



Joerg Niessing

BUSINESS SCHOOL PROFESSOR

INSEAD Professor, Speaker, Author “B2B Digital Transformation”, Consultant and Strategic Advisor

- **Global Thought Leader in Customer-Centric Transformation and Strategy:** INSEAD Professor and former Partner at Prophet, with 25+ years advising 300+ top global brands including Google, L’Oréal and Samsung.
- **Award-Winning Educator and Keynote Speaker:** Directs and teaches 30+ executive programs annually at INSEAD; winner of the “Teaching Excellence Award” for nine consecutive years and the prestigious 2025 “Outstanding Case Teacher Award” for innovation and impact in business education.
- **Entrepreneurial Brand Strategist:** Co-founder of vstrat.ai; strategic advisor to multiple startups and first investor in Waterdrop; helping startups and organizations build and scale purpose-driven businesses that create lasting value.
- **Cutting Through the Noise:** Blends academic rigor with hands-on business impact—helping leaders move beyond buzzwords. As Joerg puts it: *“If people want to use WhatsApp, do NOT optimize the fax machine.”*

Joerg Niessing's 2026 Biography

Joerg Niessing: Expert in Business Transformation, Digital Strategy, Brand Strategy and Customer-Centric Growth

Joerg Niessing is a globally recognized expert on customer-centric business transformation, sought after for his ability to bridge academic rigor with hands-on business impact. With deep expertise in digital strategy, branding, marketing, customer experience, and data analytics, Joerg helps organizations to unlock growth by building powerful brands that stand out in highly competitive markets. His cutting-edge research and advisory work are redefining how organizations approach innovation, digital transformation, and business reinvention—enabling them to create future-oriented business models, experiences and strategies.

A Senior Affiliate Professor at INSEAD and former Partner at Prophet—one of the world’s leading brand consultancies—Joerg has spent more than 25 years helping top executives from over 300 companies, including Google, L’Oréal, Roche, Ferrero, Walmart, Marriott, Diageo, Electrolux, and Samsung. He specializes in crafting future-proof strategies, building meaningful customer experiences and scaling brands globally—always grounded in robust data and insight.

AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

JOERG'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Customer Experience & Marketing

LANGUAGES: English, German

During his time at Prophet, Joerg built and led the firm's customer insights and analytics practice, helping organizations turn data into actionable strategies. In addition to his work with global enterprises, he actively supports startups in building impactful, purpose-driven businesses. He was the first investor and strategic advisor to Waterdrop, helping shape its brand and drive its expansion into 30+ markets. He also co-founded vstrat.ai, an AI-powered strategy tool that enables companies to scale the use of proven strategy and branding frameworks, empowering every employee to think and act strategically.

At INSEAD, Joerg directs and teaches 30+ top-ranked executive programs each year, focused on business transformation, customer-centricity, branding, and data-driven strategy. His highly interactive and example-rich teaching style has earned him multiple awards, including the "Teaching Excellence Award" in executive education for nine consecutive years. In 2025, Joerg was named the winner of the international Outstanding Case Teacher Award by The Case Centre—a lifetime recognition for innovation and impact in business education.

As a keynote speaker, Joerg brings a rare mix of academic depth, real-world examples, business acumen, and engaging storytelling to every session. He speaks regularly at global conferences such as the Mobile World Congress, QSP Summit, and the Chief Marketer Institute Europe, as well as private leadership offsites and corporate events. His keynotes are designed to inspire bold thinking and are packed with insights, examples and practical tools that empower leaders to build brands that create lasting value, energize organizations and drive measurable business impact.

Having lived in six countries across Europe, the US, and Asia—and worked in over 40—Joerg brings a truly global perspective, blending European strategic depth with Silicon Valley dynamism.

What to Expect

Joerg's sessions are fast-paced, insight-packed, and highly actionable—blending cutting-edge thinking with practical tools and a compelling storytelling approach. Whether engaging senior executives, entrepreneurs, or cross-functional teams, Joerg delivers a powerful mix of strategic frameworks, vivid case studies, and real-world applications grounded in data, innovation, and purpose.

Expect to dive deep into how organizations can drive customer-centric transformation and build powerful brands by harnessing the full potential of data, digital technologies, and AI. Joerg explores how leading companies are reinventing their business models, customer experiences, and internal cultures to stay competitive in an era of disruption and rising customer expectations.

Rather than treating transformation as a one-off initiative, Joerg challenges participants to embed customer obsession into the DNA of their organization—turning insight into action, and strategy into sustained impact. His sessions connect the dots between strategy, customer-centricity, data & technology, organisation change, and innovation, providing participants with a holistic playbook for transformation that sticks.

Because real change requires more than surface-level fixes—Joerg calls out the common pitfall of "putting a digital lipstick on a legacy pig." His

approach cuts through the noise to focus on what truly drives progress: deep, meaningful transformation that starts from within but focussing on creating customer value.

What You'll Leave With

You'll walk away with a refreshed mindset and a strategic playbook for driving customer-centric transformation—equipping you to lead with clarity, confidence, and impact in a rapidly evolving digital world. Joerg challenges leaders to rethink the fundamentals: “If people want to use WhatsApp, don't optimize the fax machine.” The point? Transformation is not about incremental tweaks—it's about reimagining value from the customer's point of view.

You'll gain deep insight into how to harness data, technology, and AI to create relevant brands, value-driving customer experiences, foster innovation, and build future-ready business models. Key action points include turning customer insight into strategic direction, designing end-to-end experiences that drive engagement and growth, aligning cross-functional teams around the customer, and embedding agility and experimentation into your organization's DNA.

You'll learn how to connect strategy with execution—translating bold ideas into scalable, real-world impact across functions, markets, and touchpoints. Whether you're leading a transformation, reimagining customer value, or unlocking new growth opportunities, you'll leave equipped to act boldly, inspire change, and create organizations that are not only more digital—but deeply customer-first and innovation-driven.

Joerg Niessing's 2026 talks & topics

CUSTOMER-CENTRIC STRATEGY IN A DIGITAL WORLD: EVOLVING TRENDS VS. ENDURING PRINCIPLES

Many leaders today face a strategic paradox: how to navigate fast-moving digital trends—AI, personalization, omnichannel platforms, and data abundance—while staying grounded in the timeless principles of customer-centric growth.

This session brings clarity by distinguishing what has changed (consumer behavior, tech capabilities, unlimited data, the speed of disruption) from what has not (the need for clear strategy, compelling value propositions, and relevant brand positioning). Participants will learn how to cut through digital hype and design future-ready strategies rooted in customer insights and value creation.

We introduce “*The Future of Strategy*” framework, highlighting critical shifts such as data-driven models, personalized experiences, and effective engagement at scale- in a digital world. Through real-world cases and mini-exercises, participants will assess their own strategic posture and begin shaping an action plan to deliver sustainable, customer-first growth.

Participants will leave with:

- A strategic framework to align customer-centricity with digital innovation & technology
- Practical tools to connect value creation with evolving digital capabilities
- Case-based inspiration on how leading firms have adapted without losing focus

- Clear direction on how to modernize their go-to-market and growth strategies
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LEADING CUSTOMER-CENTRIC TRANSFORMATION IN A DIGITAL WORLD

Rapidly advancing technologies and digital trends, changing customer behaviours and disruptive competitors are making it increasingly difficult for organizations to drive sustainable and profitable growth. Despite significant investment, most transformation efforts fail to deliver meaningful impact—because too often, they start with technology rather than the customer. This session shifts the perspective, focusing on how to execute transformation through three high-impact strategic shifts: (1) Digital Engagement Shift, (2) The Digital Experience Makeover, (3) The Digital Business Model Pivot.

Based on my research with over 2000 executives and 30+ corporate transformations, this session shows how leading companies have move from siloed, fragmented operations toward integrated commercial engines—where business functions, data, and technology are properly integrated to drive engagement and performance.

We will conclude by addressing four essential questions for each shift: Where to Play, How to Win, What to Do, and Who Is Needed. This will be supported by various examples and mini cases from diverse industries.

Participants will leave with:

- A clear and actionable roadmap to execute a customer-first transformation
 - Tools and frameworks to unify business functions, technology, and data
 - Guidance on where to play, how to win, and what capabilities to build next
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BEYOND TECH: BUILDING A CULTURE THAT POWERS TRANSFORMATION FOR GROWTH

Technology can accelerate change—but only culture sustains it. Research consistently shows that culture is the single biggest barrier to successful transformation. Yet many transformation programs still focus on tools, systems, and structures—neglecting the deep behavioural, leadership, mindset, and cultural shifts required across the organization.

This session explores culture as both a catalyst and a potential killer of transformation. We unpack the leadership blind spots that stall execution and discuss why customer-centric, agile, and innovative cultures are at the core of every successful transformation. Through my award winning-cases about Kuoni and Majid al Futtaim, as well as other real-world examples, we examine the key enablers of change: empowered employees, cross-functional collaboration, experimentation, and a shared sense of purpose.

We'll also introduce a transformation readiness roadmap—linking mindset and behavior change to shifts in governance, organizational design, and ways of working. Participants will reflect on their own leadership role in driving sustainable change and begin crafting a personal roadmap for creating impact at scale. Using real-world transformation stories, we discuss how companies overcame internal inertia and built momentum from within.

Participants will leave with:

- A clear understanding of how culture accelerates—or blocks—transformation success
 - Proven levers to shift behaviours, mindsets, and leadership practices
 - A practical framework to assess and activate transformation enablers
 - Clear next steps to build agile, customer-first and innovation-ready organizations
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INNOVATION AT SCALE: DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH CREATIVITY AND ECOSYSTEMS

Innovation is no longer a function—it's a capability that must be embedded across the entire organization. Creativity, agility and collaboration are essential to navigate uncertainty and unlock new growth. Organizations that foster new ideas and act on them with speed and scale are best positioned to navigate disruption and seize emerging opportunities. This session explores how companies can innovate at scale by embracing open innovation, tapping not just internal talent, but the full potential of a broader ecosystem.

We'll leverage my award-winning BMW Startup Garage case to illustrate how BMW reimaged innovation by becoming a venture client—a model that enables rapid sourcing and integration of start-up technologies. This shift enabled the company to outpace competitors and build a sustainable advantage through its innovation ecosystem. But start-ups are only one part of the equation. True open innovation requires engaging a broader network of partners: customers, suppliers, universities, platforms, and even competitors.

Participants will learn how to design innovation ecosystems, shift from closed to open models, and embed creativity into daily operations. The focus is not just on generating ideas—but on turning them into scalable, customer-centric solutions that drive measurable value.

Participants will leave with:

- A strategic approach to scaling innovation through creativity and ecosystem collaboration
- A replicable model for start-up engagement (Venture Client Model)
- Tools to identify high-impact use cases and embed innovation into the core business
- Insights into building agile, externally connected organizations that drive long-term growth

LEADING WITH DATA: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH STRATEGY, CULTURE, AND AI

Data is not just a technical issue—it's a leadership imperative. Yet while most companies are rich in data, they remain poor in value creation—only 30% say they're good at turning it into actionable insights. This session is designed for executives who want to lead from the top, architect a data-first organization, and scale impact through a clear data strategy, cultural alignment and enterprise-wide AI integration.

We'll leverage my award-winning Majid Al Futtaim case, which illustrates how a traditional business built a robust data strategy and foundation—including a modern data architecture, advanced analytics capabilities, the right organizational set-up, and a strong culture of test-and-learn experimentation. Participants will explore what it takes to move from siloed analytics initiatives to a top-down, vision-led transformation with bottom-up adoption and use-case-driven execution.

We also demonstrate the power of AI-enabled strategy tools, using vstrat.ai as a hands-on example. While only 13% of leaders feel their organizations are fully prepared to integrate AI into their core business, tools like vstrat.ai show how generative AI can already help leaders generate insights, design customer experiences, and innovate business models in real time. The focus is on using AI to make smarter decisions—not just faster ones.

The session closes by focusing on leadership's role in shifting mindsets—how to create an insight-driven culture, empower teams, and embed data and AI into everyday decision-making across the business.

Participants will leave with:

- A roadmap for building and scaling a data- and AI-driven transformation
 - A blueprint for a powerful data strategy
 - Case-based lessons on embedding data and analytics into innovation and execution
 - Hands-on exposure to GenAI for strategic thinking and business model design
 - Clear actions for creating a culture of agility, experimentation, and insight-driven leadership
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FROM PRODUCTS TO SOLUTIONS: REINVENTING BUSINESS MODELS THROUGH DATA AND AI

Offering great products is no longer enough. In a world of rising customer expectations, digital disruption, and commoditization, companies must evolve their business models—from selling standalone products or services to delivering integrated, data-powered solutions that solve real customer problems and create sustainable competitive advantage.

This session explores how to lead that shift. Building on original research and real-world cases, we examine how successful companies leverage technologies like IoT, AI, cloud, and automation to pivot their value propositions—moving from transactions to ongoing outcomes, and from product-centric thinking to platform, subscription, and solution-based models.

We'll highlight how successful companies have transformed their go-to-market approach by embedding smart services, predictive analytics, and performance-based pricing into their offerings—creating deeper customer value and more resilient revenue models. Participants will also explore how to identify value creation opportunities, design solution-centric offerings, and explore new monetization models.

This is not just a shift in offering—it's a strategic pivot that requires rethinking how organizations define value, structure partnerships, deploy technology and enable the right culture and capabilities.

Participants will leave with:

- A framework to pivot from product-led to solution-driven business models
- Strategic insights into how AI and data can power new offerings and revenue streams
- Case-based inspiration from companies reinventing themselves
- Tools to identify customer problems worth solving and design monetizable outcomes
- Guidance on the leadership and organizational shifts required to scale solution innovation

BUILDING POWERFUL BRANDS IN A DIGITAL, AI-DRIVEN WORLD

In a world of constant disruption, strong brands remain one of the few enduring sources of competitive advantage. Our research shows that in some industries, the brand perception accounts for up to 90% of decisions making. That's why, for leading companies, branding is no longer just a marketing function—it's a strategic capability and a boardroom-level priority. But brand building today looks very different from a decade ago. Consumers now demand relevance, purpose, and experience—not just recognition. Meanwhile, brand leaders must integrate global platforms, fragmented channels, and real-time technologies into unified, value-generating strategies. Yet many organizations still treat branding in isolation—disconnected from customer experience, digital innovation, and commercial decision-making.

This session redefines branding as a core driver of value creation and competitive advantage. We explore what it takes to build, grow, and lead powerful brands in the 21st century—focusing on how to craft meaningful brand platforms, create narrative-driven differentiation, and deliver consistent, engaging experiences across markets, segments, and touchpoints. Participants will also learn how to balance long-term brand equity with short-term business performance—especially in high-pressure, fast-evolving environments.

Besides many other examples we'll deep-dive into my award-winning Waterdrop case, showing how a digitally native brand achieved rapid international growth by building a strong brand platform and activating it through storytelling, experience design, and a powerful omni-channel strategy. Waterdrop's success illustrates how modern brands thrive at the intersection of purpose, data, and digital engagement.

Finally, we explore how data and AI is transforming branding—from predictive insights and hyper-personalization to generative content and real-time strategy. The session blends frameworks, data, and hands-on tools to equip participants with a modern perspective on brand leadership.

Participants will leave with:

- A modern framework for building and managing brands and brand equity
- Insight into how brands create value for customers and for the business
- Tools for integrating brand strategy with customer experience and digital transformation
- Insights into how AI and automation can be integrated into brand strategy and execution
- Best practices for keeping brands relevant, agile and differentiated in a rapidly changing world

Joerg Niessing's Videos

