



FAREWELL, COMFORT ZONE

INTERVIEW

_MARCO BAZZANI

CIO and Member of the Executive Board, Swisscard AECS

Published in SMART insights 2021 magazine

In cooperation with

AECS
SWISScard

ergon

smart
people –
smart
software®

MARCO BAZZANI IS CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER AND MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF SWISSCARD AECS: ONE OF SWITZERLAND'S LEADING CREDIT CARD PROVIDERS. HAVING ABRUPTLY CHANGED COURSE AT A LATE STAGE IN HIS CAREER, HE EMBODIES CHANGE MANAGEMENT LIKE NO OTHER. MR BAZZANI LEFT HIS COMFORT ZONE AND NOW SUCCESSFULLY PERFORMS A DAILY TIGHTROPE WALK, BALANCING IT AND BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMANITY. WE ASKED HIM HOW HE DOES IT.

Mr Bazzani, what does your job involve?

I lead the 120-plus staff of our IT operation. We have a pretty broad remit; from maintaining the IT infrastructure, to managing relationships with external partners, to controlling and contracting, business innovation and change management. And then, of course, there's IT security, which has become increasingly important.

You spent a long time in the banking industry. Where does your passion for IT come from?

In my 24 years in private banking at Credit Suisse I oversaw countless projects where we had to mesh business and IT. I was also ad-interim COO of International Wealth Management, heading up global IT with a staff of over 1,000. In banking and the card industry, IT is the enabler when it comes to digitalising the business – whether it's to improve efficiency or the customer

experience, or just to manage the complexity of it all. I've always been excited to help that process along as it intersects with IT.

What made you switch jobs at 53?

On my way to work one day I was thinking about the long and successful career I'd had, and I had this real longing to push myself to do something new. I realised that I had to act fast and get myself immersed in a different field if I wanted to achieve anything by the time I turned 60. I had a frank discussion with my line manager about it and got the ball rolling from there.

How did it feel?

It was a mix of enthusiasm, curiosity and respect. Huge respect, really, for the fact that I was leaving my comfort zone, as well as fear that I wouldn't enjoy the same kind of success. But my curiosity won out. It was what really spurred me on. At Swisscard I was

welcomed from day one with an openness I hadn't experienced before, with no prejudice or standing on ceremony – and that gave me another rush of energy.

So you'd describe yourself as a risk-taker?

I try to weigh up the business risks as best I can and I'm willing to take controlled risks if it's going to be worth it. Risks have to be assessed continually and corrected swiftly if necessary. It's an approach that has served me well.

How do you approach major challenges?

I love getting to grips with complex problems. It's one of my strengths. It's even better when you have other people to bounce ideas off. It hones the decision-making process.

Has anything taught you a particularly good lesson?

It's more something I've learned along the way. Mistakes don't just happen. You often see them coming mi-

les off but you're too busy taking corrective action to look closely. Or you're too proud to admit them. I'd rather tackle them head on and have the courage to have a nightmare ending rather than no end to the nightmare. The important thing is not to get caught up in apportioning blame.

How do you motivate yourself and your team after a setback?

We simply discuss what we did particularly well. By that I don't mean that we gloss over what went wrong. Rather, we have the confidence to say that there is good to be gained from the situation and professionals like us can use that to evolve.

Any tips on working with external service providers?

Everyone should be aware that they're in a win-win situation and be proactive about giving their partners what they need. In any case, communica-

tion is everything. That's also what it's like partnering with Airlock. We work together at having an open, constructive peer-to-peer dialogue.

What have you enjoyed most about the past four years at Swisscard?

It hasn't been any particular success but more the corporate culture in general. It's extremely collaborative and gives people the scope to grow fully in their roles. We value team spirit and we encourage each other to innovate. We also have short decision-making paths, which make my life as CIO an awful lot easier.

What's your primary management principle?

Engagement. Complex tasks are easier if you're motivated and looking forward to them. Going the extra mile isn't nearly so much effort with a smile on your face. In my experience, you achieve that with respect, trust and transparent communication. A leader must listen, challenge and support.

Has anyone particularly inspired you?

In Myanmar I met one of the most senior figures in Buddhism. His presence alone filled an entire room, occupied it almost. I felt that presence, and realised that there are other ways of leading, outside of our general and business culture. The key is to go through life with an open mind. That credo is behind everything I do, be it now or in the future. />

Interested in more?

Digitisation projects
Change makers
Tech trends

Order now
ergon.ch/smart-2021

