

A portrait of Adrian Schmid, a middle-aged man with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket over a light blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting and bokeh effects.

An integrator with a feel for people

INTERVIEW

_ADRIAN SCHMID, HEAD OF EHEALTH SUISSE

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ADRIAN SCHMID HEADS EHEALTH SUISSE AND IS IN CHARGE OF IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC PATIENT RECORDS NATIONWIDE. HE GREW UP IN A MEDICAL FAMILY, BUT JOINING THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR WAS A LATE CAREER MOVE. SINCE THEN, HIS GREAT FEEL FOR WHAT PEOPLE REALLY NEED HAS MADE HIM ONE OF ITS LEADING LIGHTS. WE SPEAK TO AN IMPRESSIVE INTEGRATOR WITH A CRITICAL OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE.

Did you always want to go into healthcare?

No, not at all. My father was a GP and the surgery was part of our house. I grew up in that environment but I wasn't particularly interested in medicine. I wanted a job with lots of freedom, so I became a teacher, then a journalist, and now I head up eHealth Suisse. The moves weren't planned but they were a natural progression.

Doesn't it take guts to keep changing tracks?

It does. I'm a bit of a repeat offender there. My parents were very busy with their work, so I could amuse myself to a large extent and got to explore areas that interested me. I was never - am never - bored because I'm very receptive. I've always taken on a lot.

Besides courage, what does it take to make important decisions?

It can help to get an honest opinion. "Do you think I'm up to it?" What can't I do? What do I still have to learn? You shouldn't shy away from questions like this. You should use feedback from people you trust to reflect on yourself.

Are there parallels between the three professions?

More than you'd think. All three need a healthy outside perspective. You have to observe your target market constructively, involve them in what you're creating, and address their needs selflessly, in a way. The basic approach is the same whether they're students, readers or patients. It's just a question of consistency.

When did the healthcare sector come onto the horizon?

I was writing for the Berner Zeitung newspaper. One day I was landed with an article because I was the doctor's son. Nobody wanted to do it, but someone had to. So I just started writing. That's how I got into healthcare, and I'm still here.

What led you to the federal government?

The longer I wrote about healthcare, the more I felt a growing need to do something properly constructive. I joined the federal government as a project manager and got involved in the eHealth Strategy. After that I was invited to set up the new eHealth unit. The challenge was a huge draw, so I said yes.

Can you describe your current job?

I've led the 14-strong team at the eHealth Suisse secretariat

since 2008, and I'm responsible for coordinating the nationwide introduction of electronic patient records in Switzerland. It's a classic management task with a number of different strands, from organisation to technology to law and communication to finance. And plenty of politics.

It's successful, too. You're coordinating an historic project.

It may be historic, but it's also incredibly complex. When we started we had no real idea of what it would take. Establishing electronic patient records was a tough process that took over 13 years. It's a

fantastic feeling now to slowly be reaching the finish line.

Is EPR eHealth Suisse's only project?

It's the most important, and accounts for 90 per cent of our work, but it's not the only one. We also handle

other patient-related topics, such as optimising digital communication between all parties in the sector.

It sounds like a real mission.

I often feel that patients aren't taken seriously. That's my outside perspective and what enables me to respond to the needs of those who use our services. It would also be interesting to work for a patient organisation.

"For me, leadership is about developing a sense of individual strengths and promoting them, instead of dwelling on weaknesses."

How do you build a good team?

By respecting the individual capabilities and limits of team members, and trusting them. I give them tasks that match their skillsets and personalities. For me, leadership is about developing a sense of individual strengths and promoting them, instead of dwelling on weaknesses.

Talking about teamwork, how do you find working with Ergon?

Constructive and proactive. Your people combine technological mastery with humanity, and a feel for our needs. They're good listeners, and they understand us. Ergon doesn't shy away from any challenge. I'm like that, too, so I appreciate the way you work.

What's the secret of your success?

At a course on group dynamics I was told that I'm an 'integrator' by nature. That's spot on. It's about bringing people together, respecting their opinions and working together to produce solutions. I love that, and you're good at what you like doing, aren't you? />

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