

# The thrill of pushing boundaries



“If every graduate doing well donates a little, the result is huge” says André Dahinden.  
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From pharmacist to internationally sought-after manager and consultant: André Dahinden’s history in a nutshell. This background also shapes his view of ETH, which he now supports as a donor.

*What is important to you in life?*

**ANDRÉ DAHINDEN** - To test my limits and find out what I am capable of, whether it’s in sport, studies, or my work. I don’t follow this urge quite as stubbornly as I used to, but I still like to see how far I can get.

*In 2019, after a career of almost twenty years in the pharmaceutical industry, you set up your own business. Today, you are Managing Director at Accenture management consultancy - what personal boundaries have you pushed with these changes?*

One of the factors linked to setting up my own business was to face my fears and see if I could ‘reinvent’ myself. My family encouraged me to take this step - that was important. It was an astounding realisation for me that I could still be successful without things like a prestigious title or a large staff. However, I soon realised that it was

too early for this step. I wanted to embark on another high-energy adventure in a large organisation. With Accenture's diverse mix of talented people, I have an incredible amount to learn here, but also to give.

*Last year you also completed your training as a helicopter pilot.*

Doing a lot of mountain sports, I've always been fascinated by the helicopter pilots flying for Rega and Air Zermatt. I wanted to find out whether I had enough discipline, desire and talent for this.

*How do you remember your student days?*

I almost glorify that period of my life. The studies themselves weren't particularly taxing for me. I mainly remember good times during the seminar weeks, lunches together and fitness training at the ASVZ. It was a time of lots of opportunities and freedom and little responsibility.

*Alongside Hugo Tschirky, who unfortunately passed away, Gerd Folkers was your doctoral supervisor. You describe him as a mentor.*

Gerd has always inspired me even back in my student days. He is a visionary. During my career in industry, he kept telling me that I could also do something completely different and that I shouldn't let my success tie me down: at every stage of your life you can always become someone else! As an emeritus ETH professor and former chair of Collegium Helveticum, he is currently doing an apprenticeship as a bookbinder. Today, Gerd is a father-like friend to me.

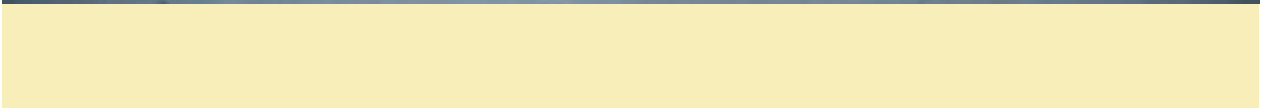
*You donate to the ETH Excellence Scholarships - why?*

In my opinion, we in Switzerland don't show enough pride in our institutions compared to other countries. ETH has given me a lot. For me, donating an amount every year is a way of expressing pride. If every graduate doing well donates a little, the result is huge.

*When you look at ETH in your role as a business and strategy consultant, what do you advise your alma mater?*

Don't let anything stop you from striving for world class! Of course, ETH forms part of the Swiss educational landscape and therefore the federalist system too. However, I believe everyone is best served if we see ETH as a beacon institution and cultivate it as such. To achieve ambitions of gaining global relevance, we sometimes need to raise our heads higher than we're used to in Switzerland and cheer confidently: yes, we're world leaders too!

**[Learn more about ETH Excellence Scholarships](#)**



## Introducing

André Dahinden (\*1975) studied pharmacy at ETH Zurich and holds a doctorate in management sciences. Before working as a consultant, one of his roles was General Manager at the biotechnology company Amgen, first in Switzerland and then in Italy. André Dahinden and his Valais-born wife have a son in baccalaureate school. The family lives with Ino the cat in Cham (ZG).

[https://ethz-foundation.ch/en/spotlight/uplift\\_nr10\\_andre-dahinden/](https://ethz-foundation.ch/en/spotlight/uplift_nr10_andre-dahinden/)

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