

Sustainability & Manufacturing: Strategy & Approach of International Manufacturers toward Implementing Sustainability Goals

Panelist Bios



Sara Irvani is the CEO of Okabashi Brands, one of the remaining 1% of domestic shoe manufacturers. Established in 1984, and now a third generation family business, Okabashi has sold over 35 million pairs from its Buford, Ga factory. With its closed loop manufacturing and recyclable bio-based footwear, the team is on a mission to prove that sustainable American manufacturing can flourish at scale. Sara has a Bachelors in Philosophy with High Distinction from University of Virginia, a Masters of Finance from University of Cambridge, and a MBA from INSEAD. Sara is an Associate Board Member of the Two Ten Foundation, a 2018 Most Admired CEO by the Atlanta Business Chronicle, a Global Shaper with World Economic Forum, and on the Board of Councilors of The Carter Center.



Jim Reed serves as president of YKK Corporation of America, the parent company of YKK Corporation's North and Central America Group. There, he is responsible for YKK's businesses operating in North America and Central America, which consists of 12 dynamic operating companies spread across five time zones covering Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Central America and Colombia, South America. Since the company's founding in Tokyo in 1934, YKK has continuously set industry standards for quality, service, value and innovation in the production of fastening products such as zippers, hook & loop fasteners, plastic buckles and notions, webbing, and snaps & buttons, and architectural products such as storefronts, curtain walls, entrances, sun controls, windows and doors. Before becoming president, Jim served as YKK's Chief Legal Counsel. Prior to joining YKK, Jim was in-house counsel for Georgia-Pacific, LLC and also served as managing director of intellectual property licensing for BellSouth (and later for AT&T). He was also an associate at Troutman Sanders LLP in Atlanta, Georgia. Jim graduated from the University of Virginia in 1989 and the University of Georgia School of Law in 1995. He lives in Marietta with his wife, Sheri, and their 3 children.



Nicolas Cudré-Mauroux is the Group General Manager Research & Innovation (CTO) at Solvay, a specialty chemicals and advanced materials company investing more than 300M€/yr in R&D. Nicolas spent the first part of his career with DuPont, starting in 1988 as a researcher at the Experimental Station, DuPont's central research facility in Wilmington, Delaware (USA). Until 2006, he has held a range of R&D, technical, marketing and new business development leadership roles in the United States, Canada and Europe. In 2006, Nicolas was named Regional Business Director for the Advanced Fibers Systems and Nonwovens businesses in EMEA. In 2011, he joined the DuPont-Danisco integration team and, in 2012, moved to Denmark to become the Technology & Innovation Director for the food ingredient business that DuPont formed following this acquisition. In 2015, Nicolas joined Solvay where he focuses on maximizing the impact of Research & Innovation investments. He is based at the corporate headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the CNRS, the largest French research organization, of the Royal Academy of Belgium and of the Board of Governors of the Argonne National Lab. Nicolas is Swiss and was born in Luxembourg. He has a MS and a PhD in Materials Science from the Swiss Institute of Technology in Lausanne, Switzerland.



Andy Brehm is the site director at Boehringer Ingelheim's animal health manufacturing site in Gainesville, Georgia. The site employs about 260 people and manufactures 60 billion doses of vaccine a year for poultry in 60 countries. Since taking his role in 2012, Brehm has been instrumental in moving Vaxxitek, a poultry vaccine produced in Gainesville, to one of the top animal health products manufactured by Boehringer Ingelheim, a leading animal health company with more than 3,000 employees in the United States. More recently, as part of a corporate strategy to embrace sustainability, Brehm has led an initiative to achieve carbon neutrality at the company's Gainesville site by 2021.



Valerie Thomas is the Anderson Interface Professor of Natural Systems in the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Georgia Tech, with a joint appointment in the School of Public Policy. Current research projects include production of chemicals and fuels from biomass, energy in sub-Saharan Africa, and methods to reduce environmental impacts of electricity systems. Before coming to Georgia Tech she worked at Princeton and Carnegie Mellon, and has served as a Congressional Science Fellow. She has a PhD in high energy physics from Cornell and a B.A. in physics from Swarthmore.
