

Sustainable and Innovative Leadership in the APAC region

Interview with Michael Lim



While sustainability has become a global priority, many companies still struggle to translate ambition into execution. To make sustainability truly sustainable, it must be approached through a strategic, innovative, and commercially grounded lens.

As part of our MU APAC Sustainable & Innovative Leadership series, [Gabriel Nam](#) from MU invited a leader who exemplifies this mindset—**Michael Lim**, VP & Head of Asia at Denneen & Company. With a proven track record across global brands like Philips, ASSA ABLOY, and BASF, Michael brings a rare blend of strategic, commercial, and cross-cultural expertise across Asia and Europe.

Now with Denneen & Co., a US-based growth strategy consultancy known for advising blue-chip multinationals and private equity firms, Michael leads the firm's global practice in **Commercial Excellence**. He is also a certified Practicing Management Consultant (PMC).

In our conversation, he shares powerful insights on how commercial excellence can serve as a critical enabler of innovation, sustainability, and scalable growth—especially in today's resource-constrained, fast-changing environment.

Essence of Commercial Excellence

“Commercial excellence serves as the bridge between strategy and execution. It ensures that customer engagement, product offerings, pricing, and go-to-market efforts are aligned with strategic growth priorities.”

“By then, every commercial activity can directly contribute to long-term value creation and competitiveness. This is how ‘commercial excellence’ can contribute to the broader corporate strategy agenda.”

Observation on the Adoption of Commercial Excellence in the Corporate World as a Function/Domain

“In leading companies, commercial excellence is a cross-functional capability—often structured as a standalone function or at least supported by a dedicated working group. It may operate under different names such as Commercial Effectiveness, Revenue Growth Management, or Go-to-Market Excellence, depending on the organization's focus.”

“It typically reports to a senior C-suite executive—most commonly the Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), or Chief Strategy Officer (CSO)—ensuring alignment with enterprise-level growth and customer value creation agendas.”

“These functions are not confined to sales or marketing alone—they are embedded across product, operations, finance, and customer experience. Companies with this capability are generally more aligned, responsive, and efficient.”

“In contrast, organizations without it often face internal silos, unclear accountability, and inconsistent customer experiences—resulting in missed revenue and margin opportunities.”

Linkage of ‘Commercial Excellence’ with Sustainability and Innovation

“Commercial excellence helps companies scale sustainable and innovative solutions in a way that is profitable and market-relevant.”

“It ensures that new offerings are backed by real customer insights, introduced efficiently to the market, and priced based on perceived value.”

“This helps de-risk innovation and embed sustainability into the business model, not just as a value, but as a competitive advantage.”

“A notable example, in my view, is Unilever's ‘Sustainable Living Plan’, which integrates sustainability into its commercial strategy, leading to long-term brand equity and cost efficiencies. Another company I think highly of is Tesla, with its direct-to-consumer model and digital engagement that enhances its ability to innovate and scale sustainable solutions like electric vehicles (EVs) and energy storage.”

Advice to Companies on Approaching ‘Commercial Excellence’ with Relatively Lean Resources

“Focus on what moves the needle. Start by identifying key commercial gaps—such as unclear customer segmentation, inconsistent pricing, or fragmented sales processes—and prioritize those.”

“Even with lean resources, building alignment across functions and using existing data to guide smarter decisions can unlock quick wins and set the foundation for scalable, sustainable growth.”



Gabriel Nam, MU

“Michael's perspective is both timely and deeply relevant. In a world where every business is rethinking its path to growth, commercial excellence provides the structure, discipline, and clarity to move forward—sustainably and competitively. His insights reinforce a growing truth: the companies that will thrive are those that can align strategy, customer value, and cross-functional execution in a coherent and scalable way.”