

IMPACTful Dialogues Podcast featuring Ecolab Chairman and CEO Christophe Beck

Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for grammatical accuracy and readability while preserving the intent, tone, and flow of the original conversation.

Voiceover [0:00–0:03]

Safety first. Please start the podcast before driving. Do not interact with your phone while operating the vehicle.

Dexter Davis [0:03-0:27]

After a year away, we're kicking off 2026 with a big conversation. I'm here with Ecolab Chairman and CEO Christophe Beck to talk about what it really takes to lead in a world that's more complex than ever. How do you balance performance, stakeholder expectations, and the human impact of every decision? For Christophe, it starts with putting people first. Let's get into it.

Podcast Intro [0:28-0:42]

Welcome to *IMPACTful Dialogues*, an Ecolab podcast that elevates inclusion, mindfulness, purpose, awareness, collaboration, and trust through executive conversations. I'm your host, Senior Vice President of Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Dexter Davis.

Dexter Davis [0:43-0:50]

Christophe, thank you for joining us for *IMPACTful Dialogues*. I'm really excited for this discussion and truly appreciate you taking the time to sit down with us.

Christophe Beck [0:51-1:31]

Thanks, Dexter. Before we get started, I want to take a moment to recognize that it's been a challenging time for many people and businesses across our communities. You can feel that a lot of people around us are carrying more than usual.

And no matter what, we take care of the people and places we call home. That spirit connects closely to what *IMPACTful Dialogues* is all about: listening, inclusion, and coming together in meaningful ways.

So Dexter, I'm really grateful to be here with you today to continue this conversation.

Dexter Davis [1:32-1:57]

You know, Christophe, that really resonates with me. When we talk about putting people first, it has to translate into how we lead, listen, and make decisions across the board.

How do you bring that [mindset] to the table into conversations with investors, governments, and our people? And we talk a lot about winning the right way. And another question to ask, we talk a lot about winning the right way. How do diverse and inclusive teams play into that?

Christophe Beck [1:58-3:18]

So, we have two questions in one, Dexter.

Let me start with the first, because they're connected. For me, I don't see DE&I, sustainability, and performance in different worlds. They're all connected.

At the core of who we are and how we've succeeded since 1923, we've said we grow fast by growing our impact and growing our team. That brings performance, sustainability, and DE&I together. It's how we win. It's not being on a social trip. It's not about saving the planet just for the sake of it. It's about how do we do good things for the company by bringing the right teams together generating value for people who believe in us be it our customers, our team, our shareholders, and our communities.

All that is coming together. And it relates to your second question of winning the right way, which is at the real core of my philosophy. We are in the business of winning.

Christophe Beck [3:19-4:31]

Why does winning matter? Because winning means you're ahead. You have more ideas, make a bigger impact, you make a bigger difference. And at the same time, people want to follow winners.

I always remember, one of my longtime mentors once told me, "If you want to change the world, you need to be widely successful first." When he told me that, it was at a difficult moment of my life, so I didn't appreciate what he truly meant. In hindsight, he was exactly right. When you win, you gain the ability to influence, lead, and steer things for the better.

Winning the right way means being proud of how we win. It's not just about having more points than the other team. It's about how we did it—together, as a team, caring for one another, growing as we evolve through adversity. We faced it, we stood again. But we did it the right way.

Christophe Beck [4:32-5:01]

And it's why those two are so essential – winning the right way. At Ecolab, we know we only win when we drive impact and grow our teams. That's at the core of who we are. So it's to bring all of those concepts together and not to see sustainability as one topic, DE&I as another one, and performance as another one. All three are connected. We grow fast by growing our impact and growing our team.

Dexter Davis [5:02-5:45]

Man, I appreciate that, Christophe. And it makes me think about, I was at Ecolab before, came back to Ecolab. There's something about the culture that keeps drawing me here.

One thing that I've seen working with you and what I admire is you really make the opportunities for all voices to be heard, and you're open to feedback and have that back-and-forth debate, which I think is really important as a leader. And, it's hard sometimes as a CEO – I've never been a CEO – it's a lonely job at times. And that value of really making sure voices are heard is so important, and I think you do that really well. And you do it in a way that I really think is authentic.

Talk a little more about why it is important that you create an environment – especially your leadership team – where all voices are heard.

Christophe Beck [5:46-6:53]

It's a few different things. On one hand, there's an assumption that leaders—especially CEOs—have all the answers. That may be the expectation, but it's not the reality.

We operate in an incredibly complex world, we serve three million customers in 172 countries with 48,000 people, thinking about complexity. This is quite an extreme. So, people expect that I will have all of the answers, and I don't. And it's to realize that it's okay not to have the answers. But to recognize that the team will have the answers.

That requires a shift in mindset, and I had to get through that – years back. And if the team is coming up with the answer, there will be a much higher level of ownership as well, than if it's coming from the leader. So, it's a double win, a better answer, and at the same time, a much higher level of ownership.

Christophe Beck [6:54-7:59]

There's another dimension as well. It's to think, "What are we trying to accomplish as a team?" In many organizations, we see it in different silos—by function, division, or market—we ultimately all have the same mission.

As our corporate controller once said, at the end of the day, we're all in sales. We only have two jobs. Either you serve customers directly, or you support those who do. That perspective changes how we think about inclusion and inclusive leadership.

Because, when we all have the same job, when we all have the same mission—protecting what's vital—we work as one team. That combination of shared purpose and finding solutions as one team is the magic of this organization.

Dexter Davis [8:00-8:28]

Hey, you know, Christophe, hearing you talking today you can't help but get excited. It makes people feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves, and I think that's so important for diverse and inclusive teams.

As you look ahead to 2026 and beyond, with DE&I, sustainability, and broader challenges for our organization – I know you're bullish, I'm bullish about the future of Ecolab in that area – what are some things that excite you about 2026 and beyond?

Christophe Beck [8:29-9:20]

What excites me most is the impact we're making as a team. We're living in a world that's moving super fast. I think it's fascinating times. And as hard as it can be to be a leader today, I think we're absolutely privileged to be in a leadership role. We can make an impact. We can shape our future. We can learn, we can grow, we can redo things that – well if you're not in a leadership position it's harder to do.

But one might argue, we're all leaders. Even if you're by yourself, you can shape what's happening around you and where your organization is going. When I think about our company it's so cool to see our purpose translated into real ambitions.

Christophe Beck [9:20-10:23]

We've said by 2030, we want to be one of the first companies that's growing fast by protecting two billion people

from infection and providing enough water for the drinking needs of one billion people, all while being net positive for people and the planet. Positive in water usage. Positive in carbon usage.

We've made real progress on that journey. I think it's the magic of our model, our team and company. We can do great by doing things the right way – by winning the right way.

And 2026 is no different. We spent a lot of time planning for '26, and I'm pretty sure that nothing is going to happen as plan – as we've seen in the last few years. So, we'll adjust and that's the power of the team, that's the power of an inclusive team with adjusting with what's going to be thrown at us. Problems and opportunities and capturing them.

Christophe Beck [10:24-11:47]

When I think about a big theme, like AI, which has been [heavily] talked about over the past 12–24 months, well, it's a huge opportunity for us, but also a major challenge for nature. Well, we don't have the power, the electricity, to power AI. We don't have the water that we need to produce all the chips that they produce and to be used afterward. What we do as a company can unleash that growth, and that's why we're looking at us as a sustainability company. It's an approach of abundance, not an approach of restraint. We're able to produce more chips, to use more AI, because we have circular solutions like nature has done it for millions of years. We're going to be reusing water, and when we reuse water, it's a benefit for our customers. They make more profit, and if they make more profit, they buy more from us as well. It's a virtuous cycle for us, the customer, for nature, and our shareholders, and that's really what's driving me every single day.

And when I look at 2026, it won't be an easy year, but it's going to be an impactful year for us, and we're going to get there because we work as one integrated, inclusive, global diverse team, which is at the core of who we are as a company.

Dexter Davis [11:48-12:16]

Well said, Christophe. I want to end with one question. It's kind of off the beaten path a little bit, because I've had the opportunity to see you in a lot of different areas. One thing is I've gotten to see you with your family and how important that is to you. How do you balance leading a global Fortune 500 company while balancing the demands of being a father and husband?

Christophe Beck [12:17-13:37]

It's a great question. It's a difficult question, and I don't have a perfect answer. Honestly, I could be a better husband, father, and friend. I'm not as good as I should be because I don't have enough time for that. I don't always have the right mind space for it as well. And I realize—I don't know if it's just me—you care about people around you so much during your professional life, and there's a risk, when you come back home, that you relax and you care just a little bit less.

And for me, this is so front and center. I'm trying to care about my family, my friends, the people I really care about, as intensely as I can and to be conscious that there won't be much time. But the little time that I have with them has to be quality time. It has to be valuable time. And for me, the best solution has been to integrate both.

Christophe Beck [13:38-14:33]

And just think about it as one flow rather than a balance, where your life comes all together. Ecolab's mission of protecting people and natural resources—I talk a lot about it with my family when I come home. I get a lot of input;

I get a lot of feedback. Sometimes I love it; sometimes I [want] a little bit less. That's been my solution, because I integrate both worlds, and it fascinates them. They're part of the solution that I try to implement in my professional life. It becomes one; it becomes small, harmonious, flowing life, and it's not true every day. It's not true every year, and that's what I'm trying to accomplish.

I see life as one flow, not separate worlds. My family is deeply connected to the Ecolab mission, and they give me honest feedback. And that's what I'm trying to accomplish, where it becomes one flow, one life.

Dexter Davis [14:33-14:56]

I really appreciate that, Christophe. And I think—what I really appreciate about you—you're a real dude. I really do. And I really appreciate that understanding that we're not perfect. And hearing that from our most senior leaders, and understanding the challenges we all have and share—that's what brings us all together. So I appreciate you. Appreciate your leadership. Thanks again for doing this for IMPACTful Dialogues. Your authenticity matters, especially when it comes from senior leadership. It reminds us we're all navigating similar challenges.

Thank you for your leadership and for joining us on IMPACTful Dialogues.

Christophe Beck [14:57-15:28]

Same here. I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't have all those ideas without the coaching from you as well. We've been through interesting times in 2025 and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has been questioned, and you've kept me on the right path, for the right reasons, and that we really making sure we keep winning the right way. So Dexter, thank you so much for everything you're doing for the company, for the world around us, and for me.

Dexter Davis [15:29-16:01]

Thank you, Christophe.

I hope you all enjoyed this conversation. I appreciate you all for tuning in. Next up, we'll be talking with Margeaux King, Ecolab's Executive Vice President of Human Resources. We'll dig into listening at scale and turning insight into action. How HR uses data, storytelling and systems thinking to stay connected to what matters most: our people. You don't want to miss it; it should be a great conversation. And if you liked what you heard today, don't forget to like, subscribe, and share IMPACTful Dialogues. See you next time!