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# Sustainability Best Practices, with Jennifer Gootman at Tory Burch

Here are ten highlights from Jennifer Gootman's discussion on sustainability at Tory Burch, with a focus on her innovative approaches and strategies. This InnoLead members meeting took place on December 6, 2024.

## Building from Scratch

Gootman highlighted that she is the first in her role at Tory Burch, building the entire sustainability and ESG function from scratch. She advises sustainability leaders to align their work with core business values and focus on embedding sustainability into everyday processes rather than treating it as a standalone initiative.

## "I Call Everything a Pilot"

Gootman recommends framing new initiatives as pilots to reduce resistance and foster adoption. She stated: "I call everything a pilot, because people aren't scared of pilots, but they’re scared of taking new things on," advising sustainability leaders to use this approach to encourage experimentation and gradual scaling.

## Understand Supply Chain Complexity

Gootman described the importance of deeply understanding supply chain dynamics, including upstream and downstream impacts. She suggests building long-term partnerships with suppliers and investing time in understanding their processes to drive meaningful change collaboratively.

## Changing Behavior is Never Easy

Gootman emphasized that influencing behavior within organizations is crucial but challenging. She advises sustainability professionals to focus on demonstrating the value of change, using storytelling and data to motivate teams to adopt new practices.

## Prioritize Material Innovation

Gootman highlighted the impact of transitioning to lower-impact materials like biotech alternatives to fossil fuels. She advises integrating sustainability goals with design innovation, emphasizing that new materials must align with quality and durability standards to succeed.

## Use Storytelling to Inspire Action

Gootman leverages storytelling to connect teams and consumers to the origins and impacts of materials. She recommends showcasing supplier stories and the journey of products to foster deeper engagement with sustainability efforts.

## Focus on the "Nuts and Bolts"

Gootman stressed the importance of addressing unglamorous but impactful aspects, like switching to more sustainable linings, threads, and edge paints. She advises prioritizing these common components to achieve significant environmental benefits across multiple products.

## Leverage Industry Partnerships

Gootman advises working closely with like-minded brands and industry groups to share resources and achieve common sustainability goals. These collaborations can amplify impact and provide support for implementing new practices across supply chains.

## Make Data Actionable

Gootman highlighted the importance of integrating sustainability data into financial systems, like Product Lifecycle Management, to build strong business cases. She recommends using this data to demonstrate cost savings and align sustainability goals with business objectives to secure buy-in.

## Balance Authenticity with Strategy

Gootman pointed out the risks of setting unrealistic goals and advises focusing on authentic, actionable commitments. She recommends creating realistic strategies that align with the company’s capabilities and focusing on meaningful, long-term impact.