

## Sarah Springman, Switzerland

### Rector ETH Zurich

**On her attitude to school and her ambitious nature:** “They didn’t put me in the A-stream, so I made myself thoroughly unpleasant by doing all the work they gave me, as quickly as I possibly could, to make my point. Being in the B-stream was not where I had my own self-image or where I wanted to be. I remember being very upset about it. Then, after that, I worked very hard and made it to the A-stream within 24 hours.”

**Lessons:** “We often think we have got less talent than we really have. Quite often, I find I’m struggling with something and putting myself down, and then I realise that I am probably within a very small percentage of people who are performing at quite a high level in society. Occasionally, I have to remind myself of that, rather than thinking about all of the people who are above me and the people who are better than me. I think about the fact that I probably have got a lot more talent than I sometimes give myself credit for. Perhaps this is a classical women’s attitude?”



“I think it’s important to have a goal. I like to cite three factors, which are talent and goals, which are backed up by hard work. I’m absolutely convinced that the hard work is pretty critical to achieving success, and if you only have two of them, then you won’t get to where you think you want to go.”

“If something is not working, try again. But don’t necessarily do it in the same way; I suggest thinking of a clever way of going around it. If you’ve got an obstacle in front of you, you have got lots of choices: you can bash through it, you can go over the top, you can go round the side and you can tunnel underneath it. So think laterally and rationally about different ways to overcome the problem. Think about who your allies are and how you can create a win-win situation for people. Think about how you can operate in those high levels of motivation so that you can bring people with you and create value for others. Rise up above the businesses of survival, pleasure and control to the higher levels of compassion, courage, meaning and wisdom, if you can.”

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