

MEDIA RELEASE

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2026 Entrepreneurs Study by Lombard Odier, Bilan and Finanz und Wirtschaft

Swiss family businesses are accelerating their technological transformation, but succession remains a key challenge

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- **Succession remains a major challenge:** It is cited as the primary concern by 45% of respondents, well ahead of preparing the next generation (25%), highlighting the evolution of succession models and a growing openness to solutions beyond the family sphere.
 - **Technological transformation is advancing, albeit at a measured pace:** 51% of companies invest at least 1% of their annual revenue in innovation and new technologies, while more than 41% have already integrated artificial intelligence or are in the process of deploying it.
 - **Margin pressure remains a significant challenge:** Costs and margins (51%), the shortage of skilled labour (38%) and regulatory constraints (36%) rank among the main challenges identified, although 55% of respondents remain confident about the future of their business.

For the third consecutive year, Lombard Odier, Bilan and Finanz und Wirtschaft have conducted a study of entrepreneurs and executives from nearly 300 family-owned businesses across Switzerland. The 2026 edition highlights forward-looking entrepreneurs who are investing in technology and artificial intelligence, while continuing to face persistent challenges related to succession planning and the broader economic environment.

Succession remains at the heart of entrepreneurs' concerns

At a time when tens of thousands of Swiss businesses are expected to change hands in the coming years, succession remains the foremost family-related challenge identified by entrepreneurs. Nearly one respondent in two (45%) cites business succession and ownership transfer as their primary concern, while only 25%

point to preparing the next generation. This suggests that succession is now widely recognised as a critical issue, but one that is no longer necessarily viewed through the lens of family continuity alone.

This shift reflects an increasingly common reality: the absence of family successors and the growing involvement of third parties or members of the extended family in succession plans. As a result, entrepreneurs are exploring a broader range of solutions to ensure the long-term continuity and success of their businesses.

Technological innovation emerges as a strategic priority

Swiss family-owned businesses are continuing their technological transformation, recognising that innovation has become a key driver of competitiveness. More than half of respondents (51%) invest at least 1% of their annual revenue in innovation and new technologies, including 16% that allocate more than 5% of turnover to these investments.

Artificial intelligence is also gradually gaining traction among family-owned SMEs. Some 21% of companies surveyed report that they have already integrated AI into their operations, while a further 20% are currently testing or deploying AI solutions. An additional 11% plan to implement AI within the next 12 months.

Investment decisions tempered by a more challenging environment

The findings also point to a degree of caution when it comes to investment. Faced with the combined impact of a strong Swiss franc, rising raw material costs and ongoing international trade tensions, businesses are seeking to protect their margins. This pressure helps explain the lower level of investment in innovation compared with the previous edition of the survey.

Confidence in the future despite multiple challenges

As in previous editions of the study, economic concerns remain top of mind. Pressure on costs and margins is cited by 51% of respondents, ahead of the shortage of skilled labour (38%) and regulatory and administrative constraints (36%).

Changing customer expectations (28%), family-related business issues (21%) and digital transformation (20%) complete the ranking of the main challenges identified by business leaders.

Despite these headwinds, entrepreneurs remain optimistic. Nearly two-third of respondents say they are confident or very confident about the future of their business, once again demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of Swiss family-owned companies.

Serge Fehr, Limited Partner and Head of the Swiss Market at Lombard Odier, commented: *“Family-owned businesses today must navigate several transitions simultaneously: technological, generational and economic. Yet we continue to witness the remarkable resilience of Swiss companies, which adapt to changing market conditions while continuing to invest with both prudence and confidence.”*

When it comes to succession and ownership transfer, we see that entrepreneurs who start addressing these questions early and surround themselves with the right expertise are best positioned to turn challenges into opportunities and to secure the long-term future of their business.”

About the study

The study was conducted by TX Group between 31 May and 27 August 2026 among 282 Swiss family-owned businesses, including 160 in French-speaking Switzerland, 113 in German-speaking Switzerland and 9 in Italian-speaking Switzerland, as part of the third edition of the nationwide survey carried out by Bilan, Finanz und Wirtschaft and TX Group.

Respondents represent a broad range of sectors across the Swiss economy, with 96% of participating companies employing up to 250 people. The survey provides a representative overview of the priorities, challenges and outlook of Switzerland’s family business community.



About Lombard Odier

Lombard Odier is a global wealth and asset manager. For 230 years, and through more than 40 financial crises, the Group has consistently prioritised the long-term interests of its private and institutional clients. It maintains a strong balance sheet, with a CET1 ratio of 31% and a Fitch rating of AA-, the highest rating awarded to a bank of its size.

Structured as an independent partnership, Lombard Odier is owned exclusively by its Managing Partners. This governance model enables the Group to remain fully focused on its clients’ interests while fostering innovation at the highest levels of the organisation.

As an investment house, Lombard Odier offers a comprehensive range of advisory and portfolio management, wealth management and custody services. The Group supports entrepreneurs in planning and managing their private wealth, as well as in business valuation and strategic decisions relating to the succession or sale of their companies. Its asset management activities are conducted through Lombard Odier Investment Managers (LOIM). The Group has also developed leading-edge banking technology solutions that are used by other private banks and financial institutions across Switzerland and Europe.

As at 30 June 2026, total client assets stood at CHF 367 billion. Headquartered in Geneva since 1796, the Group operated 26 offices across 19 jurisdictions and employed 2,895 people at the end of June 2026.

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