



Goutam Challagalla

BUSINESS SCHOOL PROFESSOR

Sustainability investments have not delivered the commercial returns most organisations expected. AI adoption has followed the same pattern – pilots multiplied across business units, producing modest efficiencies but no strategic differentiation. The pressure on growth and commercial leaders is to turn both into genuine sources of customer value before the window for competitive advantage closes.

Goutam Challagalla, dentsu Group Professor of Strategy and Marketing at IMD, helps boards and executive teams convert sustainability commitments and AI adoption from cost obligations into sources of commercial growth and competitive differentiation.

Goutam Challagalla's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Goutam Challagalla

- His book “Clean Winners” (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2026) gives leadership teams a named framework – the Resonator model – for redesigning sustainability around customer value rather than compliance, using cases from Michelin, Schneider Electric, Nespresso, and John Deere.
- His HBR argument for “deep and narrow” AI adoption – published November-December 2025 and developed with the former global CMO of Reckitt – gives executive teams a direct counter to the scattered pilot approach that has produced cost without strategic return.
- He holds the dentsu Group Chair in Sustainable Strategy and Marketing at IMD – an endowed position created specifically to research the commercial impact of sustainability strategy.
- His case study on Nespresso’s strategic reset won the Overall Award at The Case Centre Awards and Competitions 2025, the most rigorous global recognition for real-world business teaching material, judged across the full range of business school cases worldwide.
- He directs IMD’s Advanced Management Program and the Strategy Governance for Boards programme, which means his frameworks are tested with C-suite executives and board directors, not MBA students.

Biography highlights

- dentsu Group Professor of Strategy and Marketing and holder of the dentsu Group Chair in Sustainable Strategy and Marketing, IMD Business School, Lausanne
- Director, IMD Advanced Management Program and Strategy Governance for Boards programme; co-director, Integrating Sustainability into Strategy programme

AVAILABLE FOR

- After Dinner Engagement
- Speaking

GOUTAM'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI
- Business Strategy & Growth
- Customer Experience & Marketing
- Digital Transformation
- ESG Strategy

LANGUAGES: English

- Author, “Clean Winners: Sustainability Strategy That Puts Customers First” (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2026, with Frederic Dalsace)
- HBR contributor: “Stop running so many AI pilots” (November-December 2025); “How to Market Sustainable Products” selected for HBR’s 10 Must Reads 2025
- Maynard Award (2015), American Marketing Association; Overall Award, The Case Centre Awards and Competitions 2025
- Former Principal, The Monitor Group; former Associate Dean for Executive Education and marketing department head, Georgia Institute of Technology

Biography

Most organisations have committed to sustainability and launched AI experiments. Few have connected either to commercial growth. Goutam Challagalla, dentsu Group Professor of Strategy and Marketing at IMD Business School, has built his research programme around exactly that gap.

His book “Clean Winners” (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2026), co-authored with IMD colleague Frederic Dalsace, makes a specific and counterintuitive argument. Companies that succeed with sustainability do not ask “how do we make our products greener?” They ask “how can sustainability make our products perform better or cost less?” The book names companies that have figured this out – Michelin, Schneider Electric, Nespresso, John Deere – as Resonators. An earlier HBR article developing the same thesis was selected for HBR’s 10 Must Reads 2025.

His HBR article “Stop running so many AI pilots” (November-December 2025) draws the same logic into AI strategy. Organisations that spread AI experiments across departments generate marginal efficiencies. Those that concentrate investment in a single strategic domain – going deep and narrow – generate competitive advantage. The piece was developed in part from direct work with Reckitt’s former global chief marketing officer.

At IMD, Challagalla directs the Advanced Management Program and the Strategy Governance for Boards programme. His research appears in the Journal of Marketing, the Strategic Management Journal, and the Journal of Applied Psychology. His Nespresso case study won the Overall Award at The Case Centre Awards and Competitions 2025; the Journal of Marketing’s Maynard Award recognised his best paper in 2015. Before IMD, he spent twenty years at the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he served as Associate Dean for Executive Education, and was a Principal at The Monitor Group.

Key speaking topics

- AI implementation strategy for executives and boards
- Sustainability as commercial growth strategy
- Go-to-market design in digital environments
- Strategy governance for boards
- Pricing and commercial performance
- Business model adaptation under digital and sustainability pressure
- Customer value creation through technology and sustainability

Ideal for

- Chief marketing officers and commercial leaders responsible for growth strategy and go-to-market performance

- Board directors and chairs governing AI investments and sustainability commitments
- Executive leadership teams navigating digital transformation alongside sustainability pressure
- Chief strategy officers and heads of corporate development evaluating competitive positioning

Audience outcomes

- A reframing of sustainability strategy from compliance cost to customer value driver, with named company examples and a tested framework for redesigning product and market approach
- A specific, evidence-based framework for AI adoption that counters the scattered pilot approach and identifies where deep investment generates strategic return
- Structured criteria for evaluating whether a current strategy is genuinely defensible rather than merely coherent on paper
- Practical guidance on what boards should be asking about AI governance – including the accountability gaps and blind spots that conventional oversight structures miss
- A sharper language for connecting sustainability, marketing, and AI investments to commercial outcomes in board and executive team conversations

Goutam Challagalla's 2026 talks & topics

AI in the Boardroom: What Directors Need to Get Right

Drawing on his research into AI governance and commercial strategy, this session equips board directors with the questions, frameworks, and accountability models needed to set a clear AI agenda – beyond technology briefings and pilot reports.

Key takeaways:

- The specific questions boards should be asking about AI – focused on accountability, risk exposure, and competitive positioning rather than technical detail
- The most common AI governance blind spots where traditional board oversight falls short
- A framework for identifying where AI can generate genuine strategic value at scale rather than marginal operational efficiency

Stop Running So Many AI Pilots

Built around the “deep and narrow” implementation model and the Reckitt case, this talk challenges the scattered AI pilot approach and gives executive teams a clear method for concentrating AI investment where it drives strategic advantage.

Key takeaways:

- Why broad AI experimentation produces efficiency gains but not competitive differentiation
- How to select a single strategic domain for deep AI investment and what “deep and narrow” execution looks like in practice
- The organisational conditions – data assets, technical capability, cross-functional commitment – that determine whether deep AI investment scales

Clean Winners: How Sustainability Becomes a Commercial Strategy

Drawing directly from the “Clean Winners” book (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2026), this talk reframes sustainability from cost and compliance into a product performance lever, giving commercial and strategy leaders a tested model for turning sustainability commitments into customer value and profit.

Key takeaways:

- Why most sustainability investments underperform commercially – and the strategic misalignment behind the gap
- The Resonator model: how companies including Michelin, Nespresso, and Schneider Electric use sustainability to improve product performance or reduce cost for customers
- How to shift the internal strategy conversation from “how do we make our products greener?” to “how does sustainability help us serve customers better?”

Goutam Challagalla's Videos

