stage 3 winners. That Venture Kick is a shareholder in companies they fund today means that it remains close to them even after they have left the program. As for the types of startups, the over-all quality has improved. This can be seen through the jury votes, we seldom had close votes at the beginning, but now we have more and more.

In the past 10 years there have been significant changes in the ecosystem surrounding startups in Switzerland, what part do you think Venture Kick has played in supporting these changes?

I would say that through coaching and improving the business case of Venture Kick startups, we have raised the bar of expectations for all startups in Switzerland. This has in turn raised the credibility of the ecosystem. Beat and Jordi are very visible and skilled spokespeople, which has improved the visibility of startups in Switzerland. Venture Kick alumni now make the front pages, 10 years ago startups were lucky to be on page 35!

Venture Kick was the first private initiative to propose yearlong startup pre-financing with multiple stages and giving on the spot decisions for grants in Switzerland: how do you see this model? And how do you think it might have influenced others?

The model is clearly a success, as proven by the disproportionate number of successful startups that Venture Kick has supported. Other startup incubators in Switzerland may have looked to Venture Kick and borrowed elements from it to make their own, but Venture Kick has a number of complementary factors that make it unique; The sheer number of startups wanting to be a part of Venture Kick, combined with professional organization and administration, coaching capacity, the rigorous process with deadlines and reporting, large pool of expert jury members willing to work pro bono and lastly, the visionary team and board of directors, make Venture Kick something special.

This year we’re presenting the 10 greatest success stories from the last 10 years of Venture Kick. Which startups have particularly stood out to you or inspired you during this time?

This is a tough one! Those that have stood out are those that have grown and proved themselves to be viable and sustainable companies. It’s always rewarding to see a group of young people start to earn a living from the idea with which they originally set out.

The other ones that have stood out are the ones that were rejected in stage 2, but have gone on to be successful anyway: Dacuda (mobile 3D scanning technology) is the one which always
comes to my mind. Along the same lines, companies that initially took off and did well, and were labeled a success, but somehow hit a wall and failed.

**You were named Business Angel of the Year 2017, congratulations! What does this award mean to you?**

It’s a recognition of my work and my contributions to the Swiss startup ecosystem over the past 15 years. It’s crucial that new technology companies are founded in Switzerland for the sake of the economy and job creation and I would like to use the platform to raise awareness of a very glaring lack of funding that we have for startups in the ‘Valley of Death’, the second and third financing rounds. They are inadequate in Switzerland and it is holding all of us back. In my opinion, it’s the greatest hurdle for startups in the ecosystem and this is something which we have to solve.

**Aside from the cash injection, what difference do you think it makes to a startup to have the Venture Kick seal of approval?**

Venture Kick approval is definitely a boost to the startup for a number of reasons. They and their business case have gone through an intensive selection process, improving every time, meaning that by the end the quality is significantly better. The team are confronted with deadlines which they have to meet. Through the Venture Kick process they also become embedded in the Swiss startup ecosystem because they have so many opportunities to present themselves, e.g. through the team going to the US or to China, or being invited to events where they meet other entrepreneurs and business angels.
10 YEARS OF DRIVING INNOVATION

We are proud that after 10 years of giving kicks to startups, we have multiple success stories that have translated into brands that you may have done business with. In the following pages we present just a few edited highlights of products that our alumni have brought to market.
**G-Therapeutics SA**  
2013  
An implantable neuro-stimulation system to rehabilitate patients suffering from neurological disorders.  
→ Raised CHF 36m for development and currently performing clinical feasibility studies, due for completion in 2018.

**MindMaze SA**  
2010  
Novel platforms for neurorehabilitation, game training and 3D imaging using immersive virtual reality, brain imaging and 3D technology.  
→ Raised over CHF 100m. Even Leonardo DiCaprio has invested in Venture Kick’s first unicorn!

**TWIICE**  
2017  
Modular and customizable exoskeleton for walking assistance that allows paraplegics to regain independence.  
→ Successfully competed in Cybathlon 2016.

**Abionic SA**  
2010  
Biomedical point-of-care diagnostic device that provides fast and user-friendly allergy diagnoses.  
→ Successfully completed clinical trials. Received FDA approval for world’s most rapid allergy test.

**Ava AG**  
2014  
A wearable medical device to accurately and conveniently recognize fertile days and facilitate family planning.  
→ Launched in USA and Europe. Raised over CHF 12m in funding with a growing team in Zurich and San Francisco.

**Pregnolia AG**  
2015  
A diagnostic device to accurately predict the risk of premature birth during routine pre-natal consultations.  
→ Entered the TOP100 Swiss startups. Winner of W.A. de Vigier Award 2016.
Aleva Neurotherapeutics SA 2008
Implantable Microelectrodes for Deep Brain Stimulation as a therapy for neurological diseases.

→ Raised more than CHF 55m from investors. Clinical efficacy demonstrated.

CAScination AG 2009
Seamlessly integrates modern stereotactic technology dedicated to complex liver interventions and surgeries.

→ Received FDA clearance and is ramping up global sales.

Advanced Osteotomy Tools AOT AG 2010
Computer assisted and robot guided laser osteotome (CARLO) to improve current bone surgery.

→ Successfully completed Series C financing.

KB Medical SA 2011
Robotic system to empower surgeons with precise, cost-effective, robot-assisted spinal and neuro surgery.

→ Acquired by Globus Medical in 2017.

HYLOMORPH AG 2015
Anti-fibrotic solutions for soft tissue repair and implantable medical devices.

→ The Wyss Zurich project established international partnerships to prepare for clinical trials.

VirtaMed AG 2007
Virtual reality simulators for instructional teaching and training of different diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopic interventions.

→ Strong growing global sales and team. Launched world’s first virtual reality simulator for ankle arthroscopy in 2017.

CHANGING THE WAY WE PERFORM SURGERY
DEVELOPING NEW BIOTECHNOLOGIES TO DIAGNOSE AND TREAT

Amal Therapeutics SA
Novel therapeutic cancer vaccines with a proprietary family of vectors.
- Raised over CHF 12m in funding.

InterAx Biotech AG
Assets for the discovery of functionally selective drugs with improved efficacy and reduced side effects for human receptors.
- Closed investment round with Boston based biotech investors after winning venture leaders trip.

PharmaBiome AG
Platform to optimize the efficient development and production of defined, function-based microbiome therapies to treat intestinal diseases.
- Entered the TOP100 Swiss startups.

InSphero AG
Organotypic, biological in vitro 3D microtissues for highly predictive drug testing.
- Strong, growing global sales. Teams in the US, the EU and Switzerland. Secured over CHF 20m in Series C funding.

MaxWell BioSystems AG
Advanced cell-imaging platform for drug development.
- Ramping-up global sales of multiple products. Venture leaders life sciences 2017

ProteoMediX AG
Developing markers for the early detection and monitoring of prostate cancer.
**REVOLUTIONISING SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY THROUGH A NEW GENERATION OF INSTRUMENTS**

**Nanotive SA**
2013
Disruptive proprietary technology, which allows exploration of a living cell in 3D without damaging it.

→ 3D Cell Explorer successfully launched and sold around the globe.

**IRsweep AG**
2014
Cutting edge optical sensing technology to trace gas sensing and on-line process analysis.

→ Raised substantial investment round.

**Andrew Alliance AG**
2011
Modern benchtop and transportable androids for handling liquids.

→ Strong global sales activity. Secured Series B financing.

**Zurich Instruments AG**
2008
LabOne® integrates the finest analog front-ends with fast, sophisticated digital signal processors.

→ Announced international partnerships and opened office in China.

**Winterthur Instruments AG**
2010
Measurement system for fast non-contact and non-destructive testing of industrial coatings.

→ Closed a financing round to fuel growing global sales.

**Lunaphore Technologies SA**
2014
Tumor analysis platforms making a greater number of tissue biomarker checks possible for each tumor.

→ Raised CHF 6m in funding.
TRANSFORMING YOUR CELL PHONE INTO A MULTIFUNCTIONAL TOOL

Beekeeper AG
2011
Digital workplace app connecting and empowering entire workforces anywhere, anytime.

- Operating across 137 countries. Raised CHF 8m in Series A financing round.

Dacuda AG
2008
Low-cost digitization technology based on real-time image processing and computer vision to be used in computer mice and mobile phones.

- Dacuda 3D division acquired by mixed reality leader Magic Leap, forming its first European presence in Zurich.

Fashwell AG
2013
Recognizes products in images through cutting edge deep learning algorithms in order to make Instagram shoppable.

- The app launched in 2015 and the company is currently expanding from fashion to furniture recognition.

Scandit AG
2009
Barcode scanning solutions that transform business processes across industries including healthcare, logistics, manufacturing and retail.


RealLook AG
2013
Selfnation offers customized, perfectly fitting jeans and chinos using online 3D visualization and sustainable Swiss production.

- Sold several thousand customized jeans in the first year. Raised substantial funding rounds and expanding into Berlin and the UK.

ScanTrust SA
2013
Copy-proof QR codes combined with a comprehensive Internet of Things software platform, fights against counterfeit goods.

- Operates out of Lausanne, Shanghai and Bangkok. Raised financing rounds with Swiss and Chinese investors.
Using Electronics and Mechanics to Solve Societal and Industrial Needs

**CombaGroup SA**
*2012*

Greenhouse technology to grow salads locally all year long using less resources than traditional methods of growing.

- Contracts signed for 1.5 ha of greenhouses in Switzerland and France. Winner of venture leaders China.

**Geosatis SA**
*2015*

Complete solution for offenders under electronic monitoring, decreasing the cost of monitoring and of re-entering society.

- Growing customer base around the globe, including Switzerland, South Africa and Lithuania.

**QualySense AG**
*2009*

High-end solutions enable reliable sorting of every single grain, seed or bean using biochemical and geometric properties.

- Selling around the globe. Secured CHF 14m in growth funding in 2017.

**UrbanAlps AG**
*2013*

Uncopyable, 3D printed keys for the security market.

- Product patented and launched in 2017.

**Relish Brothers AG**
*2013*

The next generation of electric guitars made with unique construction methods and materials.

- 300% sales growth per year over the past four years.

**Kandou Bus SA**
*2010*

New breed of chip connection technologies fundamentally improving the speed to power consumption trade-off frontier.

- Operating in Switzerland, UK, USA and Japan. Elected among the top 60 emerging companies to watch by EE Times.
SENDING DRONES WHERE HUMANS CAN’T GO

**AEROTAIN AG**
*2016*
Safe drone for live entertainment, providing fun, monetizable and interactive entertainment.

- Delivering customer projects in a growing number of countries.

**Flyability SA**
*2014*
Insect-inspired drone built for inaccessible places, which can collide with obstacles and continue its flight undisturbed.

- Over 250 industrial customers using the “Elios” drone. Employs 60 people and growing strong.

**Gamaya SA**
*2016*
Integrated solution for large-scale diagnostics of crops and decision support for precision agriculture.

- Named Hottest European Startup by Nvidia. Just closed a CHF 3.2m Series A round.

**MotionPilot Sàrl**
*2016*
Smart controller to make piloting drones more fun and immersive.


**senseFly SA**
*2009*
Smart autonomous high resolution flying cameras that can automatically survey up to 10 square kilometers in a single flight.

- Over 100 employees and 200 points of sale in over 100 countries. Acquired by Parrot.

**Insightness AG**
*2014*
Visual awareness systems enabling smooth augmented virtual reality in smart glasses and obstacle evasion in drones.

- Successfully closed first round of financing.
REDUCING OUR IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

**Bcomp AG**
2010
High-performance semi-finished products made from natural fiber composites.

- Closed Series A financing round of CHF 3m.
- Technology included in Formula E racing cars, luxury watches and surf boards.

**Climeworks AG**
2009
Climeworks Plants capture pure CO₂ from air for the food and beverage industries, commercial agriculture, energy sector and automotive industry.

- Made history with the world’s first "negative emissions" plant operating in Iceland and turning carbon dioxide into stone.

**DEPsys SA**
2013
GridEye measures, monitors and controls the low-voltage grid for efficient integration of renewable energy sources.

- Received CE certification. Agreements with Singapore Power Group.

**Insolight SA**
2015
Flat optical panel that directs sunlight onto smaller and highly efficient solar cells, doubling efficiency.

- New efficiency world record for a flat solar panel that can be mounted on a roof: 36.4% (validated by the Fraunhofer ISE).

**L.E.S.S. SA**
2011
Ultra-thin, -bright and -uniform lighting systems based on nano-structured waveguides.

- L.E.S.S. nano active fiber integrated into a car for the first time at GIMS’17. EY Entrepreneur Of The Year™ award finalist.

**TwingTec AG**
2013
Tethered wings to harvest energy from high altitude winds.

- Closed new financing round in 2017.
In your career you moved from an academic background, having been an assistant professor at EPFL, into the business side of your company, Selexis, followed by joining the board of Venture Kick. That's a packed career, what motivated you to move in this direction?

A single word has motivated and shaped my career: “independence”. I created Selexis SA as a means to becoming this independent person. Along the way, I was lucky to meet unique individuals who allowed me to become an entrepreneur and create this successful venture. It was an easy decision to accept a seat on the board of Venture Kick because it is so important for me to help shape the future of startups in Switzerland. Venture Kick is unique in that it not only provides money to the entrepreneurs, but also the education and mentorship necessary for success.

What does the role of board member involve? Is there any particular part you enjoy?

My role with Venture Kick is to offer a hands-on view of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It’s important to consider the best way to manage a new initiative to ensure that it will be around for the long term. Additionally, we represent the donors and partners of the private initiative of Venture Kick. It was vital for me to explore different ways to guarantee the sustainability of the organization. Today we have established a promising way of ensuring the future of this initiative by encouraging each entrepreneur who has benefited from it to return some of his or her wealth back to the Venture Kick Foundation.

Venture Kick has given kicks to 522 startups in its 10 year existence. What do you think sets it apart from other startup support organisations?

Today, Venture Kick is novel in how it supports entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. Firstly, it can provide up to CHF 130,000 to an entrepreneur to support his/her ideas. Secondly, Venture Kick provides entrepreneurs with a unique kicking approach. It helps the entrepreneur understand the amount of business development work he or she must deliver to succeed in leading the startup. Furthermore, Venture Kick entrepreneurs have the opportunity to meet with many other entrepreneurs, some of whom may also become competitors. This is extremely helpful as such interaction helps a leader to understand the market.

Engagement Migros and Swisscom joined the Venture Kick consortium this year. What makes Venture Kick attractive for corporates?

Major corporations realize that by supporting Venture Kick, they are investing in the future of our country. Venture Kick has demonstrated that it indeed creates many companies, jobs and, ultimately, wealth in Switzerland. Beyond investing for personal return, I believe we should also invest in the community that has financed, educated and mentored us.

Last year, you received the “Excellence in Leadership Award” from BioProcess International. What did this award mean to you?

This award meant that my company, Selexis, lived up to its brand promise: “Driven by Excellence. Guided by Science.” We have always been innovative in science, which is represented by the number of patents we have filed. To impact the production of novel biologics for unmet medical needs, our R&D investment was essential in generating better solutions for our industry. This award was given to me because we have maintained and nurtured this corporate philosophy for over 15 years.

Selexis was founded in 2001. What has changed for startups in Switzerland since then?

Other than the number of opportunities, the world of startups has not changed since 2001 when I created Selexis. Today we see many more opportunities for entrepreneurs because there’s more of an appetite for investing in and supporting young companies in the market here.

In the past, the creation of a startup was always associated with high risk/high reward, which was not well accepted by people here in Switzerland. That’s changed, in part, because of initiatives like Venture Kick.
Selexis exited very successfully early this year. What brought you to this decision and what are the next steps?

Selexis has matured for more than 15 years and we had reached an important turning point in the growth of our business. The company wanted to expand its market segment. This could have been achieved as a stand-alone company by seeking a large investment or by looking for the right partner via acquisition. Our board decided that seeking the right partner would be the most efficient way to expand our global reach into new business segments. Now we are poised to be part of a complete contract development manufacturing organization for the biopharmaceuticals industry.

"Venture Kick is novel in how it supports entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs"

Igor Fisch, Biotech entrepreneur

Many Swiss startups move into international markets. How do you think that Venture Kick helps that process?

Venture Kick helps the startup entrepreneurs to understand the surrounding environment much better. By meeting other entrepreneurs in many different sectors, I noticed that we all have the same problems; we need money to grow the business and identify new markets, and we all concluded that we need to go global in order to survive.

In addition to being a board member, you are also joining the consortium of Venture Kick donors. What is your motivation?

I have experienced the great impact and importance of early support myself. When I was at the very beginning of my entrepreneurial journey, I was supported by NETS, the predecessor program of venture leaders. After a successful exit with Selexis, I promised myself I would do my best to help Venture Kick to continue offering such invaluable help to startups. Let’s kick the next generation of entrepreneurs and enable them to shape the future!

ABOUT IGOR FISCH:

Entrepreneur Dr. Igor Fisch is CEO of Selexis SA, which he co-founded in 2001 after having previously worked in research in the fields of protein chemistry and molecular biology. Selexis SA is a global leader in mammalian cell-line development. In June 2017, Selexis was acquired by JSR Corporation, a Japanese company that is entering into the business of life sciences.
**THE DONORS OF VENTURE KICK**

**SUPPORTED BY A CONSORTIUM OF PRIVATE DONORS**

**THOUGHTS ON THE 10 YEARS OF VENTURE KICK**

“Venture Kick closes a key gap in the innovation chain by early identification and promotion of high-risk, high-potential business ideas in order to create the markets of the future. The highly respected promotion channels guarantee national and international visibility for the startups.”

Dr. Pascale Venmont, CEO, Gebert Rüf Stiftung

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“Venture Kick’s unique program and the expertise of those involved offers the opportunity for promising business ideas to become global shapers and to contribute to the development of Switzerland.”

Dr. Suzanne Schenk, Deputy CEO, Ernst Göhner Stiftung

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“In future, I envision Venture Kick becoming self-sustaining by leveraging the Foundation’s philanthropic investment, along with expansion into other markets and returns from financed startups.”

Dr. Igor Fish, CEO Selexis, SA

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“The startup teams of Venture Kick are definitely among Switzerland’s most innovative brains. We are very happy to bring an effective contribution for the encouragement of new commercial ideas.”

Stefan Schöbi, Director Engagement Migros

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“In the next 10 years, we hope that many more successful companies will come out of innovative ideas supported by Venture Kick and that the innovation power of Switzerland in the tech arena will be further strengthened.”

Gabriele Giraudi, Member of the Board of Trustees, Fondation ProTechno
“In the next 10 years, I would like Venture Kick to be a springboard for the emergence of projects focused on products, services and new technologies related to the sustainable development of our planet, because this parameter is now essential if we reason in the long term.”

Andre Hoffman

“Venture Kick offers the opportunity to catalyze economic transformation at the service of society by mobilizing capital, talent and ideas.”

Dr. Maximilian Martin, Global Head of Philanthropy, Lombard Odier

“The setup with a strong coaching/kicking approach, the exposure to a jury of investors with a great palette of experts and the connection to a large network are the key success factors for Venture Kick!”

Bea Arnold, Associate Director, Debiopharm

“In the next 10 years, Venture Kick should continue to go for quality and engage more international and female institutional investors in order to promote Swiss startups.”

Dr. Nanja Strecker, European Space Agency Business Incubation Program (ESA BIC)

“All successful startups in Switzerland have come out of the tough Venture Kick process. Venture Kick is the most important startup initiative and we’re proud to support this unique private program.”

Roger Wüthrich-Hasenböhler, Chief Digital Officer, Swisscom

“We are very excited to partner with Venture Kick to provide innovators with the right tools and training, so that they can successfully move their innovative ideas to market, create new jobs and contribute back to the community.”

Eveline Mumenthaler, Director, Rising Tide Foundation

“In the next 10 years of Venture Kick, I hope that we see the establishment and growth of many more companies that not only sell their ideas and initial products but also turn into large successful global companies that create thousands of jobs.”

Eric Lohrer, Hansjörg Wyss

“In the next 10 years, Venture Kick to be a springboard for the emergence of projects focused on products, services and new technologies related to the sustainable development of our planet, because this parameter is now essential if we reason in the long term.”

Andre Hoffman
VENTURE KICK

ORGANIZATION

Venture Kick is a philanthropic initiative of a private consortium. Turning scientific innovation into entrepreneurial activity and job creation is the basis of societal and economical prosperity. In the very early stages, startups bear very high risks that are neither carried by public money nor by private investors. Supporting seed stage startups fills a crucial gap and is therefore purely philanthropic.

LEGAL STRUCTURE

Venture Kick was selected as a program line of digitalswitzerland’s startup enablement program. digitalswitzerland is structured as an association and a foundation. The digitalswitzerland foundation, along with its independent foundation fund Venture Kick, is hosted by “Fondation des Fondateurs” (FdF). As an umbrella foundation, FdF is monitored by the Swiss Federal Supervisory Board of Foundations.

PURPOSE

Venture Kick aims at promoting entrepreneurship at Swiss universities and kicking-off science-based, highly innovative startups. Too often, excellent research ideas are not transferred to the market. Venture Kick helps these great ideas to get funded at the early stage of their development.

GOVERNING BODIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF DIGITALSCHWITZERLAND FOUNDATION

The board of trustees is responsible for the overall strategy of digitalswitzerland. Members of the executive committee can be found on digitalswitzerland.com.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF FONDATION DES FONDATEURS

The board of trustees controls the business activities of Venture Kick based on detailed annual reporting.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
• Dr. Dr. iur et phil. Thomas Sprecher (President),
• Dr. phil. Philipp Egger (Vice president),
• Evelyn S. Braun (Member).

The board of trustees has delegated all strategic and managerial competences of Venture Kick to the strategy board.

STRATEGY BOARD OF VENTURE KICK

The strategy board defines the medium and long-term objectives and orientation of Venture Kick. It is composed of representatives of the supporting partners and successful entrepreneurs.

MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGY BOARD:
• Dr. sc. nat. Pascale Vonmont (delegate) representing Gebert Ruf Stiftung,
• Dr. iur. Suzanne Schenk, representing Ernst Gönner Stiftung,
• Dr. Igor Fisch, Selexis SA.

POOL OF EXPERTS

The jury members evaluating the startup projects during the jury sessions are all proven and successful investors and business experts. The composition of the jury varies from session to session. The pool of experts can be found at venturekick.ch.

MANAGEMENT OF VENTURE KICK

The strategy board has commissioned the operational management mandate to venturelab. The co-managing directors, Beat Schillig and Jordi Montserrat have been running the operations of Venture Kick since the start, together with highly committed teams in Zurich and Lausanne.

OPERATING TEAM STARTUP SUPPORT:
Salome Aggeler, Patrick Biro, Caroline Graf, Philip Hassler, Stefan Steiner

PROMOTION/COMMUNICATION:
Tsering Ngorkhangsar, Lara Rossi, Linda Seward

IT/ADMINISTRATION:
Roger Hammel, Raphael Huber, Daniel Niklaus.
Beat Schillig and Jordi Montserrat are the founding managers of Venture Kick, both motivated by a passion to help researchers in Switzerland to bring their projects to market. After working tirelessly for the past 10 years, they reflect on how far Venture Kick has come and where they hope that it is headed.

You co-founded the Venture Kick initiative back in 2007. What drove its creation?

BS Back in 2005 we already had a great collaboration with Pascale Vonmont from the Gebert Rüf Stiftung through which we developed venture leaders US from the NETS program. Gebert Rüf Stiftung wanted to tackle a new gap after the NETS program had been adopted. In an exchange with key players of the ecosystem, the topic of pre-seed funding proved to be a clear gap. On this basis we developed the concept for Venture Kick together. On June 12th 2007 we announced the launch of Venture Kick on “10vor10”, the daily news program on Swiss television.

JM A key challenge was to make this pre-seed funding efficient and impactful, to be sure it would support the brilliant scientists in Switzerland in commercializing their research. We knew that we had to go beyond just financial support, we needed to push the new entrepreneurs out of their comfort zone. We wanted to give them the kick to engage with potential customers, partners and investors as early as possible.

10 years later, is the spirit still the same?

JM Definitely. The ecosystem keeps evolving and we keep integrating new partners and identifying new jury members to make sure that Venture Kick keeps reaching out to make the ecosystem better and bring Switzerland one step further. I would even say that our ambition has strengthened: many “venture kickers” have built impressive startups with a global impact, so we can use them as role models for the new entrepreneurs: “dare to dream big!”

BS Also the number of applications for Venture Kick has grown 300 %, but we have only been able to increase the number of supported projects by 30 %. From the beginning, the Venture Kick pro-cess has been very selective. Now the compe-ition has become kind of brutal and we would love to support more of the presented projects than our budget actually allows.

After Gebert Rüf Stiftung and Ernst Göhner Stiftung a large number of new partners joined Venture Kick. How important was this?

BS Venture Kick is a fully private initiative; we have never received a single Swiss franc of public money, so it could only evolve by delivering a highly impactful program and convincing new partners with this. The collaboration with partners remains at the heart of Venture Kick: bring the best partners, experts and investors on board, in the jury or as supporters, and foster the strongest ecosystem possible for start- ups.

JM It was clear from the start that if we wanted to “move the needle”, it could only be done by winning new partners. And the growing success of Venture Kick just puts us under constant pressure to become better at fundraising to cope with the demand from quality startup projects.

To receive the support of Venture Kick, startups have to give their best pitch to your jury. What is your pitch to convince new donors?

JM Just look at the great Venture Kick startups that are competing successfully at a global level and are creating jobs and wealth for the next generation in Switzerland. We need more of them! And now after ten years Venture Kick as an organization knows how to kick them to become winners even better.

BS For every single Swiss franc that Venture Kick has paid out to a project, the startups have been able to raise more than CHF 83 in addition. This number is increasing year by year as the startups grow in jobs and turnover and raise higher financing rounds from investors.

Many initiatives supporting startups have been launched in Switzerland in the meanwhile. Is Venture Kick still unique?

BS The appreciation for our “kicks” from the startups is still there. We often hear from them that the tough and straightforward feedback and actionable inputs are what makes Venture Kick different. They like our very strict and competitive process. And not to be forgotten: nobody else distributes CHF 3m in seed capital to more than 60 projects a year.

JM We keep delivering on the promise to have significant impacts on the startups. We also keep evolving our network of investors and experts, which is growing, especially on the international side. More and more Venture Kick startups are backed by leading investors, with exits to Silicon Valley tycoons taking place. We also often hear that the visibility and credibility stamp that Venture Kick offers is as valuable if not more than the money.
You have both kicked hundreds of startups in so-called Kickers Camps. What are your favorite anecdotes?

**JM** There would be many ... lots of very intense moments. I could mention the case where we “forced” a participant to reach out early to a potential partner. The entrepreneur felt he had “nothing to propose” and didn’t even have a warm introduction. It turned out that this contact eventually triggered a strategic partnership between this founder and one of the leading pharma companies.

**BS** Sometimes I just dial the number of a personal contact in industry and hand the mobile over to the founders to get instant and direct market feedback and follow-up opportunities for them. Once we had an entrepreneur that came to the Kickers Camp to announce that he would stop the project. Then he stayed and two days later he was fully motivated again with a new business case. Later he raised more than CHF 10m from investors.

Which startups out of the 522 supported are you most proud of?

**JM** I am proud of every entrepreneur that has taken up the challenge to build their company and come to present at Venture Kick, whether they succeeded or not. Of course, it is a particular joy to see them standing in the ranks of the TOP100 Swiss startups, or making global headlines with their achievements.

**BS** This is like asking a father which child is his favorite. I am most proud of the ones that have made the biggest evolution in terms of entrepreneurial personality. The transformation from a technology centric scientist to a customer centric entrepreneur is not trivial. What you observe in the first pitches is often not really convincing. And only a few months later you see some raising millions from investors. To witness this makes me proud every time.

How do you see Venture Kick in 10 years time?

**JM** Celebrating our 20th anniversary with more partners and multiple Venture Kickers turned industry captains and billionaires on stage, to kick Switzerland into the next decade!

**BS** Most of our startups are still in their growth phase. But there are already nice exits to celebrate. And nearly all of the successful Venture Kick startups that have sold their companies and made substantial amounts of money kick back and support the next generation of startups as mentor, coach or investor! That’s what we hope to grow even stronger in the next 10 years!
3,200,000

TO KICK 122 STARTUPS IN 2018 AND BRING SWISS SCIENCE TO GLOBAL MARKETS.

Each month, eight scientists get the chance to present their startup project to a jury. The four most promising receive CHF 10,000 and qualify for the second round held three months later, where the two best teams receive another CHF 20,000. In the third and final round, the winner gets seed funding of CHF 100,000.

Since 2007, 522 spin-off projects from 20+ Swiss universities have received CHF 21,000,000 in pre-seed funding resulting in 392 incorporated companies with 4,748 jobs. These startups had attracted investments of CHF 1,808,000,000 by October 2017.

The private initiative Venture Kick is financed by:

- GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG
- ERNST GÖHNER STIFTUNG
- André Hoffmann
- Hansjörg Wyss
- Martin Haefner
- Igor Fisch

www.venturekick.ch