

MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026

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THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS OF SRI LANKA

CHARTERED MANAGER

SPECIAL EDITION

Recognizing Managerial Excellence. Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders!

The CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards aim to recognize and honour outstanding business leaders and corporate decision-makers who have effectively transformed their company or team's vision into a reality, driving growth and profitability. As a leading Professional Management Institute, CPM Sri Lanka is committed to promoting excellence in Best Management Practices. These awards will celebrate exemplary leadership qualities such as innovation, community service, brand building, diversification, management skills, and strategic acumen.

BEYOND RECOGNITION:

CPM SRI LANKA'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

The Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026 (MLE Awards), organised by the Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka), provided valuable insights into the leadership landscape of the country through its applicant profiles, competency assessments and evaluation findings. These findings offer an opportunity to identify areas requiring greater attention in developing future-ready managerial leaders.

One notable observation was the distribution of applicants across leadership levels: 46% represented Emerging Managerial Leadership, 31% Executive Decision Maker Leadership and 23% C-Suite Leadership. This indicates encouraging interest among emerging managers in professional recognition and highlights the importance of strengthening leadership development pathways at every career stage.

However, the gender distribution, with 81% male and 19% female applicants, highlights the need for greater efforts to encourage women's participation in senior management and leadership positions. CPM Sri Lanka recommends that organisations strengthen succession planning, mentoring opportunities and leadership development initiatives to create more inclusive pathways for women.

The competency analysis also revealed differences in leadership priorities across the three applicant categories. Emerging managers demonstrated strong interest in innovation and creativity (20%), while strategic leadership and trend capitalisation accounted for only 4%. Among executive decision-makers, diversification and growth strategy recorded 8%, while innovation and brand building each accounted for 18%. At C-Suite level, innovation recorded 10%, compared with 18% for visionary and strategic leadership.

These findings highlight the importance of developing a balanced leadership competency framework that integrates innovation, strategic foresight, business diversification, sustainability and organisational transformation.

CPM Sri Lanka further recommends that organisations move beyond traditional leadership training towards measurable, evidence-based leadership development. Greater emphasis should be placed on translating leadership competencies into key behavioural indicators, linking individual leadership performance with organisational outcomes and evaluating the impact of management development initiatives.

The Institute also encourages stronger collaboration between professional bodies, corporate organisations and academic institutions to promote research, mentoring, executive education and practical leadership development.

Ultimately, the MLE Awards should serve not only as a platform for recognising outstanding leaders but also as a source of national insight into leadership development priorities. CPM Sri Lanka remains committed to using these findings to promote ethical, innovative, inclusive and strategically competent managers who can contribute to organisational excellence and Sri Lanka's sustainable economic development.



Each competency is distinguished by specific characteristics and attributes that provide further clarity and definition. These attributes enable applicants to gain a deeper understanding of the vision and scope embedded within each competency. The seven key areas, along with their defining attributes, are presented in the table below.

COMPETENCY	KEY ATTRIBUTES
01. Demonstrating Visionary Leadership Recognizes leaders who have successfully translated their vision into actionable strategies, resulting in significant organisational growth and profitability.	✔ Clear Strategic Direction ✔ Transformational Impact ✔ Inspiring Others ✔ Future-Oriented Thinking ✔ Purpose-Driven Leadership
02. Driving Innovation and Creativity Celebrates leaders who have fostered a culture of innovation, leading to the development of new products, services, or processes that have significantly enhanced their organisation's competitive edge.	✔ Idea Generation Culture ✔ Breakthrough Solutions ✔ Technology Integration ✔ Risk-Taking with Responsibility ✔ Continuous Improvement
03. Showcasing Community Service Orientation and/or Corporate Social Responsibility Honours leaders who have made substantial contributions to community service and/or corporate social responsibility, demonstrating a commitment to social and environmental sustainability.	✔ Sustainable/ESG Initiatives ✔ Employee Involvement ✔ Ethical Leadership ✔ Positive Social Impact ✔ Long-Term Commitment
04. Engaging in Brand Building and Achieving Marketing/Business Excellence Recognizes leaders who have successfully built and enhanced their company's brand, creating a strong market presence and driving consumer engagement.	✔ Distinct Brand Identity ✔ Customer-Centric Strategies ✔ Innovative Campaigns ✔ Market Penetration Success ✔ Reputation Management
05. Enabling Diversification and Growth Strategy Celebrate leaders who have effectively diversified their business operations, entered new markets or industries and achieved sustainable growth.	✔ Strategic Expansion ✔ Revenue Stream Development ✔ Agile Business Models ✔ Synergistic Investments ✔ Sustainable Growth Focus
06. Exhibiting Exemplary Management Skills Honours leaders who have demonstrated exceptional management skills, including team building, decision-making, and conflict resolution, leading to improved organisational performance.	✔ People Empowerment ✔ Decisiveness ✔ Emotional Intelligence ✔ Operational Efficiency ✔ Conflict Resolution
07. Inspiring Strategic Leadership and Trend Capitalization Recognizes leaders who have shown exceptional ability to formulate strategies and capitalize on emerging trends, ensuring their organisation's adaptability and long-term success.	✔ Opportunity Recognition ✔ Strategic Agility ✔ Data-Driven Decisions ✔ Vision Alignment ✔ Competitive Positioning

Participants were provided the opportunity to demonstrate their visionary leadership across the defined competencies under three distinct categories, as described below.

C-SUITE LEADERSHIP

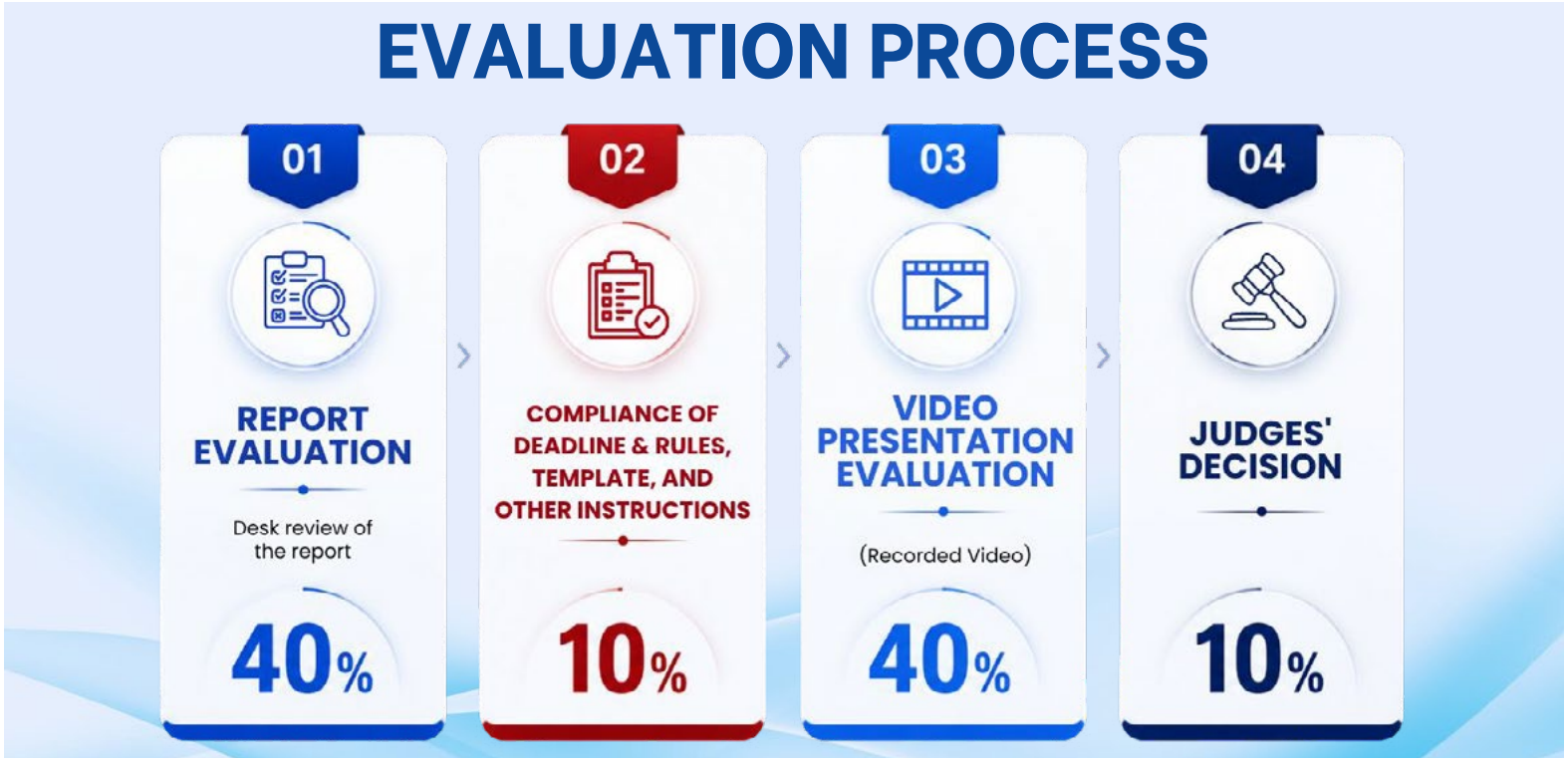
At the CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards, we honour individuals at the C-Suite Leadership, including Executive Chairman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Managing Director (MD), and General Manager (GM) and Secretaries in Government Ministries/Departments/Authorities who exemplify outstanding leadership. These distinguished professionals are recognized for their transformative impact on their organisations and their ability to navigate through diverse and challenging circumstances. Their visionary leadership, strategic direction, and unwavering commitment to excellence serve as a benchmark in modern management.

EXECUTIVE DECISION MAKER LEADERSHIP

At the CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards, the Executive Decision Maker Leadership category acknowledges the second tier of executive leadership, the driving force leaders behind strategic execution and organisational performance. This includes roles such as Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Chief Legal Officer (CLO), Chief Risk Officer (CRO), Chief Strategy Officer (CSO), Chief Innovation Officer (CINO), Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO), Chief Data Officer (CDO), Chief Development Officer (CDO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Additional/Assistant General Manager (AGM), Deputy General Manager (DGM), Assistant/Additional Secretaries in Government Ministries/Departments/Authorities, Directors, and Heads of Departments or similar roles.

EMERGING MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

At the CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards, the Emerging Managerial Leadership category recognises the next generation of management leaders who demonstrate exceptional potential, professional competence, and a strong commitment to organisational success. This category honours Managers and Senior Managers who play a pivotal role in translating strategic objectives into operational excellence, driving team performance, and fostering innovation and continuous improvement. Through their leadership capabilities, dedication, and ability to navigate evolving business challenges, these professionals are shaping the future of management and contributing significantly to the sustainable growth of their organisations.



TYPES OF AWARDS

Lifetime Eminent Leadership Award

Overall Gold, Silver, and Bronze Winners

(C-Suite Leadership Category / Executive Decision Maker Leadership Category / Emerging Managerial Leadership Category)

Outstanding Leadership Competency Awards

Sector Awards;

Banking
Banking (Public Sector)
Banking (Private Sector)

Finance, Leasing & Equity
Finance & Leasing (Public Sector)
Finance & Leasing (Private Sector)
Equity and Venture Capital
Microfinance

Insurance
Insurance (Public Sector)
General
Life
Insurance (Private Sector)
General
Life

Healthcare
Private Western Medicine Hospitals
Ayurvedic/Native Medicine Hospitals
Government Hospitals
Pharmaceuticals
Equipment & Accessories
Medical Laboratories

Hospitality & Tourism
Hotels & Resorts
Services
Entertainment, Events and Recreation

Manufacturing
Food and Beverage
Apparel and Garments
Printing and Publishing
Chemical, Ceramic and Glass
Electronics and Assembly
Metal and Wood Furniture
Leather, Footwear & Parts
Diamonds, Gems & Jewellery
Fisheries and Livestock
Tyre and Rubber
Other (not belong in the above list)

Power and Energy
Renewable (Solar and Wind)
Hydropower and Coal
Fuel and Gas

Beauty, Health & Cosmetics
Wellness Centres & Beauty Parlors
Ayurvedic & Herbal Products
Cosmetics & Hygiene

Agriculture & Plantations
Tea
Rubber
Coconut
Paddy Farming and Rice Milling
Fruits, Nuts and Vegetables
Spices

Educational and Professional Institutes
Government, Semi-Government and International Schools
Professional and Higher Education Institutes

Construction, Fabrication, Condominium & Real Estates

IT, Software & BPO Services

Transport, Logistics, Shipping and related Services

Diversified Group of Companies

Supermarkets, Malls and Shopping Complexes

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/ Charitable Institutions/Societies

Telecommunication

E-Commerce and Online Retail

Stockbrokers and Investment Advisors

Security Guards and Patrol Services

- **Plantation Human Capital Development**
  Early Childhood Development (ECD)
  Community Care
  Plantation Vanguard-Guardian
  Worker Wellbeing
  Model Estate Performer

Cluster Awards;

- **Environmental Governance**
- **Social Governance**
- **People/HR Governance**
- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**
- **Digital Literacy**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

- **Exports**
  Extra Large-Scale Exporters: Above LKR 1.5 billion
  Large-Scale Exporters: LKR 500 million – 1.5 billion
  Medium-Scale Exporters: LKR 100 million – 500 million
  Small-Scale Exporters: Below LKR 100 million
- **Women Leadership & Women-Focused Initiatives**
- **Quality & Productivity**
- **Global Adaptation and Local Development**
  UN Sustainability Goals–Led Initiatives
  Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
    Large-Scale SMEs: LKR 501 million – 01 billion and 201 to 300 employees
    Medium-Scale SMEs: LKR 101 million – 500 million and 51 to 200 employees
    Small-Scale SMEs: LKR 11 million – 100 million and 11 to 50 employees



Inspired to Lead

THE INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS OF SRI LANKA

Our Story of Leadership and Excellence

The **Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka)** is Sri Lanka's premier professional body dedicated to advancing management excellence, promoting best management practices, and developing competent, ethical, and future-ready management professionals. With a growing community of professionals and an expanding national presence, the Institute continues to strengthen its role as a catalyst for professional excellence and sustainable organizational development.

Through its structured **Chartered Professional Manager Professional Programme**, CPM Sri Lanka provides a comprehensive pathway for aspiring and practising managers to develop the knowledge, competencies, strategic thinking, and leadership capabilities required to navigate an increasingly dynamic and complex business environment. The **Chartered Professional Manager** designation represents a commitment to professional excellence, integrity, continuous learning, and responsible leadership.

CPM Sri Lanka works closely with industry, academia, professional bodies, and other stakeholders to bridge the gap between management theory and practice while fostering innovation, knowledge sharing, and lifelong professional development. Its diverse portfolio of initiatives includes executive education, professional development programmes, industry-focused training, management research, knowledge forums, SME development initiatives, and flagship platforms such as the **Management Insights Summit, Best Management Practices Company Awards, and Management Leadership Excellence Awards.**

The Institute also continues to embrace digital transformation, strategic partnerships, and innovative approaches to enhance the value delivered to its members, students, organizations, and the wider management community. Guided by the principles of good governance, sustainability, professionalism, and ethical leadership, CPM Sri Lanka remains committed to empowering individuals and organizations to adapt, innovate, perform, and lead with purpose.

As the Institute advances towards its **2030 vision**, it remains focused on building a stronger and more resilient professional management ecosystem in Sri Lanka. **Inspired by the possibilities ahead and driven by a commitment to create lasting value, CPM Sri Lanka continues its journey to inspire professionals, empower organizations, and shape leaders who are ready to lead with purpose.**

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MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

Prof. Lakshman R. Watawala

As the leading professional management body in the country, CPM Sri Lanka is proud to host the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026 (MLE Awards), an initiative dedicated to recognizing and celebrating exemplary leadership across Sri Lanka. This event reflects our mission to foster a new generation of leaders who embody vision, resilience, and innovation, all qualities essential for driving progress in both the public and private sectors during these challenging times.

Our nation is at a critical juncture, where bold leadership and transformative decision-making are indispensable to overcome economic hardships and rebuild institutional trust. It is therefore imperative that leaders across industries act with responsibility, foresight, and integrity, ensuring their influence extends beyond organizational boundaries to uplift communities and contribute to sustainable national growth.

I extend my warm congratulations to all award winners and participants of the MLE Awards 2026. Your achievements stand as a testament to the power of effective leadership in inspiring teams, driving innovation, and delivering results that benefit both business and society. Leadership failures in the past have often led to inefficiencies and setbacks, but by recognizing and rewarding excellence, CPM Sri Lanka seeks to nurture accountability, professionalism, and visionary thinking across all levels of management.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PANEL OF JUDGES AND THE SPECIAL JURY

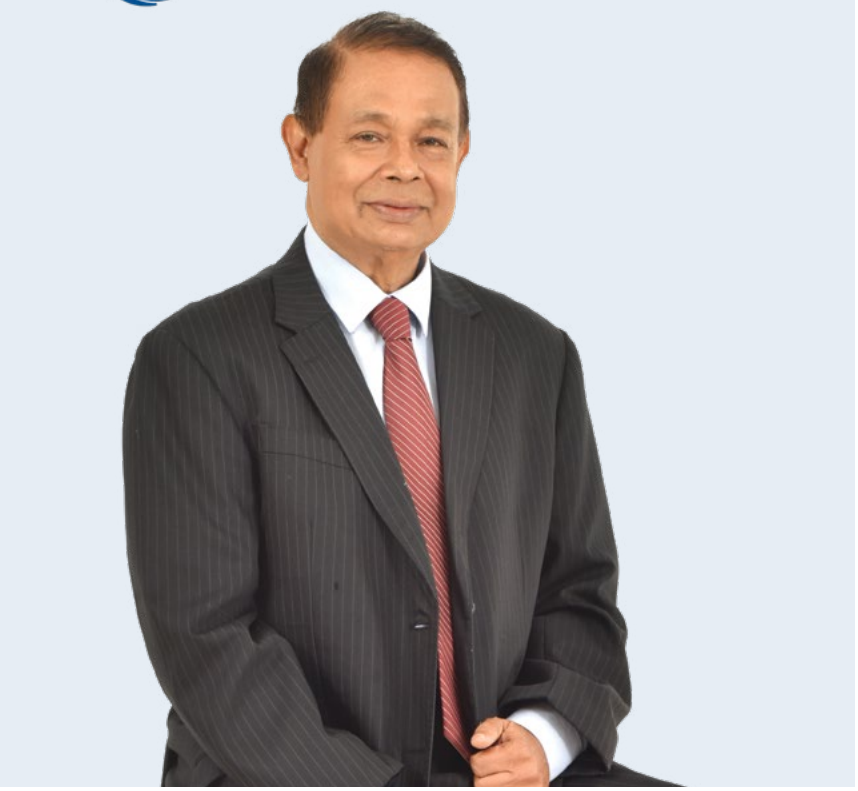
Dr. Samantha Rathnayake

It was both an honour and a privilege to serve as the Chairman of the Panel of Judges for the CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026. This prestigious event has emerged as a defining platform to recognize leaders who exemplify vision, resilience, and innovation while fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility across Sri Lanka's corporate and public spheres.

At the MLE Awards 2026, I was deeply impressed by the calibre of nominations and the diversity of leadership showcased across industries. Each award recipient demonstrated not only professional competence but also the courage to lead with foresight and the ability to inspire teams toward collective achievement. The awards stand as a testament to the transformative role of leadership in shaping sustainable organizations and contributing meaningfully to national development.

As Chairman of the Panel, it has been inspiring to witness how the seven leadership competencies, including visionary thinking, strategic foresight, innovation, brand building, managerial excellence, business growth, and community impact, were reflected in the journeys of the winners. Their stories highlight that true leadership extends beyond organizational success to embrace responsibility for people, society, and the future of the nation.





MESSAGE FROM THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE

Kosala M. Dissanayake

Welcome to the Special Edition of the Chartered Manager journal dedicated to the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026. In the second edition of the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026, we are delighted to showcase the inspiring words and wisdom of our winners, highlighting how outstanding leadership can transform organizations, empower teams, and contribute to national progress.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the award winners and participants. Your achievements serve as a source of inspiration, demonstrating the power of vision, resilience, and innovation in leadership.

I would also like to thank all the leaders and organizations who have contributed to the Chartered Manager journal by providing insightful and in-depth interviews and advertisements to this specialedition. Your contributions enrich this publication, making it a valuable platform for learning, reflection, and the exchange of ideas.

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The Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026 honoured 193 outstanding corporate leaders for their remarkable achievements across diverse sectors. Among them, 123 distinguished Gold Award winners, 57 Silver Award winners, 12 Bronze Award winners from diverse categories and one recipient of the Lifetime Eminent Leadership Award, have generously shared their perspectives through exclusive interviews featured in this special edition of the Chartered Manager journal. Their reflections provide invaluable insights into real-world leadership excellence, offering inspiration and guidance for current and future leaders alike.

PANEL OF JUDGES



Special Jury Members

Dr. Samantha Rathnayake
Chairman of the Panel of Judges and the Special Jury, Governing Council Member of CPM Sri Lanka.

Prof. Lakshman R. Watawala
Founder and President, CPM Sri Lanka.

Dr. Thilini Sumudu Kumari
Deputy Director, Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

Ms. Mahesha Amarasuriya
Country Manager, Mastercard Sri Lanka.

Prof. Champika Liyanagamage
Head of the Department, Accounting and Finance, Faculty of Management Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka.

Dr. Deepal Guruge
Senior Lecturer, Department of Accounting and Finance, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Ruhuna.

Major General (Retired) Eng. Shantha Ranaweera
Director / Principal and CEO, Ceylon-German Technical Training Institute (CGTTI).

Dr. Ravi Bamunusinghe
Senior Faculty, Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Eng. Ravi Rupasinghe
General Secretary, Organization of Professional Associations of Sri Lanka (OPA).

Mr. Lal Jayawardena
Director, Wijeya Newspapers Ltd. & Sanvin (Pvt.) Ltd.

Members of the Panel of Judges

Mr. Kiron Shenoy
Director, PanAsia Coloured Yarns (Pvt) Limited, Sri Lanka.

Dr. P. Niranjan
Management Consultant, Australia.

Mr. M.M.M. Rizley
Freelance Consultant - Cashflow flow Mgt.& Financial Accounting, Software Vertical & Stock Control for SMEs.

Mr. Romesh Chandiram
Chairman/Managing Director, RSL Freight Group.

Mr. Gunalan Karuppanan
Procurement Expert, WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence, World Health Organization, Germany.

Mr. Ruwan Jayaratne
Management Consultant, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Anton Nallathamby
Management Consultant, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Aeez Ismail
Management Consultant, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Hassan Mubarak
Managing Director, HM Canada.

Mr. Piyal Joseph Fernando
Telecommunication Fraud Investigator, Australia

Mr. Tharanga Thilakasiri
Deputy Principal Officer, Parliament of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Prasad Edirisinghe
Former Commission Member and Chief Executive Officer, National Science and Technology Commission.

Dr. Ruwaiha Razik
Senior Lecturer, Department of Human Resources Management, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo.

Ms. Christina Devi Kumar
Management Consultant.

Prof. Tissa Ravinda Perera
Professor, Department of Management and Organization Studies, Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo.



BIG THANK

PANEL OF










**The photos feature only the judges who participated in the Awards Night.*

TO OUR JUDGES

LIFETIME EMINENT LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER

Eng. Nahil Wijesuriya FIMarEST,
Leading Businessman & Philanthropist.

OVERALL WINNERS

C-Suite Leadership

OVERALL GOLD WINNER
Eranga Rohan Peiris Goonetilleke
Managing Director/CEO,
Hayleys Fabric PLC.

OVERALL GOLD WINNER
Shanaka Fernando
Country Head and Managing Director - WNS SL,
WNS Global Services (Pvt.) Ltd.

OVERALL SILVER WINNER
Lal Ravindra Perera
Director General/Chief Executive Officer (CEO),
Plantation Human Development Trust.

OVERALL SILVER WINNER
Johann Arjuna Rodrigo
Director/CEO,
Horana Plantations PLC.

OVERALL BRONZE WINNER
Shifara Farook Ismail
Chief Executive Officer - Group,
Wayamba Printpack (Pvt.) Ltd.

Executive Decision Maker Leadership

OVERALL GOLD WINNER
Suranga Sampath Thennakoon
Chief Financial Officer,
Nawaloka Hospitals PLC.

OVERALL SILVER WINNER
Chamika Anjana Wijesinghe
Group CEO,
Perfect Business Solutions Services (Pvt) Ltd.

OVERALL BRONZE WINNER
Sujeewa Prasanna Vidanapathirana
Chief Operating Officer,
LAUGFS Supermarkets (Pvt) Ltd.

Emerging Managerial Leadership

OVERALL GOLD WINNER
Srishantha Fernando
Manager - Industrial Engineer,
Omega Line Ltd.

OVERALL SILVER WINNER
Dinushi Sulochana Udakumbura
Group Manager,
WNS Global Services (Pvt) Ltd.

OVERALL BRONZE WINNER
Ivo Nimmi Primrose
Deputy General Manager
Human Resources & Administration
Sathosa Motors PLC.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY AWARDS

01. Demonstrating Visionary Leadership

C-Suite Leadership - Eranga Rohan Peiris Goonetilleke *(Managing Director / CEO, Hayleys Fabric PLC.)*
Executive Decision Maker Leadership - Suranga Sampath Thennakoon *(Chief Financial Officer, Nawaloka Hospitals PLC.)*
Emerging Managerial Leadership - Sarani Piyumika Perera *(Manager - Group Internal Audit and Risk, Eswaran Brothers Exports (Pvt) Ltd.*
- Udumullage Asela Eranga Gunasena *(General Manager, Elpitiya Plantations PLC.)*

02. Driving Innovation and Creativity

Executive Decision Maker Leadership - Sumudu Nuwan Rajaguru *(Chief Operating Officer, Dutch Lanka Trailer Manufactures Limited.)*
- Chamika Anjana Wijesinghe *(Group CEO, Perfect Business Solutions Services (Pvt) Ltd.)*
Emerging Managerial Leadership - Manjula Yohan Jayalath *(System Administrator, Wijaya Products (Pvt) Ltd.)*

03. Showcasing Community Service Orientation and/or Corporate Social Responsibility

C-Suite Leadership - Lal Ravindra Perera *(Director General / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) , Plantation Human Development Trust.)*
- Johann Arjuna Rodrigo *(Director/ CEO, Horana Plantations PLC.)*

04. Engaging in Brand Building and Achieving Marketing/Business Excellence

Executive Decision Maker Leadership - Neil Priyath John *(Group Laboratory Director, Asiri Laboratories)*
- Ruwan Rohitha Bandara *(Executive Director – Finance and ESG, Hayleys Fabric PLC.)*
Emerging Managerial Leadership - Kasun Kumara Wijesena *(Marketing Manager, Vision Care Optical Services (Pvt) Ltd.)*

05. Enabling Diversification and Growth Strategy

C-Suite Leadership - Mandadige Stanislaus Shanaka Fernando *(Country Head and Managing Director - WNS SL, WNS Global Services (Pvt.) Ltd.)*
- Madura Gamanayake *(Managing Director, Perfect Business Solutions Services (Pvt) Ltd.)*

06. Exhibiting Exemplary Management Skills

C-Suite Leadership - Senaka Bandara Alawattegama *(Director / CEO, Kelani Valley Plantations PLC.)*
- Nalaka Wakkumbura *(Managing Director, Wakkumbura Industrial Technology Company (Pvt) Ltd.)*
Executive Decision Maker Leadership - Sujeewa Prasanna Vidanapathirana *(Chief Operating Officer, LAUGFS Supermarkets (Pvt) Ltd.)*
- Maurice Dirk Joshua *(Executive Director, Sathosa Motors PLC.)*
- Nishan Mahesh Nawarathna *(Attorney at law /Deputy General Manager, SMR Consolidated.)*
Emerging Managerial Leadership - Dinushi Sulochana Udakumbura *(Group Manager, WNS Global Services (Pvt) Ltd.)*

07. Inspiring Strategic Leadership and Trend Capitalization

C-Suite Leadership - Shifara Ismail *(Chief Executive Officer - Group, Wayamba Printpack Pvt Ltd)*
- Hasith Dayanga Yaggahavita *(Chief Executive Officer, 99x Technology Limited.)*
Emerging Managerial Leadership - Srishantha Fernando *(Manager - Industrial Engineer, Omega Line Ltd.)*



STORIES OF WINNERS



LIFETIME EMINENT LEADERSHIP

AWARD WINNER



Eng. Nahil Wijesuriya FIMarEST

Eng. Nahil Wijesuriya FIMarEST is a distinguished Sri Lankan entrepreneur and business leader whose career spans maritime engineering, shipping, information technology, electronic media, property development and hospitality. Beginning his professional journey as a marine engineer, he served with international and local shipping organisations before becoming Chief Engineer at Colombo Dockyard. In 1977, he co-founded East West Enterprises, laying the foundation for a diversified business portfolio. Through his entrepreneurial vision and strategic leadership, he expanded into multiple industries, establishing ventures including East West Information Systems and ETV. His business journey reflects a capacity for identifying opportunities, navigating changing market environments and building sustainable enterprises. Beyond business, he has made significant contributions to education, healthcare and professional development, strengthening institutions and creating opportunities for future generations.

Q1 Looking back on your journey from entrepreneur to established business leader, what personal experiences have most shaped your leadership philosophy?

When I look back, I don't think there was one particular moment that made me the person I am today. It was a combination of experiences, people I met and, of course, mistakes I made along the way.

I started my working life as a marine engineering apprentice at Walker Sons, went to the UK to study, and eventually worked at sea with P&O Lines and the Ceylon Shipping Corporation. Later, I became Chief Engineer at Colombo Dockyard. Those years taught me discipline, responsibility and the importance of understanding a problem before trying to solve it.

When I started East West Enterprises with Captain Lester Weinman in 1977, I had to apply those lessons in a completely different environment. In business, you cannot depend on qualifications alone. You have to recognise opportunities, make decisions and accept the consequences.

My parents also had a tremendous influence on me. Whatever I have achieved, I have never felt that success belongs to one person alone.

I suppose the biggest lesson I have learnt is this: don't be afraid to try something different, but understand what you are getting into. And when you are in a position to help somebody else, don't keep postponing it. Sometimes, you simply have to step up and do what needs to be done.

Q2 Throughout your entrepreneurial journey, what has guided you in recognising opportunities that others may have overlooked and turning them into lasting business ventures?

I think many opportunities become obvious when you have experienced a problem yourself.

When I was working at sea, I had seen shipping agents in different parts of the world. Quite often, the people handling a ship's requirements did not really understand the ship itself. They might have been good at paperwork, but they did not necessarily understand what a captain or chief engineer needed.

I began thinking that there was an opportunity to do things differently. That thinking eventually led to East West Enterprises with Captain Lester Weinman.

I didn't start out with a grand plan to build a business empire. One thing led to another. As we gained experience, we saw opportunities in areas such as shipping services, information technology, electronic media and property.

But I have always believed that an idea by itself is not worth very much. You must understand the business, know the risks and be prepared to get involved. I like to understand how things work rather than simply sit back and depend entirely on other people.

I have also made mistakes, and I don't think any entrepreneur can honestly claim otherwise. The important thing is to learn from them.

For me, recognising an opportunity is about looking at something familiar and asking a simple question: can this be done better? If you can find a sensible answer, there may be a business worth pursuing.

Q3 Your contributions to education and healthcare demonstrate a commitment to creating value beyond the business world. What personal convictions have shaped your approach to giving back to society?

I have often asked myself a simple question: if I have been fortunate in life, what have I done with that good fortune to help somebody else?

That question became particularly important to me as I got older. My mother, Agnes Wijesuriya, was a very important influence in my life, and I wanted to do something meaningful in her memory. That was one of the reasons behind the Agnes Wijesuriya Charitable Fund.

I have always felt that helping somebody should not necessarily mean handing over money and walking away. Sometimes, you can do something that continues to help people long after you have made the initial contribution.

Take Marine House in Kollupitiya, for example. I wanted the Society of Chief Engineers Marine and the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology to have a permanent home. These were professional organisations connected to the industry in which I had spent much of my working life. I knew the difficulties they faced, and I felt I could help.

Healthcare is another area where the need is very real. Supporting the Little Hearts Project at Lady Ridgeway Hospital was particularly meaningful because it concerned children who needed specialised medical care.

I don't think giving should be about recognition. If something you do makes life a little easier for another person, or gives somebody a better opportunity, that is reason enough.

Q4 Through your support for educational institutions and students, you have contributed to opportunities for future generations. What inspires you to invest in the potential of young people?

I have always believed that talent is found everywhere, but opportunity is not always distributed equally.

A young person may have the ability to become an excellent engineer, doctor or entrepreneur, but circumstances at home can make even completing an education difficult. I have come across situations where academically capable students were struggling simply because they did not have enough money for their basic needs. That is something I find very difficult to ignore.

Education has also been a very personal part of my own life. I went to Trinity College in Kandy, and I know how much a school can influence a young person's character, confidence and outlook on life.

That is why I have continued to support Trinity, whether through educational facilities, sports or initiatives intended to strengthen its future. But I have also supported other institutions. The STEAM Centre of Excellence at Ananda College, the IT development at S. Thomas' College and the new educational building at Bishop's College are examples of different opportunities being created for young people.

What matters to me is not simply putting up a building. It is what happens inside it afterwards. Does a student discover a talent? Does somebody gain confidence? Does a young person get the chance to pursue something that previously seemed impossible?

If we can help create those opportunities, we are doing something worthwhile.

Q5 Having experienced business success firsthand, how do you believe established business leaders can use their influence and resources to address the wider needs of society?

I think business leaders have to recognise that they are part of a much larger society. We depend on people, institutions and infrastructure to build our businesses, so it is only reasonable that we should also contribute towards strengthening them.

But I don't believe there is one formula for doing this. Every business leader has different interests, experiences and capabilities. The important thing is to identify where you can make a genuine contribution.

My own background is in marine engineering, so supporting the maritime profession has always meant something to me. When the opportunity arose to provide Marine House for the professional associations, I understood exactly why that support was needed.

Similarly, education and healthcare are areas where the need is evident. A contribution to the Little Hearts Project at Lady Ridgeway Hospital can help strengthen facilities for children who require specialised treatment. Supporting educational institutions can create opportunities for students who will eventually contribute to the country in their own ways.

I also think business leaders should listen before deciding what to support. It is easy to assume that you know what people need, but the organisations working directly with those communities often understand the challenges much better.

Ultimately, social responsibility should not be something we do merely because it looks good in a report. It should come from a genuine willingness to help. And if we can make that contribution in a way that creates lasting value, so much the better.

Q6 Your contributions have supported initiatives across education, healthcare and professional development. When you consider these investments, what lasting change would you most like to see in the lives of the people they benefit?

What I would really like to see is people getting opportunities they might not otherwise have had.

Take the National Kidney Stone Referral Centre in Meerigama. The idea is to strengthen access to specialised treatment through Sri Lanka's public healthcare system. If a patient can receive the treatment he or she needs without having to worry about the cost, that is a meaningful outcome.

The same principle applies to education. When I think about the facilities and opportunities being developed at Trinity College, Ananda College, S. Thomas' College and Bishop's College, I think about the students who will use them in the years ahead. We may never know what every one of those students will go on to achieve, but that is part of the point. We are creating possibilities.

I feel similarly about supporting students who are struggling financially. Sometimes, a relatively small amount of help at the right time can make the difference between somebody continuing their studies and giving up.

I am not particularly interested in measuring a contribution only by what was spent or what was built. Those things are important, of course, but the real test comes afterwards. Did a child receive treatment? Did a student get a fair chance? Did a professional organisation become stronger? Did somebody's circumstances improve? If the answer is yes, then I believe the contribution has achieved something worthwhile. That is the kind of legacy I would like to leave behind.

Q7 How do you balance the demands of building successful businesses with your belief in creating a positive and lasting impact on the wider community?

I have never really thought of business and giving back as two things that must compete with each other. They are different responsibilities, but I believe both matter.

When I was building East West Enterprises, my attention was naturally on establishing the business, looking after our customers and finding ways to grow. Later, as the business expanded into different areas, there were always new challenges to deal with.

But life is not only about the work you do or the businesses you build. At some point, you have to ask yourself what else you can contribute.

For me, that has often meant responding when I see a genuine need. Sometimes it has been connected to my own background, as with Marine House and the maritime profession. At other times, it has been about education or healthcare, where the benefits can extend well beyond one individual.I don't think you need to wait until you have achieved everything you want in business before helping others. If you keep waiting for the perfect time, you may never get around to it.

Of course, businesses must be run responsibly. You have to understand your commitments and make sensible decisions. But I believe that financial success also gives you the ability to do things that would otherwise be beyond your reach.

The important thing is to use that ability thoughtfully. Business gives you the means to create value, and I believe there is real satisfaction in using some of that capacity to improve other people's lives.

Q8 Having navigated decades of change in Sri Lanka's business environment, what experience has most influenced your understanding of responsible leadership and the obligations that come with success?

One thing I have learnt over the years is that you cannot assume circumstances will remain the same. Industries change, technology changes, and the country itself goes through difficult periods. You have to be prepared to adapt.

I have worked in shipping, information technology, electronic media and property, and each of those businesses has its own challenges. What worked in one industry did not necessarily work in another. You had to understand the situation, make decisions and accept that things would not always go according to plan.

But there is another lesson that becomes clearer as you get older. You begin to realise that whatever you have achieved has depended on many people along the way. Your parents, your education, your colleagues and the opportunities you received all play a part.

I have always acknowledged the influence of my parents and Trinity College on my life. My experience in the maritime industry also stayed with me, which is why supporting the professional community through Marine House was so meaningful.

I think responsible leadership begins with recognising that success brings obligations as well as opportunities. It does not mean you can solve every problem, and I certainly would not claim that. But when you are in a position to do something useful, you should consider doing it.

Experience teaches you to be more realistic about what you can achieve. It also teaches you that sometimes the most worthwhile decisions are the ones that benefit people beyond yourself.

Q9 Drawing on your experience as both an entrepreneur and a contributor to social development, what change would you most like to see in how Sri Lankan businesses approach community responsibility?

I would like to see more businesses thinking about community responsibility as a natural part of what they do, rather than something they attend to occasionally.

There is nothing wrong with making donations or supporting a particular event. Those things can be helpful. But I think we should also ask whether there is a way to create something that will continue to benefit people for years.

For example, supporting a school is not only about constructing a building. It is about helping create an environment where children can learn, discover their abilities and prepare themselves for the future. Similarly, supporting a hospital should be about helping medical professionals provide better care to patients.

I would also encourage business leaders to look beyond the communities with which they are most familiar. We naturally feel connected to our own schools, professions and networks. I understand that because I feel the same way about Trinity College and the maritime industry.

But there are needs elsewhere, too. A student struggling to continue an education or a patient who cannot access specialised treatment may have no connection whatsoever to your business. That should not automatically make their circumstances less important.

I believe Sri Lankan businesses have considerable knowledge, experience and resources that could be put to better use in addressing social needs.

The real change I would like to see is a greater willingness to ask, 'What can we do that will genuinely help?' And then to follow through, rather than simply making a promise.

Q10 As the recipient of the Lifetime Eminent Award, what would you most like your professional journey and contributions to society to inspire in the next generation of Sri Lankan leaders?

If there is one thing I would like younger people to take from my journey, it is that you don't have to follow a perfectly straight path to do something worthwhile.

I began as a marine engineering apprentice, went to the UK to study, worked at sea and eventually entered business. Along the way, I moved into industries I could not have imagined being involved in at the beginning. There were opportunities, setbacks and plenty of things to learn.

I would encourage young people to remain curious, work hard and not be frightened of trying something different. But I would also tell them to understand what they are doing. Confidence is important, but it should be accompanied by preparation and a willingness to learn from mistakes.

There is another thing I feel strongly about. Don't measure your life entirely by what you accumulate or the position you reach. Ask yourself what you have contributed to the lives of other people.

I have been fortunate to support institutions such as Trinity College, contribute to projects such as Little Hearts at Lady Ridgeway Hospital and help strengthen the professional community that shaped my own career. These are things that have given me satisfaction beyond business.

And you don't have to wait until you are successful to begin helping somebody. You can do that at any stage of your life.

If younger leaders can build successful businesses, remain true to their values and use their opportunities to make life better for others, I think Sri Lanka will be in good hands.





True leadership is not measured by what you build for yourself, but by the

Opportunities

You Create for Others”



OVERALL AWARD WINNERS



Mr. Eranga Rohan Peiris Goonetilleke

Mr. Rohan Goonetilleke is the Managing Director/CEO of the Hayleys Fabric Group, leading Hayleys Fabric PLC since March 2013 and South Asia Textiles Limited since its acquisition in 2021. With over 25 years of leadership experience across the textile, apparel and plantation sectors, he has driven business transformation, manufacturing excellence, innovation and sustainable growth. A Graduate Engineer (B.Sc. Eng.) educated in the United Kingdom, he has held senior leadership positions at MAS Holdings, Brandix, Textured Jersey Lanka and Elpitiya Plantations.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Leadership vision becomes meaningful when translated into clear strategic priorities across the different levels of management. Disciplined execution, investments in technology and enhancing capabilities to align with changes in the industry and customer expectations. At Hayleys Fabric, this has been the culture and has always focused on strategic diversification, manufacturing excellence, innovation, sustainability, digital transformation and responsible business practices. The acquisition and integration of South Asia Textiles Limited also strengthen agility and resilience. Initiatives such as the management of Work-in-Progress withing a limited number of days and daily monitoring at Senior Management level reinforced this strategy through clear accountability, structured performance management and timely decision-making.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant leadership decisions was leading the strategic acquisition and integration of South Asia Textiles Limited into the Hayleys Fabric Group. The decision was not simply about expanding manufacturing capacity, but about building a stronger, more diversified and resilient organization through greater operational and organizational alignment. More recently, the very short Work-in-Progress (WIP) Monitoring Initiative demonstrated the importance of translating strategic intent into focused operational action, by strengthening accountability, visibility, brand trust and timely decision-making across key manufacturing functions.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Sustainable organizational performance begins with people who feel trusted, respected and accountable, supported by a culture that provides clarity, development opportunities and confidence to take ownership. Following the Group's expansion, we have focused on strengthening employee engagement, structured performance management and leadership capabilities, supported by continuous learning, employee wellbeing and workplace safety. During FY2025/26, 100% of employees received formal performance evaluations, reflecting our commitment to ongoing development. Developing future leaders means giving people the knowledge, responsibility and opportunities to make decisions, learn from experience and contribute meaningfully to the organization's future.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Leadership must provide clear direction while maintaining the agility to respond to changing circumstances. In FY2025/26, we navigated geopolitical uncertainty, inflationary pressures, changing trade dynamics and evolving customer expectations by strengthening operational agility and investing in advanced manufacturing, digital capabilities, process optimisation, product innovation and renewable energy. Initiatives such as an extremely short WIP (Workin- Progress) Initiative further strengthened visibility, accountability and timely decisionmaking at the operational level. Teams were supported to disrupt traditional processes and lead times and innovative ideas were encouraged to challenge traditional established processes.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Ethical conduct, strong governance and sustainability are embedded directly into our strategy, purpose, and operational decision-making. We reinforce this through ESG oversight, sciencebased climate targets, the ESG roadmap for 2030, responsible supply-chain practices and transparent stakeholder engagement. Last year suppliers were assessed for environmental and social compliance, with zero reported incidents of child labour, forced labour or corruption. Ultimately, sustainable leadership means creating long-term value while earning the trust of stakeholders.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My ambition is to create a sustainable organization that is agile to change, more resilient, innovative and responsible, while developing people who can lead with confidence, adaptability and integrity. I want to strengthen a culture of operational excellence, accountability and continuous improvement, where initiatives contribute to greater ownership and collaboration. I believe businesses have a responsibility to create meaningful value for the communities and environments. At Hayleys Fabric, we are already contributing through our community and environmental initiatives, as a journey of continuous improvement.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to think beyond the immediate horizon while remaining connected to the realities of the business today, continuously learning, adapting and embracing new ideas and technologies. At the same time, never underestimate the importance of people strong teams, trust and empowerment are fundamental to sustainable performance. I encourage leaders to turn challenges into opportunities for improvement by identifying problems, taking ownership and following through with discipline, honesty and integrity. Ultimately, enduring leadership is about building organizations that are competitive, resilient, innovative and responsible, while leaving behind stronger people and a stronger organization for the future.


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PHDT

PHDT SHINES AT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026

The Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) received 14 awards at the prestigious Management Leadership Excellence (MLE) Awards 2026, held on 18 September 2026 at the Monarch Imperial Hotel, Colombo. The recognition reflects PHDT's significant contribution to community development, leadership, and organizational excellence within Sri Lanka's plantation sector. PHDT was ranked No. 2 nationally at the awards, placing the organization among the leading institutions recognized for excellence in management, leadership, and organizational performance. A significant highlight of the evening was the recognition of three PHDT Directors for leadership excellence. In addition, five awards were presented to Mr. Lal Perera, Director General of PHDT, in recognition of his leadership, commitment to strengthening transparency, and contribution to management excellence under the C-Suite category within the plantation sector.

The awards also recognized five Emerging Managers from Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) for their commitment to continuous improvement and initiatives aimed at enhancing the well-being and development of plantation communities. Their recognition reflects the growing emphasis on professional leadership, innovation, and effective management at the estate level. These multiple accolades underscore PHDT's continued efforts to improve the quality of life of plantation communities through innovative programmes, transparent practices, effective leadership, and service excellence.

The recognition received at the MLE Awards 2026 marks another significant milestone for PHDT as it continues to strengthen its commitment to serving plantation communities across Sri Lanka.

1. **Elpitiya Plantations PLC- Dunsinane Estate**
2. **Agarapathana Plantations PLC- Kahagalla Estate**
3. **Balangoda Plantations PLC- Cecilton Estate**
4. **Pussellawa Plantation LTD- Hellbodde Estate**
5. **Kelani valley Plantations PLC- Battalgalla Estate**

Our Award-Winning Campaigns



Asia Miracle Awards 2026



Diamond Excellence Award 2026



Best Website CSR - 2026



PHDT Tea Dialogue



PHDT Community Canvas

SRI LANKA'S HIGHEST-RANKED COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATION



Mr. Lal Ravindra Perera

Lal Perera serves as the **Director General** of the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT), gazetted under the **Ministry of Plantation and Community Infrastructure**, with a mandate to uplift nearly one million plantation workers in Sri Lanka. With a **Master's Degree in Public Management and Administration in university of Colombo**, he has led PHDT for over a decade, pioneering integrated programmes in housing, healthcare, childcare, education, sanitation, and community infrastructure. His rare blend of private and public sector expertise. Started beginning high profile carrier as **Deputy General Manager** at **Mackwoods Plantations** which has enabled him to forge strategic partnerships across government, corporate, and civil society. Recognized nationally and internationally, Lal has introduced landmark initiatives such as the **Roots to Wings scholarship scheme** and **Tea Dialogue bulletin**, embodying visionary leadership as a pioneering in plantation human capital development.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

My leadership vision is rooted in **sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience**, and I translate this vision into strategic direction by embedding it into every operational and developmental initiative of PHDT. The first step is to **align organizational objectives with the evolving needs of plantation communities**, ensuring that our programmes are demand driven and holistic. This means addressing housing, healthcare, education, sanitation, and livelihood development in an integrated manner, rather than in isolation.

To position PHDT for sustainable growth in a competitive environment, I have adopted a **stakeholder centric approach and** forging strong partnerships with government, private sector, and international donors. These collaborations not only diversify our funding streams but also enhance credibility and resilience against external shocks. At the same time, I emphasize **innovation and digital transformatio**n, enabling PHDT to modernize its service delivery and remain agile in the face of disruption.

Equally important is the cultivation of **human capital within the organization**. By empowering employees through participatory decision making, transparent communication, and leadership development, I ensure that our workforce is motivated to take ownership and drive the mission forward. This culture of empowerment strengthens resilience and creates a pipeline of future leaders.

Finally, I embed **ethical governance and sustainability practices** into every strategic decision. Transparent audits, compliance frameworks, and environmental stewardship safeguard PHDT's reputation and ensure that growth is not only ambitious but also responsible. In doing so, PHDT is positioned as a **globally recognized brand in community service that the only one in the tea world, while remaining resilient, competitive, and future ready**.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

When I reflect on the leadership decision that most profoundly shaped my journey, one stands out above all others: the choice to reposition the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) from a welfare driven body into a development oriented institution. It was a turning point that demanded courage, vision, and conviction. For decades, plantation communities had been accustomed to short term relief, but I believed their future lay in empowerment, through education, health, housing, and youth development.

That decision was not merely administrative; it was transformational. It redefined PHDT's role from caretaker to catalyst, and in doing so, it redefined my own leadership philosophy. I learned that leadership is not about managing needs and it is about unlocking potential. By trusting communities with responsibility, equipping them with skills, and creating platforms for participation, I witnessed resilience and innovation flourish where dependency once prevailed.

The insight I carry forward is clear: sustainable change comes when leaders shift from providing answers to enabling solutions. This experience taught me that inclusivity and empowerment are not abstract ideals; they are practical strategies that build stronger institutions and stronger societies.

Today, as I stand recognized among the best CEOs, I see that pivotal decision as the cornerstone of my professional journey. It not only elevated PHDT into a globally respected model of community service within the tea industry, but also reinforced my belief that visionary leadership, grounded in human development, can transform entire generations.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

At PHDT, my leadership approach has always been rooted in empowerment rather than dependency. I believe a workplace thrives when individuals are educated, informed, and confident in their rights, not reliant on politicians, trade unions, or management to speak for them. By fostering awareness and knowledge, employees begin to understand the industry in depth, recognize their role in its growth, and take ownership of both responsibilities and outcomes.

This philosophy has shaped the way I build teams. Instead of driving results through force or hierarchy, I emphasize **teamwork, shared accountability, and collective vision**. When people see themselves as partners in progress, they contribute not only to achieving high production targets but also to elevating tea as one of the world's most trusted beverages. The pride of contributing to something larger than themselves becomes a powerful motivator.

Practical approaches include **capacity building programmes, leadership training, and participatory decision making platforms** where every voice matters. Recognition of contributions by way of whether through awards, sports initiatives, or leadership opportunities—reinforces the idea that each individual is a stakeholder in PHDT's success.

The insight I carry forward is simple yet profound: empowerment creates leaders. By nurturing knowledge, encouraging ownership, and building unity through teamwork, we are not just producing results and we are cultivating the next generation of leaders who will sustain and elevate this industry for decades to come.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Leading through disruption has meant confronting not only economic and social challenges but also perceptions. The plantation industry has been criticized for its colonial legacy, over a century under British rule—and for the stewardship of Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) over the past three decades. While constructive dialogue is essential, unchecked criticism risks damaging the very communities we seek to uplift. If this trend continues, even those who support the industry may withdraw, leaving vulnerable populations without the backing they need.

At PHDT, we chose a different path: transformation through empowerment. With nearly 80% of the plantation population non working and historically dependent, our challenge was immense. Poor infrastructure and limited recognition had created barriers to progress. Yet, by investing in people, we turned disruption into opportunity. Through initiatives like Roots to Wings, we brought educated youth onto a platform where they could lead, innovate, and inspire. This gave communities a sense of ownership and shifted the narrative from dependency to resilience.

We fostered an environment where innovation thrives by encouraging teamwork, inclusivity, and knowledge. Rather than driving productivity through force, we built pride in contributing to something larger and the vision of making tea one of **the world's most trusted beverages**. By anchoring our leadership in trust and empowerment, we transformed setbacks into stepping stones.

The insight is clear: protecting this valuable industry requires unity, vision, and respect. Criticism alone cannot build; empowerment and collaboration can. This transition is not just about sustaining production but it is about reshaping an industry, elevating communities, and ensuring that the plantation sector becomes a model of resilience and innovation for generations to come.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Pursuing ambitious objectives in the plantation sector requires more than chasing numbers and it demands a leadership philosophy anchored in ethics, governance, and sustainability. The plantation industry has driven Sri Lanka's economy for decades, yet it carries a complex legacy: over a century under British rule and only three decades under Regional Plantation Companies. Too often, criticism is directed at the industry without recognizing that such negativity damages communities more than the industry itself. If this trend continues, even those who support transformation may withdraw. That is why protecting this valuable sector is not just an economic imperative as it is a moral responsibility.

At PHDT, my approach has been to ensure that **every decision balances ambition with dignity**. We inherited a high resident community, largely dependent and underserved, but transformation is underway. Politicians, trade unions, and management must play a constructive role is not in fostering dependency, but in educating and empowering communities. By understanding youth aspirations, we recognize that although many seek employment outside, they continue to live within estates. Their safety, security, and dignity must be safeguarded, echoing Maslow's theory of human needs

Literacy rates are rising, more youth are entering universities, and this should be seen not as a threat but as a strength. Their capacities are improving, and by bringing them into management, we elevate their dignity and create future leaders. We have already demonstrated that this transition is possible, youth are now part of decision making, innovation, and governance.

The insight is clear and ambitious goals must never come at the cost of ethics or sustainability. By embedding strong governance, empowering communities, and embracing youth leadership, we ensure that the plantation industry is not only protected but transformed into a resilient, trusted global brand. This is not about reinventing the wheel and it is about building on what works, uniting stakeholders, and securing the future of an industry that has been the backbone of Sri Lanka's economy for generations.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond achievements and results, the legacy I wish to leave is one of empowerment, sustainability, and dignity for the plantation community. At PHDT, we have never believed in project mode interventions or contractor driven models. Our vision is to build systems that endure, supported by careful monitoring, evaluation, and community ownership.

A powerful example is *Pulle Madu*, where day care centres established during the colonial era were transformed into modern Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. With government and RPC involvement, we elevated their quality by training officers to diploma level, ensuring professional standards and measurable impact. This initiative directly contributed to rising literacy rates in the plantation sector, proving that sustainable change comes through education and capacity building.

Another lasting impact is the dramatic increase in university entrants from plantation communities—from just five per year to over 100 in the past two years. This is not a statistic; it is a testament to resilience, opportunity, and the belief that youth capacities must be nurtured, not feared. By integrating them into management and decision making, we restore dignity and create leaders who will carry the industry forward.

We also tackled malnutrition through the midday meal programme in ECD centres. Rather than outsourcing meals to contractors, PHDT insisted on revolving funds and parent participation. This approach empowered families to prepare nutritious meals, taught them the value of nutrition, and ensured sustainability. It was not about feeding children aloneand it was about teaching communities to care for their own wellbeing.

Ultimately, my lasting impact is to show that we do not just build houses but we build communities. We mobilize, advocate, and even act as a pressure group to ensure government attention to plantation needs. The transformation is clear: from dependency to dignity, from isolation to inclusion, and from short term relief to long term sustainability. That is the legacy I want to leave this not just for PHDT, but for the profession and the wider community.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

Guidance for Emerging Leaders

Nothing is impossible when vision is matched with commitment. Leadership demands not only determination but also the humility to be a good listener. Argue your point with confidence when you believe in it, but never fall into the trap of pleasing only a segment. True leadership is inclusive, transparent, and built on an open-door policy.

Do not depend solely on funds or make excuses for their absence. Funding is only assistance, not the foundation of success. What truly sustains an organization is the respect and confidence of its people. When communities trust you, industries will prosper naturally.

This message extends beyond organizational walls our own to Tea boards, brokers, buyers, and exporters. Decisions must not be driven by profit alone. **Make people smile, earn their trust, and the industry will thrive. Profit will follow, but trust must lead.**

Emerging leaders should remember:

- **Commitment and confidence** are the bedrock of progress.
- **Listening and transparency** build trust.
- **Decisions rooted in ethics and community respect** create lasting impact.
- **Profit is an outcome, not the purpose.**

Ultimately, leadership is about shaping futures, not just managing present challenges. The legacy you leave will be measured not by numbers, but by the confidence and prosperity you inspire in others.

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Mr. Johann Arjuna Rodrigo

Mr. Johann Rodrigo is a plantation industry executive with over 40 years of experience in plantation management, corporate affairs and sustainability. He began his career as an Assistant Manager with the Janatha Estates Development Board and served as Director and CEO of Horana Plantations PLC since 2020, leading diversification, innovation, sustainability, and circular economy initiatives. He previously served as Director of Corporate Affairs at Kelani Valley Plantations PLC. Mr. Rodrigo is a Director of the Ceylon Tea Museum and the Plantation Human Development Trust and played a pioneering role in child welfare and mother-and-child-friendly practices within Sri Lanka's plantation sector.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

My approach begins with connecting vision to action. At Horana Plantations PLC, we recognised that the future of plantation agriculture could not rely solely on traditional models. We transformed our vision into strategy centered on diversification, digital transformation, climate resilience and people development. By expanding into crops such as coconut, coffee, cinnamon and oil palm, investing in precision agriculture and renewable energy, and embedding ESG into decision making, we have built a more resilient and adaptable business. I believe sustainable growth comes from understanding the interconnectedness of people, the environment, operations and financial performance, ensuring every decision supports long term value creation.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant decisions in my career was championing social development and child welfare initiatives within the plantation sector, including helping introduce partnerships with organisations such as Save the Children, supporting the Mother & Child Friendly Plantations concept, and employing an MBBS qualified doctor to reside within the Estates. This taught me that leadership extends far beyond business performance. When you invest in people, communities become stronger, organisations become more resilient and long term success flows naturally. It reinforced my belief that sustainable business growth and social responsibility are not competing priorities but mutually reinforcing objectives.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Empowerment begins with trust, opportunity and recognition. We focus heavily on training, leadership development, employee welfare and open communication. At Horana Plantations PLC, we have invested in capacity building, digital literacy, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and employee engagement programmes. I actively encourage my managers to take ownership of outcomes while creating an environment where people feel safe to contribute ideas and challenge conventional thinking. Leadership development is not limited to senior management, for me it is about creating opportunities for people at every level of the organisation to grow, learn and realise their potential. That is why I also believe developing future ready leaders requires creating an environment where people are not afraid to make mistakes. By encouraging learning through experience and viewing setbacks as opportunities for growth, my employees will build the confidence to take initiative and tackle challenges.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

The plantation industry constantly faces uncertainty, whether from climate change, labour challenges, regulatory challenges or global market disruptions. During such periods, I focus on clarity, communication and adaptability. We encourage our teams to view challenges as opportunities to improve. This mindset has driven investments in renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, precision farming and digital systems. Innovation thrives when people understand the purpose behind change and are empowered to experiment with new solutions. Something I believe in and cascade down to my employees is that resilience is built by preparing for uncertainty rather than reacting to it.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

For me, governance and sustainability are not separate from business performance, rather they are essential enablers of it. Every major decision must be assessed through the lenses of ethics, accountability and stakeholder impact. At Horana Plantations PLC, strong governance structures, rigorous compliance systems and transparent reporting frameworks support this philosophy. Achieving growth at the expense of integrity is never sustainable. The most successful organisations are those that create value responsibly while maintaining the trust of employees, customers, investors and communities.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like to be remembered for helping transform the plantation industry into a more sustainable, inclusive and future ready sector. Beyond financial achievements, I hope my legacy will be reflected in stronger communities, better opportunities for plantation families, and a culture of responsible leadership. If my efforts contribute to better quality of life, greater educational opportunities for young people and a stronger commitment to sustainability across the industry, I would consider that my most meaningful achievement.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice is simple. Lead with purpose, remain humble and never stop learning. The future belongs to leaders who can balance performance with responsibility, innovation with ethics and ambition with empathy. Understand your people, listen to your stakeholders and be prepared to adapt as circumstances evolve. Sustainable success is built through trust, resilience and long term thinking. Most importantly, remember that leadership is not about personal achievement, it is about creating a space where others can succeed and where positive change can endure long after you have moved on.



Ms. Shifara Farook Ismail

Shifara Farook Ismail is a seasoned corporate leader with over 24 years of professional experience and more than a decade in **C-suite leadership**. **As Group CEO** of Wayamba Printpack, Nippon PVC Holdings, Nippon Helmets & Toys, and Classic Care International, she provides strategic and operational leadership across a diversified portfolio of manufacturing businesses.

Her career spans audit, finance, governance, operations and enterprise leadership, while her leadership journey has taken her through turnaround, rebuilding after crisis, diversification, growth and organisational transformation. This breadth has shaped her ability to connect financial discipline with operational realities, people and long-term strategic direction.

A strong advocate of continuous learning and leadership development, she also contributes beyond her corporate roles through professional knowledge-sharing and management development initiatives. Her leadership is distinguished by a forward-looking approach—strengthening organisations for today while building the capability, resilience and people needed for what comes next.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, vision becomes meaningful only when people can see it in the decisions we make today.

I therefore try to look beyond our immediate performance and ask two questions: **What is changing around us, and what must we start building now because of it?** That thinking has influenced our investments in technology, quality systems, digitalisation, people development, risk management and diversification.

But strategy cannot remain in the CEO's office. It has to become priorities that managers understand, actions that teams can execute, and measures that tell us whether we are progressing.

One lesson from our journey is that growth and resilience should not be treated separately. Growth without resilience can disappear with the next disruption; resilience without growth can simply protect the status quo. We therefore try to build both—stronger systems and controls, broader capabilities, alternative sources, empowered teams and investments that improve our competitiveness.

My role is to keep looking ahead, make choices about where we will—and will not—commit our resources, set a clear direction, and create the conditions for our people to translate that direction into measurable results.

I believe sustainable leadership is ultimately about preparing an organisation not only to perform today, but to remain relevant tomorrow.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important decisions in the leadership journey was not a single investment or expansion. It was the decision to stop managing the organisation **only from one crisis to the next**.

We had experienced difficult business conditions, a major factory fire, the pandemic, supply disruptions and Sri Lanka's economic crisis. Each time, our teams responded, recovered and moved forward. But at some point, being in the seat of responsibility, I had to ask myself a difficult question: **Do I want us to become exceptionally good at recovering, or can we become better at being prepared?**

That changed my thinking.

We began placing greater emphasis on institutional resilience—systems, risk management, business continuity, technology, cross-functional capability, stronger controls and diversification. The objective was not to predict every crisis; that is impossible. It was to build an organisation capable of responding when the unexpected happens.

That experience changed me as a leader too. I learned that decisiveness is important during a crisis, but **foresight is what reduces the cost of the next one**.

It also taught me that the strongest organisation is not one that never gets disrupted. It is one that can absorb disruption, learn from it and emerge with greater capability than it had before.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I don't believe empowerment means simply telling people, "You are empowered." People take ownership when they have **clarity, capability, authority and accountability together.**

We have to give managers room to make decisions, encourage cross-functional exposure, develop second-line capability and allow people to solve problems rather than always taking the problem upward. At the same time, empowerment must come with accountability for outcomes.

I am comfortable giving people room to make decisions, including room to make mistakes, but repeated problems without learning are different. **Empowerment works only when freedom and accountability grow together.**

I also believe leadership development happens most effectively through responsibility. Sometimes the best way to develop someone is not another classroom programme, but to give that person a difficult assignment, support them, allow them to think, and let them discover what they are capable of.

Another principle matters greatly to me: **leadership should not be reserved for titles**. An operator who prevents a quality issue, a supervisor who develops another employee, or a manager who takes responsibility when something goes wrong is demonstrating leadership.

My responsibility as CEO is therefore not to become the person who has every answer. In fact, I would consider that a weakness in the organisation. **The real test is whether we are creating people who can eventually make decisions better than we do.**

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

I have learned not to wait for certainty before acting. In business, particularly in manufacturing, by the time everything becomes clear, the opportunity to respond may already have passed.

During disruption, We first separate what we **cannot control** from what we **can influence**. We cannot control global supply chains, exchange-rate movements, economic shocks or geopolitical developments. But we can control how quickly we obtain information, how closely we manage cash and costs, how many sourcing alternatives we develop, how flexible our operations become and how quickly decisions are made.

I also try not to let crisis management kill innovation. When organisations become uncertain, the natural reaction is to protect everything and stop experimenting. Sometimes that is exactly when new thinking is most necessary.

Several improvements in our own journey came because constraints forced us to question established ways of working. Technology, process improvement, new capabilities and diversification were not pursued simply because they were fashionable; they responded to real business vulnerabilities or opportunities.

My approach is therefore **stability where stability is essential, and experimentation where change can create value**. Innovation does not always mean inventing something revolutionary. Often, it begins with having the courage to ask, **"Why are we still doing it this way?"**

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I come from a finance and audit background, so governance has never felt separate from business performance to me. I see it as part of the architecture that allows performance to last.

There will always be pressure to deliver—sales, margins, production, expansion and returns. But a result achieved by weakening controls, compromising quality, treating people unfairly or transferring today's problem to tomorrow is not a result I consider sustainable.

As organisations grow, I believe governance must also move beyond dependence on individual integrity. Good intentions are important, but **good systems are stronger**. Clear authority, segregation of duties, transparent reporting, audits, documented processes, compliance, risk management and accountability help ensure that the organisation does the right thing consistently, not only when a particular person is watching.

The same principle applies to sustainability. It should increasingly influence how we think about materials, waste, efficiency, people, supply chains and future investment—not remain a separate CSR activity.

My financial background taught me to ask, **"What is the return?"** Leadership has taught me to add two more questions: **"At what cost, and to whom?"**

Those questions often lead to better decisions.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would not want my legacy to be a list of machines purchased, revenue achieved or awards received. Those things matter, but eventually somebody will exceed every number.

I would rather leave behind an **organisation stronger than the one I inherited, people more capable than when I met them, and a culture that continues to improve without depending on one individual.**

Professionally, I would also like my journey to demonstrate that a career does not have to remain inside the boundaries of where it started. I began in audit and finance and moved into manufacturing, operations and group leadership. Continuous learning allowed me to keep crossing those boundaries.

And particularly for women and younger professionals, I hope my journey shows that leadership does not require becoming someone else's version of a leader. You can lead with discipline and empathy, ambition and values, confidence and humility at the same time.

If, years from now, people remember not simply what I achieved but what they became because our paths crossed, I would consider that a far more meaningful measure of leadership.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

One thing I would tell emerging leaders is **not to prepare themselves only for the position they want next; prepare themselves for problems they have never faced before.**

My own career taught me this. I started in audit and finance. I could have remained within that professional boundary, but manufacturing forced me to understand operations, people, markets, technology, risk and eventually businesses very different from the one in which I started. Many of the situations that shaped me most as a leader were situations no qualification could have fully prepared me for.

That is why I believe future leaders need curiosity as much as competence. Keep learning beyond your function. Listen to people who know things you don't. Be willing to make decisions before you have perfect information, but have the humility to change direction when the evidence tells you to.

I would also tell them not to become too occupied with recognition or position. **A title may give you authority, but responsibility is what develops you as a leader.** When things go well, share the credit generously. When they don't, resist the instinct to first find someone to blame. Ask what you could have seen earlier, what the organisation should learn, and what needs to change.

And perhaps most importantly, don't build an organisation that needs you for every answer. Develop people who can challenge your thinking and eventually make decisions better than you can.

The future will always contain uncertainty. We cannot prepare leaders by giving them an answer for every situation. **We can prepare them to keep learning, think ahead, make responsible choices and build organisations capable of adapting when the answers change.**

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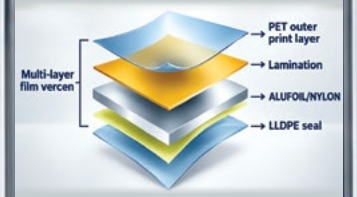

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Mr. Suranga Sampath



Mr. T. M. Suranga Sampath is the **Chief Financial Officer of Nawaloka Hospitals PLC**, with over 17 years of experience across strategic finance, treasury management, corporate governance, financial reporting and business transformation. He holds a BSc in Management from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and professional qualifications including ACA, ACCA Affiliate, MAAT and MSLID. His leadership has contributed to financial restructuring, stronger governance, improved profitability, digital transformation and renewed investment capacity. His leadership philosophy is grounded in integrity, disciplined decision-making, accountability, innovation and sustainable value creation.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe a leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into **clear priorities, measurable actions and consistent execution.**

At Nawaloka Hospitals PLC, I have always viewed finance as more than a reporting function. It must operate as a strategic partner to the business protecting financial stability while creating the capacity for sustainable growth.

During a period of significant economic and liquidity pressure, this meant focusing on capital optimization, treasury efficiency, governance, cost discipline, working capital management and strategic investment. The objective was not simply to improve short term financial results, but to ensure that the organization remained capable of investing in healthcare quality, technology, innovation and future growth.

This disciplined approach contributed to a substantial improvement in performance. Profit Before Tax moved from a **LKR 247 million loss to a LKR 337 million profit**, Net Profit improved from a **LKR 305 million loss to a LKR 56 million profit**, and finance costs were reduced by **37.7%.**

For me, resilience is not simply the ability to withstand difficult periods. It is the ability to emerge from them with a stronger financial foundation and the confidence to continue investing in the future.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant decisions in my professional journey was to pursue a **comprehensive financial turnaround without allowing short-term pressures to undermine long-term strategic priorities.**

When I assumed the CFO role, the organization was facing recurring losses, a significant debt burden, high finance costs, liquidity constraints and working capital pressure. At the same time, inflation, currency depreciation and rising medical supply costs were placing additional pressure on the healthcare sector.

The easier response would have been to focus only on cost reduction.

Instead, I believed the organization required a broader transformation one that combined debt restructuring, treasury optimization, cost management, stronger governance and performance driven financial planning, while continuing to support investment in patient care and technology.

That period fundamentally changed my understanding of leadership. I realized that the CFO's responsibility is not simply to protect the balance sheet. It is to create the financial confidence that enables the organization to continue moving forward, even during periods of uncertainty.

Leadership is not about choosing between survival and growth; it is about creating the conditions in which both become possible.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe empowerment begins with clarity, trust and accountability. People are more likely to take ownership when they understand not only what is expected of them, but also how their contribution supports the wider objectives of the organization.

My approach is to encourage team members to question inefficient processes, contribute ideas, accept responsibility for outcomes and participate meaningfully in decision-making.

I also believe that leadership development takes place through exposure to real challenges rather than instruction alone. Wherever possible, I encourage cross-functional collaboration and greater involvement in commercial and strategic discussions. This helps people develop not only technical knowledge, but also judgement, confidence and business awareness.

A leader's responsibility is not simply to provide answers. It is to create an environment where people become capable of finding the right answers, making sound decisions and eventually leading others.

The strongest teams are those in which leadership capability is continuously developed, not concentrated in one individual.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During periods of uncertainty, my first priority is to establish clarity around the organization 's financial position, key risks and immediate priorities.

At Nawaloka, we operated through a period characterized by inflation, currency depreciation, rising healthcare costs, liquidity pressure and intensified competition. Our response was not purely defensive. We combined stronger financial discipline with continued investment in technology, digital transformation and specialized healthcare services.

One example was the integration of AI and digital systems into clinical workflows. These initiatives contributed to a 36% reduction in CT and MRI turnaround times, a 12% reduction in repeat imaging, resolution of 92% of more than 18,000 chatbot queries without escalation, and a 21% improvement in outpatient satisfaction.

For me, innovation must do more than introduce new technology. It must solve genuine problems, improve outcomes and create measurable value.

The role of leadership is therefore to protect what must remain stable while creating the space for new ideas, experimentation and continuous improvement.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe strong performance and strong governance should reinforce one another.

Sustainable growth cannot be built on weak controls, short-term decision-making or compromised professional standards.

During the financial transformation, we strengthened Board oversight, enterprise risk management, treasury controls and financial transparency. We also restructured major banking facilities, helping to restore financial stability and lender confidence. These improvements contributed to the achievement of a true and fair audit opinion, reflecting stronger financial governance and reporting quality.

In major decisions, I try to consider three fundamental questions: Is it financially sound? Is it professionally and ethically responsible, Will it create sustainable value over the long term?

If a decision cannot satisfy all three, it deserves further consideration. Good governance does not restrict performance. It gives performance credibility, resilience and longevity.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The lasting impact I would like to create is not defined by one financial result or one period of performance.

I would like to leave behind a stronger institution, a stronger finance function and stronger future leaders. For me, finance should continue to be recognized as a strategic function that strengthens resilience, supports innovation, improves governance and enables better decision-making across the organization.

The financial recovery has already created greater capacity for reinvestment. More than LKR 1.3 billion was reinvested in technology and infrastructure, alongside stronger profitability and financial performance.

However, the broader legacy matters more. I would like the systems, controls, values and culture we build today to continue creating value long after any individual leader has moved on.

If the organization becomes better at making decisions, developing people, embracing innovation and serving patients, employees, shareholders and society more effectively, that would be a meaningful contribution.

A leader's most enduring achievement is not what they personally accomplish, but what the organization remains capable of accomplishing after them.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first advice is simple: **never stop learning**. The pace of change in business, technology and society is too rapid for leaders to depend only on past experience.

Future leaders must continuously strengthen their technical knowledge, strategic thinking, digital awareness and understanding of people.

Second, **lead with integrity**. Results may create short-term recognition, but integrity builds long-term credibility.

Third, become comfortable making decisions under uncertainty. Leaders will rarely have perfect information. What matters is the ability to assess the available evidence, understand the risks, exercise sound judgement and act responsibly.

Fourth, remain close to your people. Strategies may be developed at senior levels, but organization s succeed because people understand them, believe in them and execute them.

And finally, never allow your title to define your leadership. Leadership is demonstrated through the confidence you create, the standards you uphold, the people you develop and the organization you leave behind.

Leadership is the ability to create clarity during uncertainty, confidence during difficulty, opportunity during change, and a stronger organization for those who come after you.

That, in my view, is the true measure of leadership. The experience of leading through financial pressure, organizational transformation and rapid technological change has reinforced one principle for me:Leadership is ultimately about stewardship.

We are entrusted with organization s, people, resources and opportunities for a period of time. Our responsibility is not simply to deliver results during that period, but to leave each of them stronger than we found them.

Financial performance matters. Innovation matters. Governance matters. But their greatest value is realized when they work together to create an organization that is resilient enough to withstand uncertainty, agile enough to embrace change, disciplined enough to protect trust, and ambitious enough to keep moving forward.

As leaders, our success should therefore not be measured only by the numbers we deliver today, but by the capability, confidence and values we build for tomorrow.

"The real legacy of leadership is not simply achieving success, but creating an organization capable of sustaining success beyond you."


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Mr. Srishantha Fernando

J. L. Srishantha Fernando is Manager – Industrial Engineering at Omega Line Ltd., where he began his career as a Work Study Assistant in 2007. Through hands-on experience, continuous learning and professional development, he progressed into leadership. He holds an MBA (Merit) from Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK, and Advanced Diplomas in Clothing Technology and Manufacturing Management from SLITA. A qualified GSD and TPM Practitioner, he developed the Operational Learning Curve Excellence Framework (OLCEF) to strengthen operational agility and continuous improvement. He also serves as Area Director – Area H2, Division H, District 82, Toastmasters International (2026/2027), and received Gold recognition for Emerging Managerial Leadership at the CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, leadership begins with a clear vision, but a vision creates value only when translated into purposeful action. I strongly believe that “Write your vision with a pen and strategies with a pencil.” A vision provides direction, while strategies must remain flexible enough to respond to changing business realities.

The post-pandemic apparel industry faced shorter fashion cycles, smaller order quantities, increasing flash orders and greater pressure for speed and flexibility. Recognizing that traditional production approaches were insufficient, I developed and implemented the Operational Learning Curve Excellence Framework (OLCEF) to strengthen operational agility.

OLCEF integrates production readiness, pre-setup planning, machine and attachment readiness, operator training, learning-curve management and changeover improvement. Regular KPI reviews focusing on production efficiency, Change Over Time (COT) and learning-curve performance encourage fact-based decisions and cross-functional ownership.

The results demonstrate the impact of translating vision into disciplined execution. Between 2024 and 2025, average production efficiency increased from 76.48% to 83.44%, the average time required to achieve the learning curve decreased from 11 days to 4.7 days, and average changeover time fell from 93.78 minutes to 21 minutes.

For me, sustainable growth is not simply about achieving better results. It is about developing people, establishing effective systems and building an organization capable of adapting confidently to future.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant decisions in my professional journey was to move beyond conventional problem-solving and develop a structured approach to address the changing realities of apparel manufacturing. This decision led to the development and implementation of OLCEF.

I recognized that improving efficiency could not depend solely on machines, methods or individual interventions. We needed an integrated approach connecting engineering, production readiness, operator capability, learning-curve management and changeover performance.

Implementing this approach required collaboration across functions and a willingness to challenge familiar practices. It taught me that leadership is not about having all the answers, but about creating an environment where people can identify problems, contribute ideas and discover better solutions together.

The experience also changed my understanding of sustainable improvement. Solving an immediate problem is important, but building systems that enable an organization to address future challenges independently is even more valuable.

Most importantly, I learned that courageous decisions create opportunities, but people create sustainable results. When employees understand the purpose of change and are given genuine ownership, improvement becomes more than an initiative; it becomes part of the organizational culture.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe that leadership is not about creating followers; it is about creating more leaders. One of my key priorities is to give people the confidence, responsibility and opportunities they need to take ownership of their work.

My approach begins with clarity of purpose. Employees should understand not only what they are expected to achieve, but also why their contribution matters to the organization's objectives. This encourages them to take responsibility rather than simply wait for instructions.

I also believe that people should be able to balance their professional responsibilities with family commitments. When a team member needs leave for an important family matter, my response is simple: “Take it.” Supporting people when they need to be with their families builds trust and loyalty. As I often say, “If you can’t commit to your family, you can’t fully commit to your company.”

Through initiatives such as OLCEF, I encourage employees from different functions to identify problems, develop solutions and review performance. This creates shared accountability while giving individuals opportunities to strengthen their leadership capabilities.

I believe coaching is more powerful than simply providing answers. When someone approaches me with a problem, I encourage them to analyse the situation, consider alternatives and make decisions. Even when the outcome is not perfect, the experience provides valuable learning.

Regular KPI discussions help teams recognize contributions, identify gaps and improve performance. I aim to create an environment where people can speak openly about challenges and learn from mistakes without automatically viewing them as failures.

Ultimately, developing future leaders requires trust. By giving people responsibility, supporting their learning and recognizing their contributions, we build confidence and capability. My goal is not simply to develop a high-performing team today, but to prepare individuals to lead others successfully tomorrow.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During periods of uncertainty, I believe people need two things from leadership: clarity of direction and confidence that there is a way forward. Rather than resisting change, I try to understand the challenges, identify what needs to change and turn disruption into an opportunity for improvement.

The post-pandemic apparel industry faced shorter fashion cycles, smaller order quantities, increasing flash orders and greater pressure to respond quickly. These challenges highlighted the need for more agile operating methods and contributed to my decision to develop OLCEF.

I encourage people closest to the operation to participate in solving problems. Innovation does not always require a major technological breakthrough; sometimes, it begins with a simple question: “Is there a better way to do this?”

One practical example was the introduction of the Pre-Setup Area. It provided a structured environment to prepare machine layouts, attachments, line balancing, operator training and material readiness before production started. This shifted activities from reactive problem-solving on the production floor to proactive preparation before a new style was launched.

Regular KPI reviews of COT, learning-curve performance and production efficiency help teams identify problems early, test solutions and learn from results.

Most importantly, I aim to create a culture where change is not seen as a threat. When people are encouraged to question established practices, experiment responsibly and learn from successes and failures, disruption can become a catalyst for innovation.

For me, resilience is not simply the ability to survive uncertainty. It is the ability to learn, adapt and emerge stronger from it.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe sustainable performance cannot be separated from ethical leadership. Achieving a target is important, but how we achieve it matters equally. Responsible leadership means delivering results without compromising the values, people and standards that make those results sustainable.

My approach is based on transparency, accountability and fact-based decision-making. I strongly believe that "What gets measured gets done." Clear performance indicators help people understand expectations, monitor progress and take responsibility. However, measurement must always be accompanied by integrity; we should never pursue a target at the expense of doing what is right.

Strong governance begins at the operational level. Clearly defined processes, standard operating procedures and regular performance reviews establish accountability and help sustain improvements. Through OLCEF, I developed structured SOPs covering engineering preparation, production readiness, pre-setup activities, operator training, learning-curve meetings and changeover management.

For me, sustainability must also include people. A process that delivers excellent results while placing excessive pressure on employees is not sustainable in the long term. Developing people's capabilities and involving them in problem-solving are essential parts of my leadership approach.

When evaluating improvements, I look beyond immediate results. I consider whether a solution can be sustained, develop people, reduce unnecessary effort or resource use, and strengthen the organization's future performance.

Ultimately, I see ethics and governance not as restrictions on performance, but as its foundation. Ambition drives us to achieve more, while integrity ensures that we achieve it in the right way. True leadership means ensuring that today's results do not compromise the organization we want to build for tomorrow.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond the achievements and performance results associated with my role, I would like my greatest impact to be the people and systems I leave behind.

I want to be remembered not simply as someone who improved efficiency or delivered successful projects, but as a leader who helped others discover their potential. If the people I have worked with become more confident, capable and willing to take responsibility because of the opportunities and guidance they received from me, I would consider that a meaningful legacy.

Within my organization, I hope to build a culture where continuous improvement becomes a way of thinking rather than a project with an end date. The systems and frameworks we develop should continue creating value after the individuals who introduced them move on. This is why I emphasize structured processes, knowledge sharing, standardization and developing people alongside performance improvement.

Professionally, I want to help strengthen the role of industrial engineering beyond measuring efficiency. I see it as a discipline that connects people, processes, technology and business strategy. By sharing knowledge and encouraging others to approach operational challenges differently, I hope to contribute to the continued development of the profession.

I also believe leadership carries responsibilities beyond the workplace. Through mentoring, knowledge sharing and opportunities for others to develop communication and leadership capabilities, I hope to help build a stronger generation of professionals.

My understanding of success has evolved throughout my career. Earlier, success was largely about what I could achieve. Today, I increasingly measure it by what I can enable others to achieve.

If the systems I helped create continue to improve performance and the people I helped develop go on to develop others, my impact will extend beyond my individual achievements. That, for me, is the meaning of lasting leadership.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first advice to emerging leaders is to lead with purpose while remaining humble enough to keep learning. Leadership is not a position that gives you all the answers; it is a responsibility that requires you to continuously develop yourself and others.

Understand your business deeply, but never lose sight of the people behind the numbers. Technology, processes and strategies are important, yet organizations ultimately progress through people. Learn to listen, communicate clearly, build trust and give others the confidence to contribute.

I also encourage emerging leaders to measure what matters. As I strongly believe, "What gets measured gets done." Measurements should guide decisions, identify performance gaps and support improvement rather than become the ultimate objective.

Another important lesson is to embrace change instead of waiting for certainty. Business environments will continue to evolve, so leaders must develop the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn.

Innovation also requires courage and humility. Not every good idea will succeed the first time, but setbacks can provide valuable lessons when we are willing to examine them and try again.

Most importantly, think beyond your own success. Build people, systems and a culture that can thrive without depending entirely on you. The true measure of leadership is not how indispensable you become, but how capable the organization becomes because of your leadership.

Finally, I would share a principle that has shaped my own thinking: "Write your vision with a pen and strategies with a pencil." Have the courage to establish a clear vision while remaining flexible in how you achieve it. The destination may remain constant, but the path may need to change.

Lead with purpose, measure with discipline, adapt with courage, and leave people stronger than you found them.

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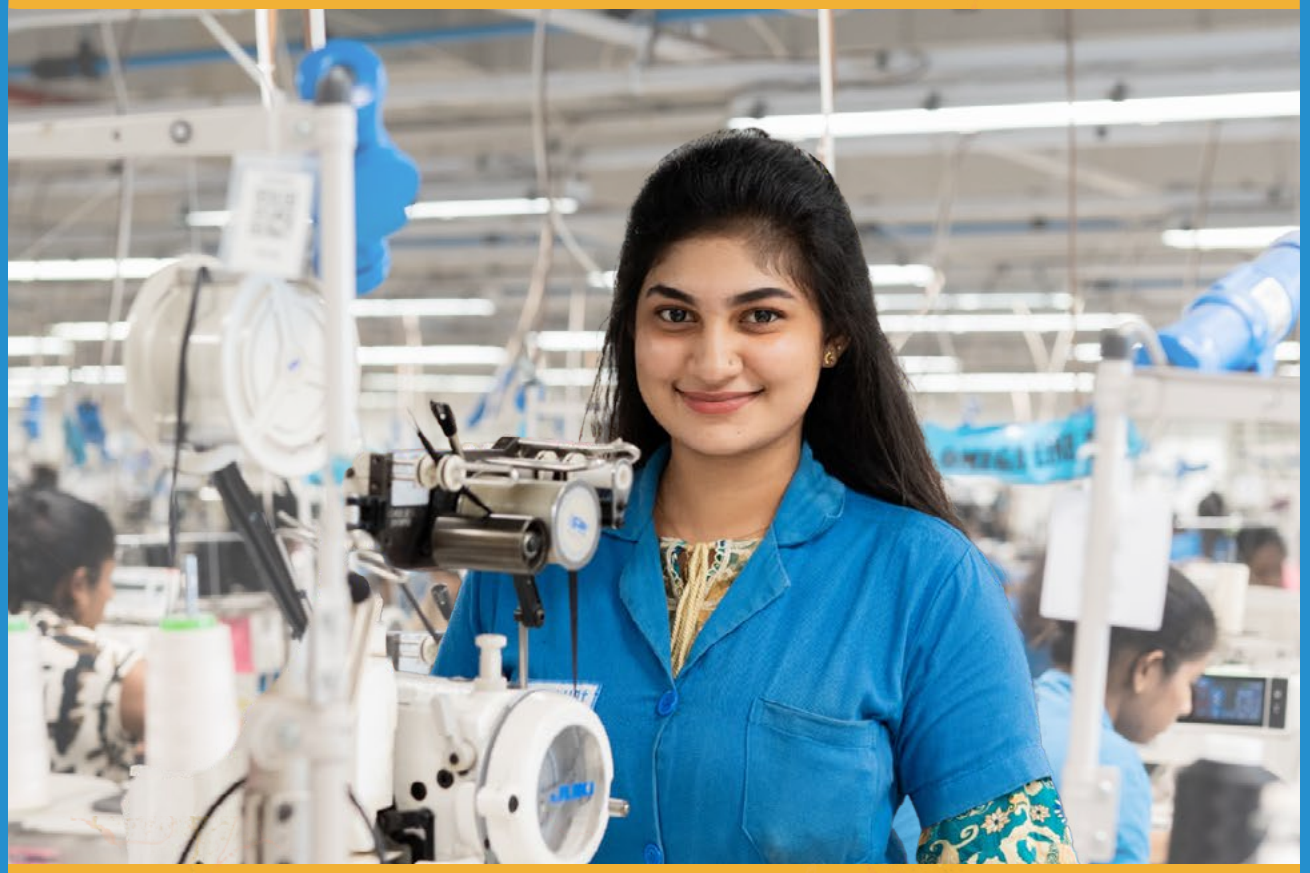

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Mrs. Nimmi Primrose

I am the **Deputy General Manager – Human Resources & Administration** of Sathosa Motors PLC, with over **22 years of progressive experience** in Human Resources and Administration within the Access Engineering Group. I began my career with **Access Engineering PLC** in 2003 as an Executive, transitioning from a Civil Engineering background to Human Resource Management through continuous professional development. I hold an **Advanced Certificate and Advanced National Diploma in Human Resource Management** from NIBM, an **Executive master's degree in human resource management**, and I am a **Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM – Membership No. 1628)**. I am currently pursuing the **CIMA Professional Qualification**. Since joining Sathosa Motors PLC in October 2024, I have led Human Resources, Administration, Corporate Governance, Sustainability, Legal and Regulatory Compliance, Organizational Development, Learning & Development, and the Integrated Management System, while serving as the principal administrative liaison with Isuzu Motors Limited, Japan. I received **Access Engineering Group Merit Awards** in the Junior Management (2006), Middle Management (2014), and Senior Management (2018) categories.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, a leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into clear strategic priorities, measurable actions and shared ownership across the organization.

At Sathosa Motors, my approach has been to align people, processes and performance with the broader business strategy. This begins with understanding where the organization wants to go, identifying the capabilities required to reach that destination, and ensuring that our people, systems and processes are continuously developed to support those objectives.

A key focus has therefore been on strengthening organizational capability through structured employee development, professional and technical qualifications, KPI-based performance management and succession planning, while simultaneously reinforcing governance and quality management systems.

I also believe that organizational resilience must be built before challenges arise rather than after they occur. The significant disruption experienced by Sri Lanka's automobile industry, particularly during the period of import restrictions, reinforced the importance of diversification, strengthening after-sales capabilities, developing our people and maintaining disciplined operational processes.

My leadership approach is therefore not simply about responding to today's business requirements. It is about building an adaptable, capable and resilient organization that is prepared for tomorrow's opportunities and challenges.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant decisions in my professional journey was to move beyond the traditional boundaries of Human Resources and accept responsibility for broader areas including governance, sustainability, compliance, organizational development and integrated management systems.

That transition fundamentally changed my perspective on leadership. It allowed me to understand that Human Resources should not be viewed merely as a support function, but as a strategic partner capable of influencing organizational performance, culture and long-term sustainability.

Working across areas such as ISO management systems, employee development, sustainability initiatives and business improvement programmes also required me to collaborate closely with almost every function of the organization. This broadened my understanding of how different functions contribute collectively to business success.

The most important lesson I learned from that experience is that leadership is not defined by designation or authority. It is demonstrated through the ability to influence people positively, create alignment, build trust and bring different functions together around common objectives.

It also taught me the importance of being willing to move beyond one's comfort zone, learn unfamiliar areas and take responsibility for outcomes. That willingness to continuously learn and accept new challenges has been one of the most valuable lessons of my career.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe genuine empowerment begins with clarity, trust and opportunity.

Employees must clearly understand what is expected of them, but at the same time they should be given sufficient freedom and confidence to determine how best to achieve those expectations. For this reason, I strongly believe in clear KPIs, continuous feedback, recognition and structured development opportunities.

At Sathosa Motors, significant emphasis has been placed on employee learning and professional development through initiatives such as technical qualifications, Isuzu global learning programmes, management trainee development and leadership opportunities.

I also encourage employees to take responsibility beyond the boundaries of their formal job descriptions. When people are trusted with projects, cross-functional assignments and meaningful decision-making responsibilities, they develop confidence, broaden their perspective and begin to demonstrate their true leadership potential.

My philosophy is simple: we should not develop employees only for the positions they hold today; we should prepare them for the responsibilities they may carry tomorrow.

Accordingly, succession planning should not begin only when a position becomes vacant. Developing the next generation of leaders must be a continuous responsibility of leadership.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During periods of uncertainty, I believe a leader's first responsibility is to create clarity, confidence and trust.

People can often accept difficult circumstances when they understand the situation. However, prolonged uncertainty without communication can create fear and disengagement. I therefore place great importance on communicating openly, listening carefully and helping employees understand what we know, what we do not yet know and what actions we are taking.

The challenges faced by Sri Lanka's automobile industry during the import restrictions were a clear example. Rather than simply waiting for market conditions to improve, the organization strengthened areas such as after-sales services, spare parts, employee capability and operational efficiency.

I also encourage teams to view disruption as an opportunity to challenge established practices by asking: What can we do differently? What can we improve? What new opportunity has this situation created?

Innovation does not always require new technology. It may involve redesigning a process, developing employees differently, improving efficiency or discovering a better way to serve customers.

As a leader, I do not believe my responsibility is to provide every answer. My responsibility is to create an environment in which people feel confident, trusted and empowered enough to propose better answers themselves.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I do not view performance and governance as competing priorities. In fact, I believe strong governance is what makes performance sustainable over the long term.

Every organization naturally pursues ambitious financial and operational objectives. However, achieving the target is only part of success; how the organization achieves that target is equally important.

Within my responsibilities, I therefore place strong emphasis on compliance, risk management, transparent processes, effective internal controls, ISO management systems and sustainability considerations.

When evaluating an important decision, I consider several dimensions: Is it commercially sound? Is it legally and ethically correct? How will it affect employees, customers and other stakeholders? And is the outcome sustainable over the longer term?

There are occasions when the quickest or easiest solution is not necessarily the most responsible one. Leadership sometimes requires choosing the more difficult path because it protects the organization's values, reputation and long-term interests.

My guiding principle is that results create success, but integrity creates trust — and a sustainable organization requires both.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The legacy I would value most is not a title, position or award. I would like to know that people and institutions became stronger because of something I helped to create.

Within the organization, I hope to leave behind capable people, strong systems and a culture in which employees recognize that continuous learning, strong performance and personal development can create opportunities for their future.

Beyond the organization, I strongly believe that businesses have a responsibility to contribute meaningfully to society.

That belief was reflected in our Automobile Toolboxes Distribution Programme, through which technical and vocational education was supported across all 25 districts through schools, technical colleges and vocational training institutions.

For me, the initiative represented more than corporate social responsibility. It was an investment in the future workforce of Sri Lanka. By giving young people opportunities to develop practical technical skills, we may be helping to create tomorrow's technicians, entrepreneurs and industry leaders.

Ultimately, the legacy I would like to leave is a stronger next generation — within my organization, within my profession and within the wider community.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

I would share five lessons from my own leadership journey.

First, never stop learning. The knowledge and capabilities that brought us to today's position may not necessarily be sufficient to take us to tomorrow's position.

Second, listen before you lead. Some of the most valuable ideas often come from the people who are closest to the actual work.

Third, do not be afraid of difficult decisions. Leadership is often tested when the right decision is not the easiest or most popular one.

Fourth, develop people rather than simply managing them. One of the true measures of leadership is the number of capable people we help to develop around us.

Finally, protect your integrity. Positions, organizations and business conditions will change throughout a career, but your values and reputation will remain with you.

My message to emerging leaders would therefore be:

Be ambitious about results, humble enough to continue learning, courageous enough to embrace change, and responsible enough to leave something better for the next generation.


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Dr. Madura Gamanayake

I am Dr. Madura Gamanayake, Founder and Managing Director of PBSS Group, which I established with a single laptop and a vision for long-term success. Today, PBSS operates across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, UAE, North America, and Australia, serving over 750 clients. With a PhD in Information Management, CIMA membership, and ACS affiliation, I have led over 150 SAP implementations and 350 ERP deployments. My leadership focuses on ethics, innovation, and sustainable growth. Beyond technology, I have diversified into education, leisure, and agriculture. I believe true success lies in empowering people, embracing innovation, and creating lasting value for all stakeholders.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe effective leadership is about translating vision into clear strategies, measurable objectives and collective action. At PBSS Group, I align organizational goals with departmental KPIs, structured management reviews and continuous performance monitoring. I empower my leadership team to take ownership of strategic priorities while maintaining accountability. My focus extends beyond financial growth to developing people, strengthening governance, encouraging innovation and building organizational resilience. I believe sustainable success comes from creating a shared vision, developing capable leaders and fostering a culture where every employee understands their contribution towards long-term organizational excellence.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of my most significant leadership decisions has been strengthening the second line of leadership and moving towards a more empowered management structure. I realized that sustainable organizational success cannot depend on one individual. At PBSS Group, I encourage delegation, accountability, independent decision-making and leadership development at every level. This approach has strengthened teamwork, operational efficiency and organizational resilience. My greatest learning is that leadership is not about controlling every decision but about trusting, guiding and developing others. A successful leader creates more leaders who can confidently carry the organization forward.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I strongly believe people perform best when they feel valued, trusted and empowered. At PBSS Group, our People-First Culture promotes accountability, continuous learning, teamwork and professional growth. We invest in structured training, mentoring, competency development, performance evaluations and succession planning. Through initiatives such as Voice of PBSS, employees are encouraged to share ideas and contribute to organizational improvement. I encourage managers to develop their teams rather than merely supervise them. My objective is to create an environment where individuals take ownership, demonstrate initiative and develop the confidence and competencies required to become tomorrow's leaders.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

I believe leadership is truly tested during uncertainty. My approach is to remain composed, assess challenges objectively, communicate transparently and guide teams towards practical solutions. At PBSS Group, structured management reviews, collaborative decision-making and continuous improvement help us respond effectively to change. I encourage innovation by empowering employees to challenge conventional practices, propose new ideas and embrace emerging technologies. Equally important is maintaining employee confidence and organizational unity during difficult periods. I believe resilience is not merely surviving disruption but learning, adapting and emerging stronger through effective leadership, teamwork and innovation.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe organizational success must be built on integrity, accountability and responsible leadership. At PBSS Group, we balance ambitious business objectives with ethical conduct, strong governance, employee wellbeing and environmental responsibility. Our corporate values, departmental SOPs, ISO 9001:2015 framework and structured management reviews strengthen transparency and accountability. I encourage leaders to make fair, informed decisions while maintaining professionalism and stakeholder trust. Our People-First Culture reinforces respect, inclusivity and employee development. For me, sustainable leadership means achieving business excellence without compromising ethical principles, social responsibility or the long-term interests of our people and society.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My greatest aspiration is to leave behind an organization that continues to succeed through strong values, capable leaders and a culture of excellence. I want to be remembered not merely for business achievements but for developing people, creating opportunities and inspiring future generations. At PBSS Group, I emphasize succession planning, professional development, ethical leadership and organizational sustainability. I also hope to contribute towards strengthening Sri Lanka's professional management standards and community development. Ultimately, I believe the true legacy of leadership is measured by the people we develop, the values we uphold and the positive impact we leave behind.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to lead with purpose, integrity, humility and courage. Leadership is not about authority but about inspiring confidence, developing people and taking responsibility. Continuously learn, embrace change and encourage innovation while remaining committed to ethical principles. Listen to different perspectives, value teamwork and lead by example, especially during challenging situations. Technology will continue transforming organizations, but empathy, trust and human relationships will remain essential. I believe successful leaders balance ambition with responsibility and performance with compassion. Above all, strive to develop others and leave every organization stronger than you found it.

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Mr. Nalaka Wakkumbura



A visionary entrepreneur, strategic thinker, and lifelong advocate of learning and innovation, Nalaka Wakkumbura is the driving force behind WITCO's evolution into a diversified industrial solutions company. With over three decades of experience spanning apparel, polymer science, industrial technologies, and international trade, he has built his entrepreneurial journey on resilience, integrity, and the courage to challenge conventional thinking.

His forward-looking approach has guided WITCO beyond traditional chemical distribution towards innovation-led solutions, strategic global partnerships, and sustainable business diversification. He believes that true business success is measured not only by financial growth but also by the positive impact created for people, industries, and society.

A strong advocate of ethical governance, inclusivity, employee empowerment, and digital transformation, he has cultivated a people-centric organizational culture where trust, continuous learning, and progressive thinking thrive. His commitment to responsible business practices and sustainability reflects his conviction that profitability and purpose must progress together.

Recognized for his achievements in exemplary management, diversity and inclusion, digital literacy, people governance, and international trade, Nalaka continues to shape WITCO's future with a global outlook and an unwavering belief that doing what is right, embracing change, and empowering people are the foundations of enduring success.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

My starting point is a simple belief: a vision has value only when it becomes a shared direction and, ultimately, measurable progress. At WITCO, we translate long-term aspirations into clear priorities, accountable ownership and regular reviews, while giving our teams the freedom to challenge assumptions and contribute ideas. Strategy should never be confined to the boardroom; the people closest to our customers and operations must help shape it.

Our own evolution demonstrates this approach. We have progressively diversified beyond a reliance on apparel into multiple industrial sectors, built relationships with international technology partners and invested in digital systems and capabilities. This gives us more than new revenue opportunities; it strengthens our ability to absorb market shocks. I see sustainable growth as a balance of commercial ambition, financial discipline, responsible practices and the continuous development of our people.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most consequential decisions was to reposition WITCO from a business heavily exposed to the apparel sector into a more diversified, solutions-oriented organization. Moving beyond a familiar market required us to question a model that had served us well, invest in new capabilities and accept that meaningful transformation involves uncertainty.

It reinforced a lesson that continues to guide me: resilience is built before a crisis, not during one. Diversification is not simply entering different markets; it is understanding where our expertise can genuinely create value and building the partnerships, people and processes to deliver it. I also learned that leaders must be willing to make difficult decisions without losing sight of the people affected by them. Courage, careful preparation and consistent communication must go together. Progress rarely comes from protecting yesterday's success; it comes from preparing responsibly for tomorrow.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people perform at their best when they are trusted, heard and given opportunities to grow. At WITCO, we work to build that environment through open communication, accessible leadership, clear accountability and a willingness to consider ideas regardless of designation. Empowerment does not mean the absence of structure; it means giving people the clarity, resources and confidence to make responsible decisions.

Our approach also recognizes that employees have lives and responsibilities beyond work. Initiatives supporting flexibility, family wellbeing, inclusion and continuous learning are part of how we build a sustainable workplace, rather than peripheral benefits. We encourage colleagues to take ownership of outcomes, learn from setbacks and look beyond their immediate job descriptions. The leaders of tomorrow are developed when we replace fear of failure with responsibility, coaching and the opportunity to contribute meaningfully today.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Uncertainty is a permanent feature of modern business, particularly when operating across global supply chains and industries influenced by changing market conditions. My responsibility is to create calm, clarity and momentum without pretending that every answer is known. We focus on understanding what has changed, protecting essential business commitments and responding quickly with the best information available.

At WITCO, this has meant strengthening our sector diversification, maintaining close dialogue with customers and global principals, and using digital systems to improve visibility and decision-making. Equally important is encouraging teams to experiment, collaborate and raise concerns early. Innovation is not limited to launching a new product; it can be a better process, a more effective customer solution or a smarter way of working. During disruption, I remind our teams that agility and discipline are complementary: we must move quickly, but never compromise our principles.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I do not regard ethics, governance and sustainability as constraints on growth. They are the foundations that allow growth to endure. Ambitious targets are important, but the manner in which we achieve them determines whether that success creates lasting value. My expectation is that commercial decisions should be transparent, responsible and defensible, even when the easier alternative appears more attractive in the short term.

At WITCO, we are strengthening this philosophy through accountable management practices, digital processes, a firm stance against bribery, people-focused policies and greater attention to environmental and social considerations. We also look to work with partners whose standards and commitments are compatible with ours. Sustainable management requires constant judgment: balancing profitability with customer trust, employee wellbeing, resource responsibility and long-term relevance. For me, doing what is right is not separate from business strategy; it is the strategy behind enduring success.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like my legacy to be measured less by the size of a business and more by what remains possible because it existed. If WITCO continues to create opportunities for people, introduce meaningful technologies to industry and conduct business with integrity long after my direct involvement, that would be a lasting achievement.

I hope to help develop a generation of individuals who are confident enough to lead, humble enough to keep learning and principled enough to make the right choice when nobody is watching. I would also like WITCO to demonstrate that a Sri Lankan enterprise can think globally, compete through knowledge and partnerships, and grow while respecting its responsibilities to society. The most valuable legacy is not an organization dependent on one individual, but a culture and institution capable of progressing beyond its founder.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

Never stop learning, and never assume that past success guarantees future relevance. The world will change faster than any individual can predict, so develop the curiosity to understand it and the humility to seek knowledge from people around you. Think globally, but stay attentive to the realities of your customers, employees and communities.

Be ambitious without sacrificing integrity. Build teams that are prepared to disagree with you, because good decisions emerge from honest dialogue, not unquestioning agreement. Embrace technology, but remember that its real purpose is to improve human outcomes and create value. Above all, be courageous enough to adapt and patient enough to build something meaningful. Leadership is not about being the most important person in the room; it is about enabling others to achieve more than they thought possible. The future will belong to those who combine purpose with action.



Mr. Nishan Mahesh Nawarathna

I am a Deputy General Manager at SMR Consolidated with over 12 years of experience in strategic management, operations, agriculture, plantation and manufacturing. I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Law(PhD) - International Commercial Law and hold an Masters of Law in International Commercial Law(LLM), MBA, MSc in Human Resources Management, Masters in Criminology, Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Bachelor of International Relations(INR). I am an Attorney-at-Law of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, MCPM - Chartered Professional Manager and Registered Company Secretary. My experience includes managing 600+ employees, leading local edible oil operations, establishing a edible oil plant in overseas, and driving operational growth, innovation and sustainability.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into clear strategic priorities, measurable objectives and disciplined execution. My approach is to first understand where the organization wants to go, assess the resources and capabilities available, and then align people, processes, technology and investments towards that direction.

In an increasingly competitive environment, I focus on improving operational efficiency while creating the capacity for future growth. During my leadership journey, I have been involved in increasing production by approximately 60%, reducing operational costs by around 20% through innovative machinery and system development, and contributing to approximately 40% growth in exports.

I also believe resilience comes from diversification, strong systems and capable people. The establishment of our edible oil manufacturing operation in overseas was an important step in this direction. It required strategic planning, international coordination, import planning and operational execution in a new environment.

For me, sustainable growth is not simply about achieving higher numbers. It is about building systems, developing people and creating an organization that can continue performing effectively when circumstances change.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant leadership decisions in my professional journey was taking responsibility for establishing our edible oil manufacturing operation in overseas as part of the company's international expansion.

The decision required me to move beyond managing an established operation and take responsibility for building something new. I had to coordinate planning, imports, machinery, resources, people and operational requirements while continuing to manage our existing edible oil manufacturing operations in Sri Lanka with a workforce of more than 600 employees.

The experience taught me that leadership is not about having every answer personally. It is about building the right team, identifying the critical issues early, making timely decisions and taking responsibility for the outcome.

It also strengthened my understanding that successful expansion requires both strategic vision and attention to operational detail. Most importantly, I learned that people are the foundation of any major transformation. A good strategy can only succeed when the team understands it, believes in it and takes ownership of its execution.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe that people perform at their best when they are given responsibility together with the authority and guidance required to fulfil that responsibility. My approach is therefore based on delegation, accountability, communication and continuous development.

As the scale of our operations expanded, our workforce increased from approximately 150 employees to around 600 employees. Managing this growth required more than simply increasing the number of employees; it required developing a stronger management structure and creating capable people at different levels of the organization.

I encourage managers, executives and supervisors to take ownership of their respective areas rather than depending on senior management for every decision. I also believe in identifying individual strengths, providing opportunities to handle challenging responsibilities and allowing people to learn from both successes and mistakes.

My objective is not to create a team that depends on one leader. It is to develop people who can independently lead their teams, make responsible decisions and eventually become leaders themselves.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

When facing uncertainty, my first priority is to understand the situation objectively and identify what is within our control. I then focus the team on priorities, communicate clearly and make decisions based on available information rather than waiting for perfect conditions.

The manufacturing and export environment is continuously influenced by changes in raw material availability, costs, customer requirements, logistics and international markets. Therefore, I encourage teams to look for solutions rather than focusing only on the problems.

Innovation has been an important part of this approach. We have introduced innovative machinery and developed operational systems that contributed to approximately 20% reduction in operational costs. At the same time, improvements in production planning and resource utilization contributed to significant growth in production capacity.

I also believe that innovation should not be limited to machinery or technology. It includes improving systems, simplifying processes, developing people and finding better ways of doing everyday work.

During periods of disruption, my role is to provide direction while giving the team sufficient space to contribute ideas and take ownership of solutions.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

For me, business performance and responsible management are not separate objectives. Sustainable performance can only be achieved when growth is supported by strong governance, ethical conduct, quality systems and respect for people and the environment.

My legal and management background has strengthened my approach to compliance, accountability and risk assessment. In manufacturing operations, I place significant importance on maintaining quality and food safety standards while achieving productivity and commercial objectives.

I also believe that sustainability must be incorporated into business decisions rather than treated as a separate activity. This includes responsible resource utilization, waste reduction, process improvement and environmental awareness.

Beyond operational responsibilities, I initiated CSR initiative, which focuses on four pillars: Education, Empowerment, Environment and Economy. The initiative aims to support communities while encouraging environmental responsibility and sustainable livelihoods.

My approach is therefore to pursue organizational objectives with a long-term perspective, ensuring that decisions create value without compromising ethical, social or environmental responsibilities.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The lasting impact I would like to create is an organization and a community that can continue to progress because people have been empowered with knowledge, responsibility and opportunities.

Within the organization, I want to contribute to developing capable managers and future leaders who can take responsibility beyond their individual roles. I consider developing people to be one of the most important responsibilities of a senior manager.

Beyond the organization, the CSR initiative represents my desire to create a broader social impact. Through its four pillars of Education, Empowerment, Environment and Economy, the initiative seeks to support communities, create opportunities, encourage environmental responsibility and contribute to a more sustainable future.

I also hope my involvement in international expansion, particularly the establishment of the overseas edible oil operation, demonstrates that Sri Lankan professionals and organizations can create value beyond traditional boundaries.

Ultimately, I would like my leadership legacy to be measured not only by business results, but also by the people I developed, the systems I improved and the positive impact I helped create in society.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first advice to emerging leaders is to remain willing to learn. The business environment changes continuously, and a leader cannot depend only on knowledge gained at the beginning of a career.

Second, understand the difference between holding a position and providing leadership. A position gives you authority, but leadership is earned through trust, accountability and the ability to bring people together towards a common objective.

I would also encourage young leaders to understand their operations from the ground level. Strategic decisions become more effective when leaders understand the people, processes and challenges behind the numbers.

Do not be afraid of difficult assignments. Some of the most valuable lessons in my career came from taking responsibility for challenging situations, including managing large-scale operations and establishing a manufacturing operation in a new country.

Finally, I believe leaders should focus on developing people rather than building dependence on themselves. The true strength of an organization is reflected in its ability to continue growing, adapting and succeeding through the people within it.
Lead with purpose, make decisions with integrity, develop people, and always leave the organization stronger than you found it.

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Mr. Rohitha Bandara

Mr. Rohitha Bandara is the Executive Director – Finance & ESG of Hayleys Fabric Group. He joined the Company in 2012 as Chief Financial Officer and was appointed to the Board in 2018, while also serving as a Director of South Asia Textiles Limited. A Fellow Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka and Fellow member of ACCA (UK), he holds a B.Sc. in Management from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and an MBA in Finance from the University of Colombo. With over 21 years of professional experience, he has played a key role in strengthening financial governance and ESG integration. He currently serves as an external member to the Board of Faculty of Management & Commerce -University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Aligning financial discipline, ESG priorities and long-term business strategy with the changing expectations of customers, investors and other stakeholders has been central to approach. At Hayleys Fabric, focus has been on strengthening financial resilience while enabling strategic investments in sustainability, innovation, renewable energy and organizational capability. The integration of ESG considerations into financial planning, governance and enterprise-wide decision-making has helped further strengthen our ability to manage risks and opportunities to Ultimate approach of create a resilient organization that balances financial performance with responsible and sustainable value creation.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

The supporting to integration of South Asia Textiles Limited into the Hayleys Fabric Group, particularly in aligning governance, financial and organizational practices. It demonstrated that successful transformation requires more than strategy; it depends on collaboration, disciplined execution and alignment across people and functions. This experience reinforced the importance of balancing financial objectives with long-term organisational resilience and sustainability. It has also strengthened my belief that effective leadership is about creating alignment and enabling people to work towards a common objective.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

People are fundamental to organisational resilience, and empowerment begins with creating a workplace built on trust, fairness, accountability and opportunity. My approach focuses on continuous learning, leadership development, equal opportunities, employee wellbeing and transparent performance management, while ensuring that people-related priorities are integrated into business and ESG decision-making. During FY2025/26, the Group delivered 40,000 training hours across a workforce of 3,000 employees, supporting the development of skills and leadership capabilities. Ultimately, developing future leaders means giving people the opportunity to learn, contribute, take responsibility and grow with the organization.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During the geopolitical issues, customer pressures and market uncertainty, maintaining organisational resilience has been essential. We responded by reinforcing continuous learning, leadership development, equal opportunities, employee wellbeing and transparent performance management, while strengthening our ability to respond to emerging risks. By financially quantifying sustainability and climate-related risks, we have gained a clearer understanding of their potential business implications, enabling more informed decision-making. Resilience is strengthened by creating an environment where people are empowered to learn, contribute, take ownership and grow with the organisation.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Strong governance, ethical conduct and sustainability are fundamental to achieving lasting business success, and we have focused on integrating ESG considerations into financial planning, enterprise risk management, governance, reporting and strategic decision-making, supported by internationally recognized frameworks and standards. Strengthening internal controls, data integrity, transparent reporting and responsible workplace and supply-chain practices helps ensure that decisions are both accountable and sustainable. Ultimately, our objective is to create long-term value while maintaining the trust of shareholders, employees, customers, regulators and wider stakeholders.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The lasting impact, I would like to create is an organization where financial strength, responsible governance, sustainability and people development are firmly embedded in the way decisions are made. Contribution to developing future professionals who understand that business success must be measured not only through financial performance, but also through responsible and sustainable value creation. Through my involvement in industry and experience, I hope to continue contributing knowledge and practical experience to the development of future business leadership.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

The message to the emerging leaders is to remain curious, adaptable and willing to continuously learn future trends, because the business environment is evolving faster than ever. Develop strong financial and analytical discipline, but also understand the importance of people, ethics, sustainability and long-term thinking in creating enduring value. Leaders should be willing to challenge conventional thinking while remaining grounded in integrity. Most importantly, focus on results you achieve, capabilities, culture and values you build.



Mr. Neil Priyath Jhon

Mr. Neil Priyath John is a distinguished laboratory and healthcare leader with over 43 years of experience at Asiri Hospitals, including more than two decades as Director of Laboratories. Beginning his career as a Medical Laboratory Technician, he progressed through expertise, dedication, and leadership to head the most advance and Sri Lanka's largest private laboratory network. Under his leadership, Asiri Laboratories has grown from approximately 25 tests per day to over 25,000, supported by 22 satellite laboratories and over 100 customer touch points. He has contributed to the development of over 10,000 Medical Laboratory Technicians and serves as Chairman of the Private Laboratory Association of Sri Lanka.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe strategic direction begins with a clear understanding of the purpose of the organization. In healthcare, our purpose is not simply to grow the business; it is to provide accurate, reliable and timely diagnostic services that doctors and patients can trust.

Over my 43+ years at Asiri, I have focused on combining **quality, technology, accessibility and people development** with sustainable business growth. When I started my career, the laboratory was conducting approximately 25 tests a day. Today, the network handles approximately 25,000 tests a day through 22 satellite laboratories and 117 collection centres.

For me, sustainable growth comes from continuously investing in technology, quality systems and, most importantly, people. A strong organization must also be resilient enough to respond to crises, changing technology and changing patient expectations without compromising its core values.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important decisions in my professional journey was to remain closely connected to the technical and operational side of laboratory medicine even after moving into senior management.

I began my career as a Medical Laboratory Technician, and that experience has remained extremely valuable throughout my leadership journey. It taught me that leadership should never become disconnected from the people who actually deliver the service.

As I progressed into laboratory management and eventually became Director of Laboratories, I continued to listen to technicians, pathologists, doctors and support teams and understand the challenges they face.

The greatest lesson I learned is that **you cannot lead people effectively unless you understand their work, respect their contribution and are willing to stand with them when circumstances become difficult.**

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people develop when they are given **responsibility, trust, knowledge and opportunity.**

Throughout my career, I have tried to create an environment where people are encouraged to learn beyond their immediate job responsibilities. I believe in sharing knowledge, mentoring younger professionals and giving capable people opportunities to take responsibility.

One of the achievements I value most is having contributed to the development of more than **10,000 Medical Laboratory Technicians** during my career. For me, that is a greater legacy than any individual position or title.

I also encourage people to understand why their work matters. A laboratory result is not simply a number on a report. Behind every sample is a patient and a family waiting for an answer.

When employees understand that purpose, ownership naturally becomes stronger.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

My approach during uncertainty is to remain calm, communicate clearly and focus the organization on its purpose.

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the greatest tests of this philosophy. At a time when the country was under lockdown and healthcare services were under enormous pressure, our laboratory operations continued without interruption. We had to rapidly expand PCR and diagnostic capabilities while protecting our staff and maintaining the accuracy and reliability of our services.

I believe a leader's responsibility during a crisis is to **absorb fear and create confidence.**

At the same time, crisis situations can accelerate innovation. When circumstances change, we must ask not only, "How do we continue?" but also, **"How can we do this better?"**

That mindset has helped us embrace new technologies, new diagnostic capabilities and new ways of delivering laboratory services.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

In healthcare, ethics cannot be separated from business excellence. A laboratory has a direct responsibility to patients, doctors and society because clinical decisions can depend on the accuracy of its results.

Therefore, I believe growth must always be supported by **quality, professional integrity, accountability and proper governance.**

I ask myself whether a decision is right not only from a business perspective, but also from the perspective of the patient, the medical professional and the people who work within the organization.

Technology and commercial success are important, but they should never come at the expense of accuracy, confidentiality, patient safety or professional standards.

My philosophy is simple: **we must build an organization that can grow successfully while remaining worthy of the trust placed in it.**

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My greatest ambition is to leave behind **people, knowledge and systems that continue to create value even after I am no longer in my position.**

I started my career by handling laboratory samples with my own hands. After more than four decades, my responsibility is much larger, but my fundamental belief has not changed: behind every sample is a person waiting for an answer.

I am particularly proud of the opportunity I have had to train, mentor and develop thousands of Medical Laboratory Technicians. I believe strengthening the country's human resources is one of the most meaningful contributions a professional can make.

I would also like to see Sri Lanka's laboratory profession continue to develop through better technology, stronger professional standards, continuous education and greater recognition of the role of laboratory medicine in healthcare.

If the next generation of laboratory professionals can take what we have built and make it even better, that will be the legacy I value most.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to young leaders is to **learn before you lead, listen before you decide, and serve before you expect others to follow you.**

Never become disconnected from the people who do the actual work. Respect their knowledge and learn from their experience.

I would also encourage young leaders not to measure success only through financial results or positions. Build **trust, people and institutions** that can stand the test of time.

Technology will continue to change rapidly, and leaders must be willing to learn continuously. But while technology changes, values such as integrity, responsibility, compassion and respect for people remain fundamental.

Finally, remember that leadership is not about having the highest position in an organization. **It is about taking responsibility when things are difficult, giving confidence to others, and developing the people who will eventually lead after you.**

A leader's responsibility is not to eliminate every difficulty for the organization, but to give people the confidence, knowledge and support to overcome those difficulties together.

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Mr.Neil Priyath John

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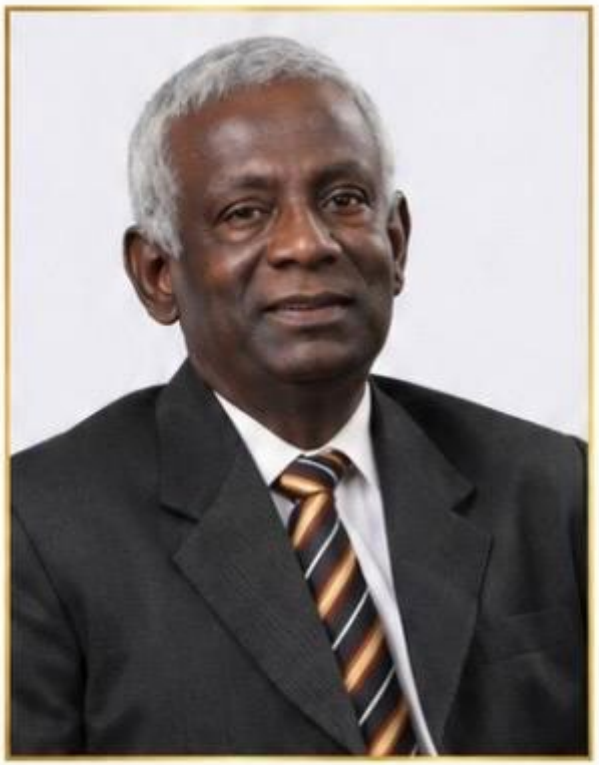

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Dr. Sumudu Nuwan Rajaguru

Dr. Sumudu Rajaguru is a strategic manufacturing and operations leader with over 20 years of experience in operational excellence, Lean Manufacturing, engineering, quality, productivity, and people development. He currently serves as Chief Operating Officer at Dutch Lanka Trailer Manufacturers, where he leads manufacturing and operational transformation with a strong focus on efficiency, innovation, sustainability, and continuous improvement. His leadership experience spans engineering, apparel, and manufacturing sectors across Sri Lanka, India, and Myanmar. He holds qualifications in Production and Manufacturing Engineering, Manufacturing Systems, Business Administration, Finance, and Strategic Marketing, alongside Lean expertise. He is recognized for transforming operations through people, processes, technology, and disciplined performance management.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I transform my leadership vision into strategic direction by aligning people, processes, technology, and resources with clear business priorities. My focus is on Operational Excellence, Innovation, Quality, People Development, Customer Value, and Sustainability, supported by measurable KPIs and disciplined execution.

I believe resilience comes from building capable teams, strengthening supply chains, embracing continuous improvement, and making data-driven decisions. By embedding Lean thinking and a culture of accountability and innovation, I aim to create an agile organization that can adapt quickly to market changes while delivering sustainable growth and long-term value.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

The most impactful leadership decision in my professional journey was choosing to embrace transformation and continuous improvement rather than simply maintain existing practices. Moving across different industries and leadership roles taught me to challenge the status quo, develop people, and turn operational challenges into opportunities for improvement.

This experience reinforced a valuable lesson: successful leadership is not about having all the answers; it is about creating the right environment for people to contribute, innovate, and take ownership. I learned that sustainable results come from combining strategic thinking with disciplined execution, empowering teams, and remaining adaptable to change. This philosophy continues to shape my leadership approach today.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people become strong leaders when they are given trust, responsibility, opportunities, and the freedom to contribute. My approach focuses on clear accountability, continuous learning, open communication, and recognition of performance and ideas.

Through structured KPIs, coaching, Lean and continuous-improvement initiatives, cross-functional exposure, and leadership development programs, I encourage employees to solve problems rather than simply report them. I also believe in identifying potential early and giving emerging leaders opportunities to lead projects and make decisions.

My objective is to create a culture where people take ownership of results, learn from challenges, innovate with confidence, and develop the capability to lead others. For me, developing people is not just an HR responsibility. it is a fundamental part of sustainable business growth.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

When facing uncertainty and disruption, I focus on staying calm, understanding the facts, and converting challenges into opportunities for improvement. My approach is to communicate clearly, make data-driven decisions, and keep teams aligned around critical priorities.

I encourage employees to challenge existing practices, identify waste, and propose practical solutions through Lean thinking, continuous improvement, and cross-functional collaboration. At the same time, I strengthen operational resilience by addressing supply-chain risks, developing people, and building alternative solutions before problems become crises.

I believe disruption should not stop innovation. A resilient organization is one that learns quickly, adapts confidently, and turns uncertainty into an opportunity to become stronger.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe ambitious business growth must always be supported by integrity, accountability, and responsible decision-making. I pursue organizational objectives through clear KPIs, transparent processes, data-driven decisions, and strong governance, while ensuring that short-term results never compromise long-term sustainability.

As a leader, I emphasize compliance, quality, employee development, environmental responsibility, and ethical business practices across operations. Initiatives such as Lean improvement, resource efficiency, carbon-footprint management, and continuous improvement help us create value while reducing waste and environmental impact.

For me, true leadership success is not measured only by what we achieve, but how responsibly we achieve it and the sustainable value we leave behind.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond the achievements and results associated with my role, I want my lasting impact to be measured by the people I develop, the culture I build, and the positive change I create. I aspire to build organizations where continuous improvement, innovation, accountability, quality, and integrity become part of the culture rather than depending on individual leaders.

A significant part of my journey has been developing people and sharing knowledge. I want to continue mentoring emerging leaders and helping professionals develop the confidence, discipline, and strategic mindset required to lead in a constantly changing business environment. I also hope to contribute to the wider manufacturing and business community by sharing practical knowledge in Lean Management, Operational Excellence, leadership, and sustainable business practices.

Ultimately, I want my professional journey to demonstrate that strong business performance and responsible leadership can go hand in hand. If I can leave behind stronger leaders, better systems, a culture of continuous improvement, and organizations that are more resilient and sustainable, I would consider that a meaningful legacy.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging business leaders is simple: build yourself before you build the organization. Leadership is a continuous journey of learning, self-discipline, humility, and the willingness to accept responsibility. Do not focus only on achieving a position; focus on developing the capability, character, and credibility required to make a meaningful difference.

First, stay close to people and close to the business. Understand what is happening at the operational level, listen to employees, customers, and other stakeholders, and never make important decisions based only on assumptions. A leader must be able to connect strategic vision with what actually happens on the ground.

Second, embrace change and continuous improvement. Markets, technology, customer expectations, and business models are changing rapidly. Leaders should develop the habit of challenging existing practices, using data to understand problems, and encouraging teams to find better ways of working. Failure should be treated as an opportunity to learn, provided that accountability remains strong.

Third, invest in people. Sustainable organizational success cannot be created by one leader. Identify potential, delegate responsibility, coach people, create opportunities for young professionals, and develop future leaders who can eventually take the organization further than you could alone.

I would also encourage emerging leaders to balance performance with integrity. Ambitious targets are important, but the way those targets are achieved matters equally. Strong governance, ethical decision-making, quality, employee wellbeing, environmental responsibility, and long-term stakeholder value should remain central to leadership.

Finally, think beyond your own career. Use your knowledge and experience to create value for your organization, profession, and community. My own journey has reinforced the belief that the most meaningful measure of leadership is not simply what we achieve personally, but the people we develop, the systems we improve, and the positive legacy we leave behind.

The leaders of tomorrow must therefore be strategic thinkers, continuous learners, people developers, ethical decision-makers, and change leaders. If they can combine these qualities with courage, humility, and a genuine commitment to creating value, they will be better prepared to shape resilient and sustainable organizations for the future.





WINNERS



Mr. Jeewaka Pradeep Delanjan

As a seasoned Pharmaceutical leader with well over 30 Years of Pharma marketing experience I have proven track record of driving growth and innovation and leading young dynamic teams and motivating them to achieve company as well as individual goals. I have trained above 300 Representatives and some of them are holding high positions as CEOs, Directors, Marketing Managers and Country managers in the industry. I have held many leadership roles in Sunpharma starting my career as Medical Representative and held numerous positions, At the moment I'm DGM INTL MKTING Sunpharma Sri Lanka heading CARDIO/GASTRO/ONCO GYNO Portfolios. I am passionate about creating value to my organization Sunpharma and its Stake holders through strategic planning and executions. I also hold an MBA IN Management an BBA in marketing and hold a Diploma in Counselling & Psychology and hold fellow membership in CIM (UK), LIFE Fellow Member CPM(SL) Fellow CAM (UK) MEMBER CIM(UK) Fellow MIM(MALAYSIA), Certified Member SLIM(SL).

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe that an effective leadership vision must translate into clear strategies, measurable objectives, and consistent execution. With over 30 years of experience in pharmaceutical marketing, I have learned that sustainable growth depends on understanding market dynamics, anticipating changes, and ensuring that our strategies remain aligned with both organisational priorities and stakeholder expectations. In the pharmaceutical industry, this also means responding to evolving healthcare needs while maintaining high standards of quality and compliance.

My approach is to establish clear priorities, empower capable teams, and maintain accountability at every level. I believe that long-term success comes from combining strategic planning with the flexibility to adapt when circumstances change. By encouraging innovation, developing talent, and maintaining a strong focus on execution, leaders can build organisations that are not only competitive today but also prepared for tomorrow's challenges.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important lessons in my professional journey has been recognising that leadership sometimes requires making difficult decisions in the best interests of the organisation and its people. Such decisions are rarely easy, particularly when they involve individuals and teams. However, I have learned that avoiding difficult conversations or delaying necessary action can affect both individual development and overall organisational performance.

My approach has always been to balance decisiveness with fairness, ensuring that people understand expectations and are given opportunities to improve. Over the years, I have come to appreciate that leadership is not simply about making decisions; it is about taking responsibility for them and understanding their consequences. This experience has reinforced my belief that strong leaders must have the courage to act, the empathy to understand different perspectives, and the integrity to remain fair throughout the process.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe that people are an organisation's greatest asset, and developing their potential is one of the most meaningful responsibilities of a leader. Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to train more than 300 pharmaceutical representatives, some of whom have progressed into senior positions, including CEOs, directors, marketing managers, and country managers. Seeing individuals grow professionally and take on greater responsibilities has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my journey.

My approach is to create an environment where people understand their responsibilities, feel confident sharing ideas, and are encouraged to learn from both successes and setbacks. I believe that mentorship, constructive feedback, accountability, and opportunities to take on new challenges are essential for professional growth. Ultimately, developing future leaders requires more than transferring knowledge; it means building confidence, nurturing sound judgement, and giving people the opportunity to discover and realise their potential.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

In today's business environment, change and uncertainty are inevitable, particularly in an industry influenced by evolving healthcare needs, market conditions, regulatory requirements, and global developments. I believe that leaders must respond to disruption with a clear understanding of the situation, a willingness to adapt, and the confidence to make informed decisions.

My approach is to remain focused on organisational priorities while continuously evaluating whether our strategies need to evolve. Equally important is maintaining open communication with teams, helping them understand changing circumstances and the actions required to move forward. I believe innovation flourishes when people are encouraged to think critically, challenge existing approaches constructively, and explore better ways of working. By combining strategic foresight with adaptability and teamwork, organisations can navigate uncertainty more effectively and turn challenges into opportunities for improvement and sustainable progress.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe that achieving business objectives and maintaining ethical standards must go hand in hand. In the pharmaceutical industry, this responsibility is particularly significant because our work is connected to healthcare professionals, patients, and the wider community. Growth should never come at the expense of integrity, compliance, or the trust that stakeholders place in an organisation.

My approach is to ensure that decisions are guided by established principles, transparent processes, and a clear understanding of both short-term objectives and long-term consequences. Ambitious targets are important, but the way we achieve them is equally important. By promoting accountability, respecting regulatory requirements, and encouraging responsible decision-making, leaders can create a culture in which performance and integrity reinforce each other. I believe that sustainable success is built on trust, and that trust can only be earned through consistent ethical conduct and a genuine commitment to doing what is right.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond professional achievements, I would like my lasting contribution to be reflected in the people I have had the opportunity to guide, support, and inspire throughout my career. Having spent more than three decades in the pharmaceutical industry and contributed to the development of over 300 representatives, I consider people development to be one of the most meaningful aspects of my professional journey.

Knowing that individuals I have trained have progressed into leadership positions reinforces my belief that the true value of leadership extends beyond immediate business results. It lies in helping others recognise their abilities, build confidence, and create opportunities for those who follow them. I would like to be remembered as someone who contributed to the growth of the organisation, upheld professional values, and helped others succeed. Ultimately, the most enduring legacy is not simply what we accomplish ourselves, but what we enable others to accomplish and the positive difference we leave in their lives.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to remain committed to continuous learning, lead with integrity, and never underestimate the value of people. Professional qualifications and technical knowledge are important, but effective leadership also requires emotional intelligence, sound judgement, adaptability, and the ability to bring people together towards a common purpose.

I would encourage young leaders to welcome challenges as opportunities to learn, remain open to new ideas and technologies, and never become complacent about their own development. At the same time, they should remember that leadership is not defined by a title or position, but by the trust they earn and the example they set. Be ambitious in your goals, fair in your decisions, and humble enough to learn from others. Above all, measure success not only by the targets you achieve, but also by the people you develop, the values you uphold, and the positive contribution you make to society.

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Mr. Don Pradeep Sujeewa



Mr. Pradeep S. Kannangara, an Old Anandian who excelled in academics and sports, joined the Sri Lanka Air Force in 1986 and graduated as a Commissioned Officer from the Air Force Academy, China Bay. Awarded the Presidential Gallantry Award, Rana Soora Padakkama (RSP), in 1994, he was a founding officer of the Special Air Borne Force and retired in 1998 as Wing Commander and its Officer Commanding.

He entered the corporate sector in 1998 as Operations Manager at AB Securitas, part of the Abans Group, transforming it into a comprehensive loss prevention solutions provider and later serving as CEO and Director. He spearheaded the establishment of DoK Solutions, ABS Courier, AB Cash Management Services and AB Securitas Bangladesh Limited.

An MBA graduate of Edith Cowan University, Australia (2009), he has held senior positions in SLASSPA and the Industrial Security Foundation Inc., serving as its President for three consecutive terms until 2025. He also contributes to ACMA, ICOCA and the ATM Industry Association.

His vision is to build globally competitive Sri Lankan enterprises through sustainable value creation, innovation, people empowerment and ethical, transformational leadership.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Leadership vison plays a pivotal role for sustainable growth in an organization. In an extremely competitive industry like manpower security needs extensive efforts to rise to the top and retain the position. This is where my leadership vision showcased translating into strategic direction whilst positioning ourselves well ahead of the business rivals. Through sheer dedication, disciplined planning, product diversification, innovation and customercentric solutions I assume we were able to achieve that.

I managed to transform AB Securitas as the leading 'Total Loss Prevention Solutions' provider in Sri Lanka from a traditional guarding company during the past two and half decades with my inculcated beliefs to 'Thinking Out of Box' and 'Change'. Empowering my subordinates with such mindset has paved the way for AB Securitas to gain unprecedented competitive advantage over the mass market currently. As an end-to-end solution provider against total losses, our focus is addressing the customers' complete security needs rather than offering isolated services.

Our expansion across Sri Lanka and into Bangladesh reflects this vision. Through robust risk management and business continuity planning, we have built resilience while maintaining essential services, advancing our ambition to establish a globally competitive Sri Lankan enterprise.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

Creating Strategic Business Units to expertise in relevant service category with acquiring superior technology, hiring right personnel, delegation of authority, establishing best practices in par with global players made the greatest impact as per my assumption in transforming AB Securitas from a small, Colombo-based security guarding company into the undisputed leader in integrated security and Total Loss Prevention Solutions provider in the country.

Steering the organization from just 38 basic security officers way back in 1998 it to the present level with over 5000 personnel required adopting different leadership styles at different stages. I recognized that sustainable growth required moving beyond traditional guarding to embrace product diversification, innovation and customer-centric solutions. This vision led to the introduction of pioneering services, including Total Cash Management and the Brown Label ATM project, while expanding our operations nationally and internationally.

This journey taught me that successful leadership is about anticipating change, recognizing opportunities before they become obsolete and having the courage to pursue a long-term vision. I also learned that people are the foundation of sustainable success; empowering employees, maintaining integrity and building customer trust are essential for continuous growth. Above all, resilience comes from adapting to change while remaining firmly committed to one's values and purpose.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

At AB Securitas, I believe empowered employees are the foundation of sustainable organizational success. My leadership philosophy is guided by two principles: "Lead by Example" and "Command but not Demand." I strive to build a culture of trust, mutual respect and accountability, where employees understand their responsibilities, take ownership of outcomes and feel valued for their contributions.

We invest in professional development through structured training, practical experience and continuous skills enhancement. Our five regional hubs across Sri Lanka, each equipped with a training center, help maintain consistent service standards and develop employee capabilities. We also promote employee welfare, occupational safety, equal opportunities and clear career pathways, enabling individuals to grow with dignity and confidence.

I believe future leaders emerge when people are given responsibility, supported through challenges and encouraged to make decisions. By combining empowerment with integrity, discipline and accountability, we aim to develop capable leaders who can uphold our values, inspire their teams and contribute to the long-term success of AB Securitas.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

My approach to disruption is grounded in resilience, decisive leadership, initiating right & fast decisions, taking calculated risks and the ability to adapt without losing sight of our longterm vision. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we further strengthened our business continuity planning, safeguarded employee welfare and maintained essential services without losing a single client. When Sri Lanka faced severe fuel shortages during the 2022 economic crisis, we established dedicated fuel storage facilities, optimized operational routes and improved fleet efficiency to ensure uninterrupted service delivery.

These experiences reinforced my belief that uncertainty demands proactive planning, swift decision-making and close collaboration with employees, customers and other stakeholders. At AB Securitas, we view change not merely as a challenge but as an opportunity to innovate. Through product diversification, technology adoption, strategic partnerships and customer-focused service development, we continuously strengthen our capabilities. I encourage teams to question conventional approaches, identify emerging needs and develop practical solutions. By combining disciplined risk management with an innovative mindset, we build an organization that can withstand disruption, seize opportunities and achieve sustainable growth.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

At AB Securitas, I believe sustainable success must be built on integrity, accountability and responsible leadership. While pursuing ambitious growth, I ensure that ethical conduct and strong corporate governance remain fundamental to our decision-making. We have strengthened governance through independent board representation, Board Audit and Remuneration Committees chaired by Independent Directors, and structured strategic reviews, supported by robust internal controls and risk management.

Our commitment to internationally recognized standards, including ISO 9001 for quality management and ISO 45001 for occupational health and safety, reflects our focus on operational excellence and employee wellbeing. We also integrate sustainability into our operations by optimizing fleet deployment, improving fuel efficiency and reducing unnecessary resource consumption.

For me, growth is not measured by financial performance alone, but also by the trust we earn, the people we empower and the value we create for society. By balancing commercial ambition with ethical responsibility, transparency and environmental awareness, we strive to build a resilient, respected and globally competitive Sri Lankan enterprise.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond business achievements, I aspire to leave a legacy of trust, professional dignity and sustainable leadership. At AB Securitas, I want to build an institution that thrives beyond any individual, driven by strong governance, innovation and a people-centred culture. I hope to create opportunities for our employees to develop their potential, lead with confidence and take pride in the essential service they provide to society.

For the security profession, my ambition is to elevate industry standards by championing professionalism, ethical conduct, internationally recognized best practices and technologydriven Total Loss Prevention Solutions. I also want to demonstrate that a homegrown Sri Lankan enterprise can compete successfully on the international stage.

Ultimately, I hope my journey from military service to corporate leadership inspires future generations to lead with discipline, courage, humility and integrity. My greatest legacy would be an organization that creates lasting value for its customers, empowers its people, contributes positively to the community and strengthens Sri Lanka's reputation for excellence.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging business leaders is to lead with integrity, think strategically and never stop learning. The business environment will continue to evolve, and success depends on anticipating change, embracing innovation and having the courage to make difficult decisions. Do not be afraid to challenge conventional thinking or explore opportunities before they become obvious.

Equally important, remember that people are the foundation of every successful organization. Lead by example, earn respect rather than demand it, empower your teams and invest in developing future leaders. Build customer relationships on trust, reliability and a genuine understanding of their needs.

I also encourage young leaders to pursue growth with a long-term perspective. Strong corporate governance, sound risk management and responsible business practices are not obstacles to success; they are their foundations. My journey from military service to corporate leadership has taught me that discipline builds consistency, resilience overcomes adversity, and integrity sustains trust. Ultimately, true leadership is not measured only by what you achieve, but by the people you inspire and the lasting value you leave behind.

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Mr. Sanjaya Nissanka

I am a Sri Lankan business executive with over 20 years of leadership experience in the agribusiness sector. I currently serve as the Cluster Chief Operating Officer at Brown & Company PLC, Chief Executive Officer of Browns Agri Solutions (Pvt) Ltd., and Non-Executive Director of AgStar PLC. I am a Lifetime Fellow Member of The Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka) and serve as the Vice President of the Agricultural and Agribusiness Management Graduates' Association (AGGMA).

I hold an MBA in International Marketing from Anglia Ruskin University, UK, a Diploma in Agriculture from the School of Agriculture, and professional qualifications in Marketing. I am currently a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) candidate at the University of Colombo. In recognition of my leadership excellence, I was honored with the Great Manager Award in 2017.

I have led the introduction of globally recognized brands including YANMAR, HYUNDAI, SHAKTHIMAN, and FIELDKING, driving mechanization, productivity, and innovation while empowering farmers across Sri Lanka.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, leadership begins with having a clear understanding of where we want to go, but more importantly, why we need to go there.

In agriculture, I have always believed that strategy cannot be developed from the office alone. We need to remain close to the farmer, understand the realities they experience in the field, listen to our dealers and sales teams, and continuously assess where the industry is heading.

The agricultural sector is evolving rapidly. Farmers are looking for greater productivity, better technology, reliable machinery and, most importantly, solutions that make their operations easier and more sustainable. Our strategic direction, therefore, has been to move beyond simply selling a tractor, harvester or agricultural input. We aim to understand the farmer's complete requirement and build an appropriate solution around it.

I also believe that sustainable growth depends on having the right people, strong relationships and the willingness to adapt. We must be prepared to introduce new technologies and build strong global partnerships, while ensuring that every solution we bring to Sri Lanka creates genuine value for our customers.

For me, strategy is not simply a document, a target or a set of numbers. It is about establishing a clear direction, communicating the purpose behind it, and inspiring people to believe in that direction and work towards it together. That alignment is what enables an organisation to grow sustainably and remain resilient in a changing environment.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

Looking back at my career, one of the most important decisions I made was to remain open to change and new opportunities, even when the outcome was not always certain.

Agriculture is a traditionally established industry, and changing the way people think and work is not always easy. Introducing new brands, technologies and ways of working requires patience and persistence. At different times, you may need to convince your own team, your dealers and, ultimately, your customers.

There have been situations where outcomes did not unfold exactly as expected. Those experiences taught me an important lesson: a decision does not have to be perfect to be valuable. What matters is that we make responsible decisions, learn from the outcome and use that learning to move forward more effectively.

I have also learned that leadership cannot rely solely on one's own experience. You have to listen to younger colleagues, people working in the field and those closest to the customer. Sometimes, someone else will have a better idea, and a good leader must be willing to recognise that.

That understanding has influenced the way I lead today. I spend more time listening, seeking different perspectives and understanding the situation before making a decision. For me, that has been one of the most valuable developments in my own leadership journey.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I strongly believe that people perform at their best when they feel that their contribution matters and that they are trusted to take responsibility.

When someone comes to me with a problem, I do not always give them the answer immediately. Instead, I ask, “What do you think we should do?” Very often, the solution they propose is as good as, or even better than, what I had in mind. More importantly, that process encourages them to think independently and take ownership of the outcome.

I also believe that leaders must give people opportunities before they feel completely ready. If we wait until someone is 100% prepared before giving them responsibility, we will struggle to develop the next generation of leaders. My approach is to give people meaningful responsibility, provide guidance and support, and allow them to learn from both their successes and their mistakes.

Over the years, I have also learned that people are motivated by more than salary or designation. They value recognition, trust, purpose and the opportunity to grow. Therefore, I try to create an environment where people can speak openly, respectfully challenge ideas and take responsibility for results.

Ultimately, I do not believe my success as a leader should be measured by the number of decisions I personally make. It should be measured by the number of capable people I help develop who can make sound decisions, lead others and succeed without depending on me for every answer.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

One of the most important lessons I have learned over the years is that uncertainty is an unavoidable part of business. We cannot control everything that happens around us, but we can control how we respond.

During difficult periods, my first priority is to keep the team calm, informed and focused. Uncertainty naturally creates concern, and if leadership appears confused or indecisive, that uncertainty can quickly spread throughout the organisation. I therefore believe in communicating openly: explaining what we know, acknowledging what we do not yet know, and being clear about what we are going to do next.

At the same time, disruption can create opportunities. When the usual way of doing business is no longer effective, we are forced to question established practices and ask whether there is a better way. That is often where meaningful innovation begins.

Agriculture is a good example. Digital monitoring, mechanisation and data-driven tools are changing the sector and can help farmers make better decisions and improve

productivity. However, I always remind my team that technology is valuable only when it solves a genuine customer problem.

I do not believe in innovation simply for the sake of being seen as innovative. I want our people to identify real problems, understand the customer need, develop better solutions and have the confidence to test new approaches responsibly. Creating that mindset allows an organisation not only to respond to disruption, but also to become stronger because of it.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I have always believed that how we achieve a result is just as important as the result itself.

In business, there will always be pressure to achieve targets, increase market share and deliver growth. However, those ambitions should never come at the expense of our values, responsibilities or the trust customers place in us.

In our industry, we work directly with farmers and businesses that depend on our products and services for their livelihoods and operations. They are making significant investments based on the confidence they place in us, and that trust must never be taken lightly.

For me, ethical leadership means being transparent, honouring commitments and taking responsibility when something does not go according to plan. It also means looking beyond the immediate transaction. If we sell a machine today but fail to provide the customer with the necessary support tomorrow, we have not created sustainable value.

That is why I place considerable importance on strong relationships, after-sales service, technical support and long-term partnerships. Sustainable business is built when customers continue to see value in the relationship long after the initial sale.

A good business should generate financial returns, but a great business should also earn and retain trust. That balance between performance, responsibility and long-term value creation is the kind of organisation I want to help build.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

When I think about the legacy I would like to leave, I do not want to be remembered only for the sales numbers we achieved, the market share we gained or the products we launched.

I would like to be remembered for the people we developed and for the contribution we made to the advancement of agriculture.

Sri Lankan agriculture has enormous potential. We have hardworking and capable farmers, but they need access to the right technology, knowledge, finance, mechanisation and long-term support. If we can help make farming more productive, efficient and sustainable while reducing some of the challenges farmers face, then we are contributing to something much larger than a business objective.

Within the organisation, I would also like to leave behind people who have grown into stronger leaders. If someone who has worked with me becomes a better manager, a more confident decision-maker or a better leader because of an opportunity, lesson or experience we shared, I would consider that a meaningful success.

Perhaps most importantly, I would like to contribute to changing the way the younger generation views agriculture. Agriculture should not be perceived as an old-fashioned industry. It has the potential to be technology-driven, innovative, commercially attractive and exciting.

If I can play even a small role in developing people, improving the sector and helping the next generation see agriculture differently, I would consider that a lasting and meaningful achievement.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

I would offer emerging leaders a few lessons that have become increasingly important to me throughout my career.

First, stay humble. Regardless of the position you reach, never stop listening. You can learn from the person sitting next to you, a customer, a farmer, an experienced colleague or someone who has just joined the organisation. Leadership does not mean having all the answers.

Second, do not be afraid of making mistakes. Of course, decisions must be responsible and risks should be understood, but if you are so afraid of failure that you never try anything new, you will struggle to innovate or grow. The important thing is to learn from the experience, take responsibility and avoid repeating the same mistake.

Third, build relationships. Business is ultimately about people. You may have an excellent strategy and the best technology, but without trust among your team, customers and partners, sustainable success will be difficult to achieve.

I would also encourage young leaders to keep learning. The world is changing rapidly, particularly with developments in technology and artificial intelligence. What we know today may not be enough tomorrow, so continuous learning and the ability to adapt are essential.

Finally, do not build your career around designation or salary alone. Focus on creating value wherever you are. Help your team succeed, serve your customers well, continue developing yourself, and leave every organisation, role or project better than you found it.

If you do those things consistently, leadership becomes less about a title and more about the positive impact you create through your actions.

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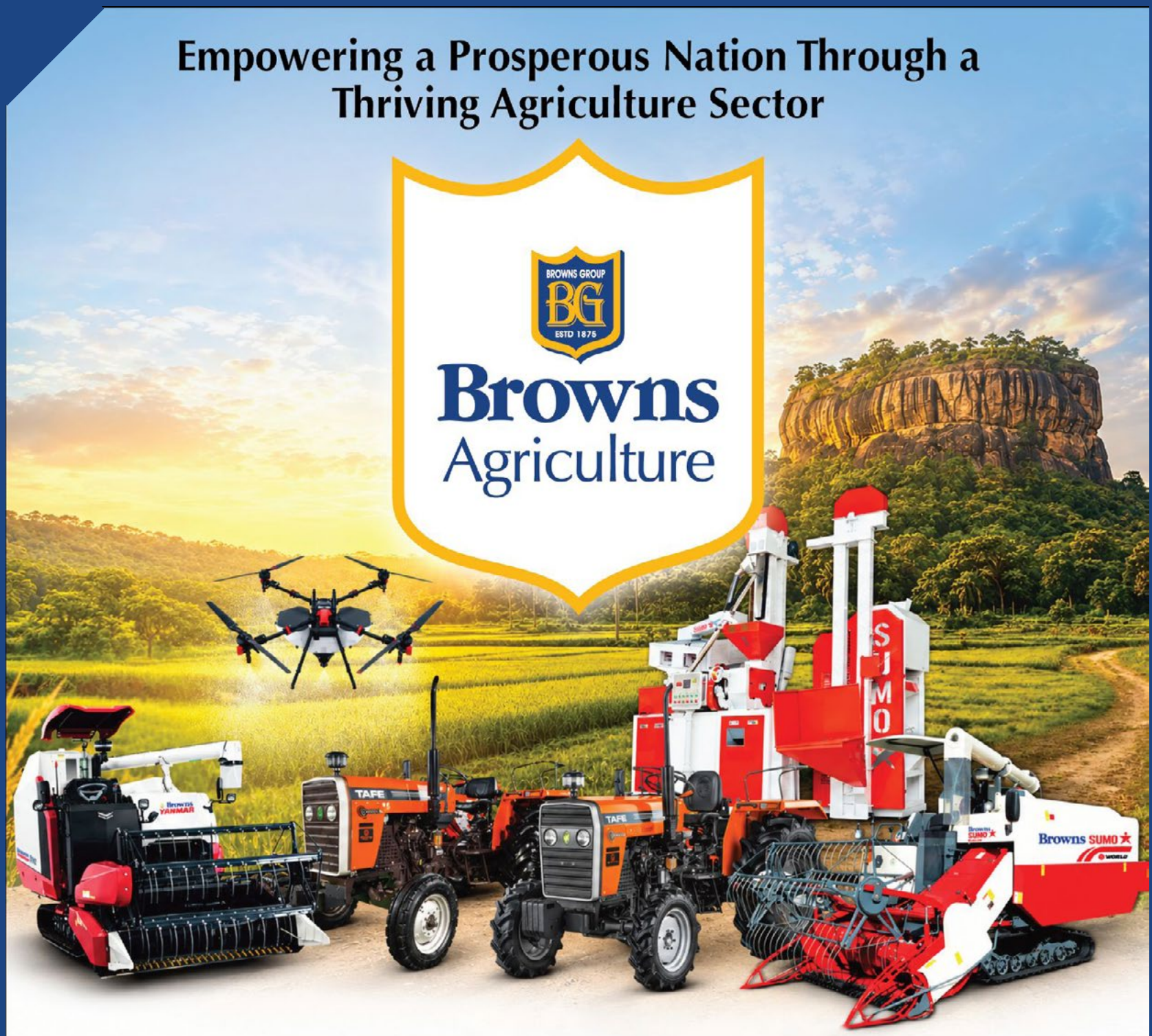

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Mr. Gehan Amarasinghe

As Chief Executive Officer of PE Plus (Pvt) Ltd., a subsidiary of The Capital Maharaja Group, I bring over two decades of leadership experience across finance, manufacturing and operations, supply chain, sales, and business transformation. My leadership combines strategic vision, operational excellence, and people-centric management to drive organizational turnaround, profitability, innovation, and market expansion.

I hold an MBA from the University of Southern Queensland - Australia, Fellow Membership of CIMA/CGMA - UK, Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka, Postgraduate in Finance and Administration, EDBA qualifications from CA Sri Lanka and CMA membership in Sri Lanka and Australia.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe every successful organization begins with a clear vision, but translating that vision into reality requires strategic clarity, disciplined execution and a shared commitment to excellence with great passion. As a leader, my responsibility is to establish a compelling direction, align people around common goals and ensure that every strategic decision contributes to the organization's long-term success.

My leadership approach at PE Plus is grounded in trust, accountability and a strong performance-driven culture. I believe that an effective strategy must go beyond setting ambitious targets; it must provide a clear roadmap, empower people to take ownership and foster a culture where decisions are guided by sound judgment, collaboration and a commitment to continuous improvement.

To position the organization for sustainable growth, I focus on anticipating market changes, identifying emerging opportunities and strengthening our competitive advantage. Equally important is building resilience by encouraging adaptability, managing risks proactively and ensuring that the organization can respond confidently to uncertainty and changing business dynamics.

Ultimately, I believe sustainable success comes from aligning vision, people and performance. My goal is to build an organization that delivers consistent results today while continuously strengthening its capabilities, embracing innovation and remaining agile enough to navigate tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the defining decisions in my leadership journey has been the conscious choice to lead transformation rather than simply manage performance. I have always believed that true leadership requires the courage to challenge the status quo, make difficult decisions, and take ownership of the outcomes.

I have learned that transformation begins with a mindset. It demands clarity of direction, unwavering discipline, and the conviction to do what is right, even when the path is difficult. Equally important is the ability to inspire people to embrace a shared vision and unite their efforts towards a common purpose.

This experience has reinforced my belief that trust and accountability must go hand in hand. When people are trusted, they gain confidence and the freedom to innovate. When they are held accountable, they develop ownership and discipline. When both are anchored in a shared purpose, they create a powerful foundation for sustainable organizational progress.

I have also come to understand that leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about making sound decisions with the information available, staying true to one's principles, and bringing people together to achieve outcomes greater than any individual could accomplish alone.

Above all, this journey has taught me that meaningful transformation begins with the leader. Before we can transform an organization, we must be willing to challenge our own assumptions, adapt our thinking, and lead by example. **The greatest lesson I have learned is that leadership is not measured merely by the results we deliver, but by the people we empower, the culture we build, and the lasting positive change we create.**

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I firmly believe that people are the greatest strength of any organization. Building a high-performing team begins with creating a workplace where individuals feel trusted, respected, empowered, and inspired to give their best.

My leadership philosophy is built on three fundamental principles: **trust, discipline, and accountability**. Trust gives people the confidence to take initiative and make decisions. Discipline creates consistency and professionalism, while accountability encourages individuals to take ownership of their responsibilities, decisions, and results.

I also believe that passion is a key ingredient of excellence. When people understand the purpose behind their work and feel connected to the organization's vision, their commitment goes beyond simply fulfilling their duties. They become more engaged, proactive, and willing to contribute to the organization's success.

As leaders, we must create opportunities for people to grow, encourage independent thinking, welcome new ideas, and recognize individual contributions. At the same time, we must establish clear expectations, provide constructive feedback, and maintain high standards of performance. Empowerment does not mean the absence of accountability; it means giving people the freedom to perform, the support to succeed, and the responsibility to deliver results.

Developing future leaders requires more than building technical competence. It involves shaping character, strengthening judgment, fostering resilience, and instilling the values necessary to lead with integrity and responsibility. I believe in identifying potential early, providing people with meaningful challenges, and allowing them to learn from both their successes and their mistakes.

Ultimately, **the true measure of leadership is not how many people follow you, but how many people you empower, develop, and inspire to become leaders themselves.**

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

I believe uncertainty is an inevitable part of business, and the true test of leadership lies in how we respond to it. Challenges are unavoidable, but our mindset, discipline, resilience and ability to adapt determine how effectively we navigate them and emerge stronger.

My leadership journey at my organization has been shaped by some of the most challenging periods in Sri Lanka's recent history, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented economic crisis that followed. These disruptions placed significant pressure on business operations, supply chains, raw material availability, costs and consumer purchasing power. They required difficult decisions, disciplined financial management and the ability to respond swiftly to a constantly evolving business environment.

During these periods, my priority was to provide stability, clarity and confidence while keeping the organization focused on its long-term objectives. We concentrated on what we could control, strengthened operational efficiencies, managed resources prudently and empowered our teams to identify practical and innovative solutions rather than be constrained by challenges.

I firmly believe that adversity can be a catalyst for transformation. At PE Plus, this mindset helped us strengthen our business fundamentals, improve operational performance and build a more agile, accountable and resilient organization.

Innovation is equally central to my leadership philosophy. I believe it must be embedded in the organization's culture, where people are encouraged to challenge conventional thinking, embrace continuous improvement and explore new opportunities for growth. Creating an environment where teams feel empowered to share ideas, take ownership and learn from challenges is essential to sustaining innovation, particularly during periods of uncertainty.

Above all, I believe in the power of people, passion and shared purpose. When employees trust their leadership, understand the organization's direction and feel empowered to contribute, they can turn even the most difficult circumstances into opportunities for progress.

To me, resilience is not simply about surviving uncertainty. It is about using disruption as an opportunity to innovate, strengthen the organization and build a more competitive, adaptable and future-ready business.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I have always believed that the way we achieve success is just as important as the success itself. Strong performance must never come at the expense of integrity, ethical conduct, or the trust placed in us by our stakeholders.

For me, good governance goes beyond policies and procedures. It is about building a culture where ethical behaviour, transparency, and accountability are embedded in everyday decisions and become an integral part of the organization's DNA.

Trust, discipline, and accountability are fundamental to this approach. Trust is earned through consistent actions, discipline ensures that standards are upheld, and accountability reinforces our responsibility towards our stakeholders and society at large.

I also believe that sustainable leadership requires a long-term perspective. Every significant decision must balance commercial objectives with its broader implications for the organization, its stakeholders, the environment, and future generations. Achieving short-term targets is important, but not if it compromises the organization's long-term resilience or reputation.

As leaders, we must lead by example. Integrity cannot simply be communicated through policies or speeches; it must be demonstrated consistently through our decisions, actions, and willingness to do what is right, even when it is difficult.

Ultimately, I believe that organizations built on strong values, responsible governance, and genuine stakeholder trust are best positioned to achieve sustainable growth and enduring success. My approach is therefore to pursue ambitious objectives with determination, while ensuring that the principles guiding how we achieve them remain non-negotiable.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like my legacy to be measured less by the financial results I achieve during my tenure and more by what continues long after I have moved on.

During my tenure in the organization, we achieved a significant business turnaround, expanded into new markets, strengthened our portfolio, and earned national recognition for quality, productivity, innovation, and operational excellence. These are important milestones, but I believe the true measure of leadership is not simply what we achieve today, but what we build to sustain and surpass those achievements in the future.

The legacy I aspire to leave is an organization with a strong culture, capable and confident people, and the courage to continuously challenge conventions, embrace change, and reinvent itself. I want the people we develop today to become the leaders who take the organization further tomorrow, creating opportunities for others and building a sustainable pipeline of leadership.

Beyond the organization, I would like my organization PE Plus, to stand as an example of what a Sri Lankan manufacturing company can achieve by innovating with confidence, competing on the international stage, creating meaningful employment, and contributing to the country's economic and social development.

Ultimately, if I can leave behind an organization that is stronger than the one I inherited, people who are better equipped to lead, and a culture that continues to create value long after my involvement, I would consider that a meaningful legacy. **For me, the greatest achievement of leadership is not to make oneself indispensable, but to build an organization that can go further, achieve more, and create a greater impact without depending on any one individual.**

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first piece of advice would be, **never wait for opportunity, create it.**

The business environment will never be perfect. There will always be uncertainty, competition, and challenges. Leadership is about recognizing possibilities within those circumstances and having the courage to act, even when the path ahead is not entirely clear.

Second, **understand your business beyond your own function**. Know your customers and stay close to them, understand the financial position and operations of the business, and, most importantly, understand your people and earn their trust. Great leaders see the organization as a whole rather than through the lens of a single department.

Third, **remain curious and keep evolving**. What made an organization successful yesterday may not make it successful tomorrow. Leaders must continuously learn, challenge established thinking, embrace new ideas, and have the humility to adapt when circumstances change.

Finally, **take people with you**. You may have the best strategy in the world, but it will remain a presentation unless your people believe in it, take ownership of it, and translate it into action. Sustainable success is built by empowering people, developing future leaders, and creating a shared sense of purpose.

Ultimately, leadership is not about the position you hold or the authority you exercise. It is about the confidence you inspire, the decisions you make, the people you develop, and the organization you leave stronger than you found it.

Because the true measure of leadership is not simply what you achieve during your tenure, but what continues to thrive long after you have moved on.

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Mr. Kumar Rodrigo

Kumar Rodrigo is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of LAUGFS Lubricants Limited, LAUGFS Lubricants Bangladesh and LAUGFS International, bringing over two decades of experience in strategic, commercial and operational leadership.

Previously, he held senior leadership positions at Diesel & Motor Engineering PLC (DIMO), managing diverse business portfolios and contributing to the growth of globally recognised brands, including BOSCH, FISCHER, Black & Decker, Stanley, DeWalt, WD-40 and PERI. He has also played an instrumental role in developing private-label brands and strengthening their market presence across various industries.

His experience spans industrial products, consumer durables, automotive and lubricants. He holds an MBA from Vinayaka Mission University, India, a CIM Level Seven Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK, and a Diploma in Marketing from the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing (SLIM). He has also completed executive leadership programmes at IIMA and PIM, Sri Lanka.

His leadership philosophy centres on challenging convention, transforming businesses and empowering people to achieve sustainable growth.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I see leadership as the ability to recognise possibilities before they become obvious, and then give people the clarity and confidence to pursue them. Vision, on its own, is only an aspiration. It becomes meaningful when it is translated into priorities, decisions and consistent action.

My approach is to begin with a clear view of where the organisation needs to go, understand the realities it faces, and identify the strengths that can create a distinctive advantage. I do not believe that success comes from imitating competitors in every respect. Often, the better question is: what can we do differently, and what capabilities must we build to do it well?

At LAUGFS Lubricants, this meant looking beyond immediate recovery and building a stronger, more resilient business. We aligned our priorities around stable cash flows, brand equity, procurement optimisation and a capable team, while strengthening retail, B2B and international growth opportunities. These priorities are connected: operational and cost discipline create competitiveness; customer confidence supports growth; and growth creates the capacity to invest in people, technology and quality.

I believe strategy must also have a rhythm of execution. Our Plan – Do - Review discipline and EDGE (Every Day Great Execution) help us turn ambition into clear ownership and measurable progress. The business has strengthened its financial performance and market position, earning recognition as a leading player in Sri Lanka's lubricant market.

For me, sustainable growth is not simply about becoming bigger. It is about building an organisation that is more capable, more adaptable and better prepared to create its own future.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important decisions in my professional journey has been to look beyond the immediate problem and understand what needs to change in the system that produced it. A business may appear to have a sales problem, a cost problem or a people problem, but the underlying causes are often connected. Treating only the visible symptom may provide temporary relief without delivering lasting improvement.

That perspective shaped our approach at LAUGFS Lubricants. We treated the challenge as a business-wide transformation not simply a sales recovery bringing financial discipline, operational capability, customer confidence and people into the same plan. We strengthened working-capital management, worked to improve the balance sheet and manage liabilities responsibly, and sharpened our focus on cash flow. Alongside these measures, we reviewed costs, operational efficiency and commercial priorities to establish a firmer financial foundation.

The experience reinforced that leadership sometimes means challenging practices simply because they have become familiar. It takes courage to make difficult decisions and patience to build the capabilities that make them effective. We also invested in our laboratory and technical capabilities, achieving ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation for our lubricant testing laboratory. This strengthened our ability to support product quality with credible testing and technical evidence.

The progress at LAUGFS Lubricants matters, but the deeper lesson is that results endure when strategy, systems and people reinforce one another.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe leadership is not about being the person with every answer. It is about creating an environment in which people can think clearly, contribute confidently and take responsibility for outcomes. A leader should provide direction, but should also make room for others to question, improve and lead.

For me, Empowerment begins with clarity. People need to know why their work matters, which decisions they own and how their contribution supports the organisation's goals. When that connection is clear, accountability becomes a commitment people understand not simply an instruction they follow.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, I have focused on clearer responsibilities, stronger processes and better collaboration between functions. I want teams to see the business as one connected system. The plant, sales, procurement, finance and marketing functions may have different responsibilities, but their decisions ultimately influence the same customer and the same business outcome. Encouraging people to understand those connections helps them move beyond completing tasks towards solving problems.

I also believe people grow when they are trusted with responsibility and supported through the learning process. They should be able to raise concerns, challenge established practices constructively and learn from outcomes. Recognition matters, but so do honest feedback and opportunities to take on greater responsibility.

My measure of success is not how many decisions pass through me. It is whether I have helped develop people who can make good decisions, lead others and sustain progress independently. An organisation becomes truly strong when leadership is shared and its people are prepared to shape what comes next.

I see the CEO role as having two complementary responsibilities. The first is to drive business performance through strategy, sound decisions, financial discipline and accountability. The second is to act as a Chief Energy Officer to inspire people, create belief in what is possible, build momentum and help teams bring their best to the organisation. Strategy sets the direction, but people bring it to life. My responsibility is to balance both: building the systems that sustain performance while creating the purpose and energy that enable people to deliver it.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Disruption tests not only an organisation's plans, but also its mindset. In uncertain times, people naturally look for stability. A leader must provide that stability without allowing it to become resistance to change. The challenge is to protect what is essential while remaining open to better ways of working.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis created significant pressures through inflation, exchange-rate volatility, import constraints, financing costs and changes in customer purchasing power. At LAUGFS Lubricants, we responded by strengthening working-capital discipline, reviewing funding and supplier arrangements, exploring alternative sourcing and improving visibility over sales, collections and operations. These were practical measures to protect continuity and create a more resilient foundation.

But resilience is not simply about defending the existing business. It is also about recognising where circumstances require a different approach. We reviewed procurement economics, worked on product and formulation optimisation, strengthened retail execution and tailored our B2B proposition to different customer needs. We also began developing international business as an additional growth opportunity, supported by technical and commercial evaluation.

I see creativity as a habit of asking better questions. Can we simplify a process? Can we use our resources more productively? Can we solve a customer's problem in a different way? Can a capability developed for one market create value in another? These questions can lead to meaningful innovation when they are supported by evidence and followed by disciplined execution.

My role is to help people face uncertainty with clarity rather than fear. We may not control every external event, but we can control how quickly we learn, how responsibly we respond and whether we allow disruption to make us stronger.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

For me, ambition is measured not only by what an organisation achieves, but by how it achieves it. Growth that comes at the expense of trust, product integrity or responsibility is not sustainable. Ethics and good governance must therefore guide everyday decisions, rather than being addressed only when challenges arise.

My approach is to establish clear expectations, use evidence to guide decisions and ensure that people understand their responsibilities. Financial discipline, procurement controls, defined ownership and regular performance reviews help create an organisation where decisions are transparent and accountability is clear.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, technical credibility is central to earning customer trust. Our quality and testing frameworks include ISO 9001:2015 and ISO/IEC 17025:2017, alongside relevant API and JASO requirements. These systems support product consistency and informed technical decisions. They also reinforce the importance of making evidence-based performance claims and recommending products that are appropriate for each application.

We also recognise that responsible business extends beyond commercial performance. LAUGFS Lubricants has communicated its commitment to zero-waste manufacturing and the use of environmentally safer alternatives in formulations. These efforts reflect the importance of considering environmental responsibility alongside operational efficiency and business growth.

Ultimately, good governance does not restrict ambition; it provides the foundation for growth that lasts. When customers, employees and partners experience consistency, integrity and responsibility in the way we operate, trust becomes a lasting source of strength.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like my contribution to be measured by what continues after my direct involvement: the quality of the people developed, the strength of the organisation built and the value it creates for others. Results are important, but leadership is also about building the conditions in which good results can be sustained.

I want to help create organisations where people are encouraged to think, take ownership and develop their capabilities; where decisions are guided by integrity and evidence; and where innovation is part of the culture rather than an occasional initiative. If the next generation of leaders is more confident, capable and responsible because of the environment we have created, that is a meaningful legacy.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, this ambition is closely connected to the role of local manufacturing. A stronger Sri Lankan manufacturer can contribute to local value addition, create opportunities across its business ecosystem and demonstrate that technical capability and quality can be developed and sustained here. Our engagement with universities and technical institutes, including laboratory internships and research opportunities, also helps connect education with industry and support future talent.

I would like the organisation to be recognised not only for its market position, but for the way it builds trust with employees, customers, distributors, industrial partners and the wider community. Ultimately, the lasting impact I hope to make is to leave behind a business that is more resilient and more capable, while helping people see that local organisations can aspire to compete confidently beyond their immediate boundaries.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to combine imagination with discipline. Look beyond what is immediately obvious, then do the work required to turn those possibilities into reality. A compelling vision should inspire people, but it must also clarify priorities, identify what needs to change and guide how progress will be measured.

Question conventional wisdom respectfully. Some established practices serve a purpose; others remain simply because no one has challenged them. Listen to customers and employees, examine the evidence and be willing to change course when the facts point in a different direction. Adaptability is not a weakness; it is an essential part of responsible leadership.

I would also remind future leaders that lasting success cannot be built alone. Develop people, share responsibility and create an environment where different perspectives are valued. Set clear expectations, but lead with respect. The strongest organisations are not those where everyone waits for instructions, but those where people understand the purpose and feel accountable for contributing to it.

Above all, protect trust. Commercial results matter, but integrity, quality and responsible decision-making determine whether success can endure. At LAUGFS Lubricants, our experience has reinforced the importance of competing differently by building on our own strengths rather than simply copying others, and translating those strengths into genuine value for customers.

Leadership is ultimately a daily practice: set a direction, act with commitment, learn from the results and keep improving. You may not be able to predict every challenge, but you can build the character, capability and culture that help your organisation navigate the future with confidence.


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Mr. Chinthake Kodippilikande

Chinthake Kodippilikande is the Chief Executive Officer of Abans Engineering (Pvt) Ltd and Abans Electricals PLC. With over two decades of leadership within the Abans Group, he transformed Abans Engineering into one of Sri Lanka's foremost engineering solution providers in HVAC, vertical transportation, and building services. He was awarded Construction Engineering CEO of the Year (2022) and recognized among Asia's Top 10 Leaders by CEO Insights Asia (2023). He holds an MBA from the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), is a Lifetime Fellow of CPM Sri Lanka, and a member of CIM-UK and ASHRAE-USA.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Transforming leadership vision into strategic direction begins with anchoring strategy in core organizational values before focusing purely on performance. Following years of severe price competition in the industry, I repositioned Abans Engineering from a conventional price-competing contractor into a knowledge-driven engineering solutions provider. Every strategic initiative, investment, and decision is guided by a singular benchmark: "Will this strengthen our long-term capability to create value through knowledge?"

We shifted toward high-value, specialized niche segments in a blue ocean space, commanding premium margins through technical excellence, design and build capabilities, and disciplined cost estimation. By embedding knowledge building into our corporate DNA and aligning our long-term goals with national infrastructure development, we built sustainable competitive advantages and operational resilience that insulate the business against economic volatility.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

The most pivotal decision was refusing to resort to price undercutting and short-term cost-slashing during the severe economic crisis and post-COVID downturn. Historically, between 2016 and 2019, price wars resulted in massive operational losses. Rather than cutting core capabilities, I made the conscious decision to safeguard our engineering talent, invest aggressively in Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and compete solely on engineering excellence, technical differentiation, and integrity.

This experience offered me the profound insight that an organization's greatest vulnerability during a crisis is not financial constraint, but the erosion of technical capability and innovative mindset. True resilience stems from customer trust, deep domain expertise, and unwavering adherence to value-based leadership rather than race to the bottom pricing.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Empowerment thrives in an environment of openness and decentralized decision making. We dismantled rigid hierarchical barriers by encouraging employees across all levels from frontline technicians to senior engineers to challenge processes and contribute innovative ideas.

Furthermore, I progressively delegated decision-making authority to project managers and operational teams, granting them full autonomy and accountability to address client challenges swiftly without awaiting bureaucratic signoffs. We institutionalized structured mentorship, cross-functional knowledge-sharing forums, and succession planning. Learning is treated as a strategic investment rather than a peripheral HR exercise, ensuring our talent naturally evolves into self-driven, future ready business leaders.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During unprecedented disruptions such as currency devaluations, import restrictions, supply chain shocks, and pandemic lockdowns agility rooted in trust and transparent communication is paramount. Instead of retreating, we proactively sought opportunities amidst adversity by leveraging technical knowledge. For example, during pandemic lockdowns, we secured emergency authorizations to engineer and deliver specialized COVID-19 ICUs and isolation wards, while maintaining uninterrupted service for mission-critical hospitals, data centers, and telecom networks.

By cultivating a clear shared purpose reminding our teams that our work safeguards vital national infrastructure and human lives disruption was transformed into motivation. Innovation flourished because employees were empowered to formulate adaptive, local engineering solutions to overcome severe logistical and material hurdles.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Sustainable growth cannot exist without uncompromising ethical foundations. We embedded value-based leadership directly into our governance frameworks, performance evaluations, and client engagement models. During critical macroeconomic crises, we practiced radical transparency and honest communication with all stakeholders' financial institutions, suppliers, clients, and staff building immense goodwill and credibility.

Concurrently, we prioritized sustainable engineering practices, earning prestigious green accolades such as the Platinum Green Award at the CIOB World Construction Symposium. Rigorous risk management, accurate estimation, transparent procurement, and disciplined financial controls ensure that our commercial ambitions are achieved with complete integrity and environmental stewardship.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My aspiration is to institutionalize a resilient organizational culture that is self-sustaining and independent of any single executive. I want Abans Engineering to stand as a benchmark of engineering excellence and ethical governance for decades to come.

Within the MEP and construction profession, I aim to inspire an industry wide transition from transactional, price driven contracting toward high-value, knowledge-led innovation. For the wider community, my goal is to continue engineering sustainable infrastructure from green buildings to modern healthcare facilities that enhances societal wellbeing and drives national economic progress.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My core advice to emerging leaders is:

1. Markets fluctuate, technologies evolve, and crises come and go, but an enterprise anchored in integrity, trust, and ethics will always endure.

2. Do not compromise your long-term capability for transient gains. Continuous learning and technical differentiation are the only sustainable competitive advantages.

3. Build agile teams by trusting them with real authority. Organizations grow exponentially when people are empowered to make decisions and take ownership.

4. True leadership extends beyond financial balance sheets. When your team understands how their work betters lives and society, they will demonstrate extraordinary resilience and achieve remarkable milestones.

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Mr. Nabhan Akeel

Nabhan Akeel is the Founder, Chairman and Managing Director of LIMRA Holdings and a Gold Award recipient at the CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026. He began his first IT business in 1993, while still an engineering undergraduate, with USD 500. Over three decades, he has built LIMRA into a diversified group of seven subsidiaries operating across eight countries, spanning technology, cybersecurity, mother and baby care, and branded toys. His leadership has been defined less by scale alone than by an instinct for finding value early, backing people with conviction, and building businesses capable of growing beyond their founder.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I start with a simple question: what are we building today that will still be valuable ten years from now? That moves the discussion beyond sales and into enterprise value. It is why we invest in our own brands and intellectual property, why we created a Group Value Creation team, and why I ask whether each business can eventually stand on its own.

Strategy becomes real when somebody owns it. I set the broad direction, the investment threshold and the non-negotiables; the operating leader is expected to make the business work within those boundaries. If every important decision still has to come back to me, we have not built a resilient organisation.

The same thinking applies to people. We have already given equity to selected key individuals who have helped build long-term value, and we are now working toward extending an ESOP more broadly across the organisation. I want people to participate in the value they help create, not simply work for it.

Resilience comes from reducing dependence. I do not want a business to rely too heavily on one market, one principal, one route to market, one source of capital or one individual. We build resilience by diversifying revenue, increasing foreign-currency earnings, developing our own brands and IP, strengthening leadership depth, and maintaining discipline around profit, cash and capital employed. That is how we position the Group to keep growing even when the environment changes.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

If I look back, the decisions I remember most are rarely product decisions. They are people decisions. Markets can be studied, capital can be raised and products can be changed. The person you trust with a business can multiply all three, or undo all three.

Several people now carrying major responsibilities in the Group joined us much earlier in their careers. We gave them bigger problems before we gave them bigger titles. Some decisions worked; some did not. What mattered was whether they learned, took ownership and came back stronger.

The most important thing was identifying people with judgement and character, investing in them and, when they have helped create real value, giving them a path to become part of the business itself.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I give people a clear destination and clear boundaries. After that, I want them to have room to run. They know the Group's values, financial disciplines, risk limits and the result we expect. Within that framework, they should decide, defend the decision with facts and own the outcome. That is where confidence and judgement are built.

I also accept that people will get some things wrong. If one mistake causes authority to be pulled back to the top, everyone quickly learns that waiting is safer than leading. We recognise effort, invest in capability and deliberately expose promising people to responsibilities beyond their current job.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

I have learned not to fall in love with the current business model. In a disruption, the model may be broken while the underlying opportunity is still very much alive.

During COVID, online contribution in parts of our consumer business was around 2%. Physical channels were interrupted, so there was little value in debating whether customers would eventually become digital. We moved, and online contribution grew to around 30%. During Sri Lanka's economic crisis, the problem changed again. We pushed harder into hard-currency earnings, and the Group's foreign-currency revenue rose from Rs. 567 million to Rs. 2.22 billion in one audited year.

I have also lived through periods when closing or selling a business looked easier than continuing. Those experiences taught me to ask two things very quickly: what has genuinely changed, and what do we still believe has value? Innovation starts when the answer is honest and the organisation is prepared to move before perfect certainty arrives.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Growth creates complexity, and complexity without discipline becomes expensive. I therefore see governance as part of how the Group operates, not as paperwork that sits beside the business.

Our values set the behavioural line. Management mandates define decision rights and approval limits. Internal Audit independently tests whether controls are being followed. Tax, statutory and regulatory obligations are treated as basic disciplines of running a serious company. At Board level, governance gives us another layer of challenge and accountability as the Group becomes larger and more international.

I am equally careful that governance does not become an excuse for paralysis. Good governance should shorten the distance between a responsible manager and a decision, because the boundaries are already clear. I want our leaders to move quickly, but never ambiguously about the standards we will not compromise.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like to leave behind value that does not depend on me being in the room.

A founder can build a profitable company and still leave something fragile if every important relationship, decision and idea remains attached to one person. My measure of permanence is different: businesses with their own leadership, brands and intellectual property; governance that survives changes in personalities; and people who eventually become better leaders than the people who appointed them.

I would also like LIMRA's journey to say something about what can be built from Sri Lanka. We started very small. Today our businesses operate internationally and some of the opportunities we are creating are being funded and valued outside the country. If the Group continues creating careers, enterprises and opportunities long after its founders step away, that would mean more to me than any individual recognition.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

Our orientation material carries a simple line: 'Collaborate. Create Value. Grow Together.' For a young leader, I would put one thing before all three: learn the business properly.

Understand how it makes money. Understand cash. Spend time with customers. Take responsibility for something where the result can be measured. Early in your career, the assignment that teaches you how the business really works is often worth more than the title that looks good on a card.

Later, when you lead, build people who can disagree with you intelligently and make decisions without you. There will also be times when the market disagrees with your conviction. Sometimes the market is right; sometimes you are early. Use evidence and milestones to know the difference.

And think in decades occasionally. A career optimised only for the next promotion or the next quarter can become surprisingly small. Ask what you are becoming capable of building.

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Mr. Duminda Gunasekera

Mr. Duminda Gunasekera is the Executive Director at Technomedics International (Pvt) Ltd andthe Gold Award winner in the C-Suite Leadership category (Healthcare) at the CPM MLE Awards 2026. Rising from his foundational role as Deputy General Manager of Biomedical Engineering, he has spent his career driving technical precision and clinical innovation. He wasinstrumental in transitioning Technomedics from an equipment importer and a premier provider of turnkey healthcare infrastructure to a most respected equipment solutions provider with unmatched, technically advanced after sales service support covering entire Sri Lanka. His visionary leadership bridges the critical gap between operational clinical engineering and board-level strategic governance within Sri Lanka's medical technology ecosystem.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

My vision centers on closing the critical gaps at Technomedics' technical service infrastructure. Itransform this into a strategic direction by moving our operations beyond standard equipment services to offering comprehensive service solutions. By leading the execution of complex engineering projects such as Installation of modular operating theaters and the country's first Hybrid Cath Lab at the Kothalawala Defense University Hospital, installation of the first robotic surgery system at Asiri Surgical Hospital, we position Technomedics as an indispensable healthcare partner.

We ensure resilience by decentralizing our operations; establishing 24/7 regional servicecenters across the island guarantees continuous support, securing sustainable growth and maintaining our competitive edge even amidst macroeconomic challenges.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

The most impactful decision was spearheading the transition of Technomedics Biomedical Service team from a traditional medical equipment service provider to a specialized multi disciplined teams focused to imaging, Surgical, Critical care and Respiratory/Homecare equipments . This required a profound shift in organizational culture, skill development, and risk management. Leading the complex engineering, design, and execution of intensive care units and advanced surgical environments taught me that true market leadership requires taking ownership of the entire clinical ecosystem. The invaluable insight gained was that when you elevate national capabilities, financial success and market dominance naturally follow sustainable value creation.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Having progressed from a technical engineering specialist to an Executive Director, I firmly believe in a strong corporate governance pipeline built on merit and continuous learning. I empower my team by entrusting them with high-stakes clinical projects and holding them accountable to rigorous ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management standards. We foster a culturewhere engineers and managers are encouraged to take ownership of regional service hubs or new product lines. By providing them the autonomy to make rapid, life-saving technicaldecisions on the ground, we actively cultivate the resilience and critical thinking required for tomorrow's leaders.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During periods of rapid macroeconomic uncertainty, my approach is to identify immediateclinical bottlenecks and innovate around them. A prime example was addressing the gap in respiratory care by conceptualizing the DREAMS Sleep Centre. Instead of relying on expensive,centralized hospital stays which were vulnerable to disruption, we forged global alliances to introduce home-based sleep studies, Home care equipments such as sleep Apnea therapy devices(CPAP/BiPAP) and portable oxygen concentrators. During the COVID 19 outbreak, the team was motivated to deliver much required Non Invasive Ventilators and High Flow Oxygen Therapy devices across Sri Lanka. I guide the organization by encouraging teams to view disruptions not as roadblocks, but as catalysts for developing decentralized, patient-centric caremodels that are highly accessible and cost-effective.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

In the healthcare technology sector, ethical conduct is inextricably linked to patient safety. Aswe pursue ambitious expansions such as deploying state-of-the-art CT imaging systems across regional hospitals we strictly adhere to international clinical standards and robust internal governance. I engineered a decentralized 24/7 technical support network specifically to fulfill strict healthcare service-level agreements and prevent clinical downtime, prioritizing patient livesabove short-term profit. By embedding rigorous ISO quality management protocols into our dailyoperations, we ensure our drive for market dominance is balanced by an uncompromising service commitment to clinical integrity.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond corporate milestones and financial results, I want my lasting impact to be the democratization of advanced healthcare across Sri Lanka. By decentralizing our emergency technical networks to regions like Jaffna, Batticaloa, Kandy, North Western, Sabaragamuwa and Galle, we have ensured that patients in rural hospitals have the same uninterrupted accessto life-saving critical care systems as those in Colombo. My ultimate goal is to leave behind a legacy where geography no longer dictates the quality of clinical diagnostics and care a patient receives, supported by a resilient engineering ecosystem that outlasts any individual leader

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to never lose sight of ground-level operational realities as you climb the corporate ladder. The best strategic decisions are made by those who deeply understand both the technical and human components of their business. In an increasingly volatile environment, adaptability is your greatest asset. Build resilient, decentralized systems,invest heavily in the continuous development of your people, and always ensure that your organizational goals serve a greater societal purpose. Leadership is not about commanding from the top; it is about bridging the gap between complex execution and visionary governance.



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Mr. Indika Prasath Balasuriya

Mr. Indika Prasath Balasuriya is Chief Information Officer of Nawaloka Hospitals PLC and an accomplished technology leader with over 28 years of experience spanning software engineering, enterprise systems, ERP consulting, project leadership and digital transformation. Since joining Nawaloka in 2008, he has played a pivotal role in advancing the hospital's technology landscape, including integrated hospital information systems, digital clinical records, infrastructure, automation and data-driven management. An MSc in IT graduate of Keele University, UK, and MBCS, MCSSL and MCPM member, his recognitions include Digital Maestro awards (2018-2020), the CSSL National CIO List 2025, and World CIO 200 recognition.



Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into measurable action. I begin by understanding the organization's business priorities, operational challenges and future requirements, and then align technology strategy accordingly.

In healthcare, technology should not be implemented simply because it is new. It must improve patient experience, strengthen operational efficiency, support employees, provide reliable information for decision-making and create measurable business value.

At Nawaloka Hospitals, our approach has therefore been to progressively strengthen our digital ecosystem through integrated systems, automation, analytics, infrastructure modernization and emerging technologies such as AI. At the same time, resilience, cybersecurity, governance and business continuity remain essential considerations.

Sustainable growth comes from building systems and people that can continuously adapt rather than relying on short-term solutions.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

My professional journey has evolved from being a programmer and software engineer to becoming an application consultant, team leader, project manager and ultimately a technology leader. Beginning my career in 1998 gave me a strong technical foundation, while subsequent roles exposed me to enterprise systems, international support environments, ERP implementation, consulting, project management and customer-facing responsibilities across multiple industries and countries.

A significant turning point came when I moved from primarily implementing technology to understanding how technology could influence the performance of an entire organization. My experience leading ERP implementations, including financial systems for major institutions, taught me that successful technology projects require much more than technical expertise - they require an understanding of business processes, people, governance and organizational objectives.

When I joined Nawaloka Hospitals in 2008, this perspective became even more important. Healthcare presented a unique environment where technology directly supports both business operations and patient care. Over the years, my responsibilities expanded across the Hospital Information System, management information systems, online channeling, clinical and medical record systems, digital prescriptions, infrastructure, applications and other technology initiatives.

The leadership decision that has had the greatest impact on my journey was therefore to position IT not merely as a support function, but as a strategic business partner and an enabler of organizational transformation.

That decision changed the way I lead. Rather than beginning with technology, I begin with the business or clinical problem we need to solve and the value we want to create. It has taught me that meaningful digital transformation happens when technology, people, processes and strategy move together.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people perform at their best when they are trusted with responsibility and understand how their work contributes to the larger purpose of the organization.

My approach is to provide team members with opportunities to lead projects, solve real operational problems and interact directly with different business and clinical functions. I encourage them not simply to execute instructions, but to understand the problem, challenge existing approaches and propose better solutions.

At the same time, empowerment must come with accountability. Clear objectives, measurable outcomes, regular reviews and continuous learning are important.

A leader should not aim to make the team dependent on him or her. The real responsibility of leadership is to develop capable people who can make decisions, take ownership and eventually develop the next generation of leaders themselves.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Change has become a permanent part of today's business environment, particularly in technology and healthcare. My approach is to remain calm, understand the facts, prioritize critical operations and respond with agility.

During disruption, communication becomes extremely important. Teams need to understand what is happening, what the immediate priorities are and what is expected from them. At the same time, leaders should create an environment where people are comfortable proposing new approaches rather than simply protecting existing practices.

I see disruption as both a risk and an opportunity. It often exposes inefficient processes and creates the urgency required for improvement.

Innovation, however, should remain practical. We encourage experimentation with automation, analytics, AI and new digital solutions, but ultimately assess innovation by its ability to improve patient care, operational efficiency, employee productivity or organizational sustainability.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

In healthcare, achieving a business objective can never come at the expense of trust, patient confidentiality, ethical responsibility or good governance.

Technology leaders today are responsible for much more than systems and infrastructure. We are also custodians of highly sensitive information. Therefore, cybersecurity, privacy, data governance, regulatory compliance, access controls and responsible use of emerging technologies must be integrated into decision-making from the beginning.

I believe governance should enable responsible innovation rather than become a barrier to it. When responsibilities, controls and accountability are clearly defined, an organization can innovate with greater confidence.

Sustainability also means making technology investments that provide long-term value, are scalable and make responsible use of organizational resources. The objective is not simply rapid transformation, but responsible and sustainable transformation.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The legacy I would value most is not a particular system, award or technology implementation. Technology will continuously change and today's innovations will eventually be replaced.

I would rather leave behind a culture in which people continuously question how things can be done better, use information intelligently and remain willing to embrace change.

Within Nawaloka Hospitals, I would like technology and data to continue becoming increasingly integrated into how we improve patient experience, clinical and operational efficiency, and management decision-making.

I also believe experienced professionals have a responsibility to develop the next generation. If the people we mentor become better leaders, create meaningful innovations and contribute positively to their organizations and to Sri Lanka, that would be a lasting achievement.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first advice is to remain a learner. Technology, customer expectations and business models are changing too quickly for any leader to assume that past knowledge alone will be sufficient for the future. Secondly, understand the business beyond your own function. The strongest leaders are those who can connect people, technology, finance, operations and customer needs rather than viewing problems from only one perspective. Thirdly, do not be afraid of change or failure. Innovation requires experimentation, but it should always be supported by discipline, evidence and accountability. Finally, never compromise integrity. Skills may create opportunities and results may build a reputation, but trust determines the longevity of leadership. Future leaders will have access to more technology and information than any generation before them. Their greatest challenge will be using those capabilities responsibly to create genuine value for people, organizations and society.



Mr. Oshadh De Silva

Oshadh De Silva is Head of Marketing at LAUGFS Lubricants Limited, with over 15 years of cross-functional experience in customer service, sales, business development and strategic marketing. He holds an MBA in International Business from Birmingham City University, UK, and an MSc in Strategic Marketing from Asia e University, Malaysia. He is a Chartered Marketer (MCIM) and a member of the Australian Marketing Institute. His career spans leadership roles at LAUGFS Lubricants Limited, LAUGFS Eco Sri Limited, Great Western International Limited, and Distilleries Company of Sri Lanka PLC (DCSL), LION Brewery (Ceylon) Limited, SMM Halcyon (Pvt) Limited and HSBC. His leadership focuses on understanding people, developing potential, empowering teams and driving sustainable business growth.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe a leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into clear priorities, aligned teams and measurable outcomes. For me, this begins with understanding the business from the ground up: the customer, the market, the competitive landscape and the people responsible for turning strategy into results.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, I see Marketing as more than a communication function. It must contribute directly to brand equity, customer relationships, product innovation and commercial growth. My focus has therefore been on identifying opportunities that strengthen our market position while building capabilities that support long-term success.

However, strategy is not only about identifying the right business opportunities. It is equally about understanding the people who will execute that strategy. I believe a leader must recognise the strengths, perspectives and capabilities of the team, communicate a clear direction and create an environment where people feel confident contributing their ideas. A strategy becomes much more powerful when individuals understand not only what needs to be achieved, but also why their contribution matters.

In a competitive market, this combination of customer understanding, innovation and people development is essential. Initiatives such as introducing LEO Diesel Engine Oil to an underserved market segment and repositioning our grease portfolio demonstrate the value of identifying unmet needs and challenging conventional approaches. Equally important is building a team capable of identifying and executing the next opportunity.

Ultimately, sustainable growth requires more than achieving immediate targets. It requires developing the people, capabilities and relationships that allow an organisation to adapt, innovate and continue progressing. My objective is to build a business that performs well today while becoming stronger and more capable for tomorrow.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most defining experiences in my professional journey was accepting responsibility for leading the Marketing function at LAUGFS Lubricants during a particularly challenging period for the business.

The organisation was recovering from the effects of the economic crisis, brand confidence and market share had weakened, and shortly after I assumed responsibility, the entire existing Marketing team submitted their resignations. This happened during a Group-wide recruitment freeze, placing business continuity at risk.

I had to decide whether to wait for circumstances to improve or find a way forward with the resources available. I chose to take ownership of the situation, seek approval to expedite recruitment, redistribute responsibilities and work closely with other functions to keep essential activities moving.

However, that experience taught me something beyond the importance of making decisions under pressure. It reinforced that leadership is not simply about managing tasks or finding solutions to immediate problems. It is about understanding people, recognising what they bring to the table and helping them find the confidence to contribute, particularly when circumstances are difficult.

I believe people respond differently to pressure, change and responsibility. A leader must be willing to understand these differences rather than expect everyone to respond in the same way. Sometimes people need clear direction; at other times, they need encouragement, trust or the opportunity to demonstrate what they are capable of doing. Understanding the individual behind the responsibility is an important part of effective leadership.

The experience also reinforced that a leader cannot build sustainable performance by doing everything personally. The real objective is to create clarity, distribute responsibility and enable others to grow into their roles.

For me, leadership is ultimately about taking responsibility for both the situation and the people involved. Difficult circumstances can test a team, but they can also reveal potential, strengthen relationships and create opportunities for people to become more capable than they were before.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe one of the most important responsibilities of a leader is to recognise the potential in people, sometimes even before they fully recognise it in themselves. Every individual brings a different combination of strengths, experiences, perspectives and aspirations. Effective leadership begins with understanding those differences rather than expecting everyone to work, think or develop in exactly the same way.

My approach is to understand people before deciding how best to lead them. This means listening to their perspectives, understanding their challenges, recognising their strengths and identifying the areas in which they can grow. When people feel that their leader genuinely understands them, it becomes easier to build trust, encourage open communication and create the confidence needed to take on greater responsibilities.

I also believe that empowering people means giving them more than instructions. It means explaining the objective, helping them understand why it matters, providing the resources and guidance they need, and then allowing them the space to determine how best to achieve it. I do not believe a leader should have to make every decision or provide every answer. People develop when they are trusted to think independently, solve problems and take ownership of outcomes.

At the same time, empowerment must be supported by accountability. My responsibility is to establish clear expectations, provide direction when needed and offer constructive guidance when things do not go as planned. I believe mistakes can become valuable learning experiences when people are encouraged to reflect, improve and move forward rather than simply fear getting something wrong.

I also believe in challenging people to go beyond what is comfortable or familiar. This does not mean placing unrealistic expectations on them. It means understanding their individual capabilities and gradually creating opportunities that stretch their thinking, broaden their experience and help them discover what they are capable of achieving.

Ultimately, I do not measure my success only by the results delivered under my direct involvement. I measure it by whether the people I work with become more confident, capable, independent and prepared to take on greater responsibilities. For me, the true value of leadership lies in bringing out the best in others and creating an environment where they can continue to grow long after they no longer need constant direction.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

I believe uncertainty requires a leader to provide direction while remaining open to new possibilities. During difficult periods, people need clarity about what matters most, confidence that challenges can be addressed and the freedom to explore better ways of moving forward.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, the effects of COVID-19 and Sri Lanka's economic crisis created significant challenges for market confidence, brand visibility and competitiveness. As a homegrown brand competing against more than 35 lubricant brands, including much larger international players, we had to rethink how we could make a meaningful impact with the resources available.

My approach was to focus on understanding the situation rather than simply reacting to it. We strengthened engagement with distributors, mechanics, workshops and other trade stakeholders through technical workshops, customer fellowship sessions, targeted activations and strategic partnerships. These efforts helped us reconnect with the people who influence purchasing decisions and rebuild confidence through more direct engagement.

I believe the same principle applies within an organisation. When circumstances change, a leader must listen to the people closest to the work because they often understand practical challenges and opportunities that may not be immediately visible at management level. Encouraging people to share their observations, question established practices and propose solutions allows the organisation to respond more effectively.

This is also where empowerment becomes particularly important. Innovation cannot depend entirely on a leader having every idea. It must become a collective capability. My role is to establish the direction, encourage constructive thinking and create an environment where people feel confident testing ideas, learning from experience and adapting their approach.

I also believe resilience is built by helping people understand that constraints do not necessarily eliminate opportunities. Sometimes they require us to prioritise differently, collaborate more closely or reconsider assumptions that have gone unquestioned for years.

For me, leading through disruption is not simply about protecting the business from immediate challenges. It is about helping the organisation and its people emerge more adaptable, resourceful and confident in their ability to navigate what comes next.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe commercial success and ethical leadership must reinforce each other. Achieving targets is important, but the way those targets are achieved determines whether the results can be sustained and whether the organisation earns the trust of its stakeholders.

In Marketing, this begins with understanding the responsibility we have towards customers. Our products support vehicles, equipment and livelihoods, and our communications must accurately reflect what we can deliver. Product quality, responsible claims and transparent communication are essential to maintaining credibility.

I also believe that responsible leadership begins with how we treat people. Employees should feel respected, their perspectives should be considered, and decisions should be made with fairness and accountability. Empowerment does not mean removing standards or expectations; it means giving people the opportunity to contribute meaningfully while ensuring that responsibilities are understood and commitments are honoured.

From a business perspective, I believe every investment should have a clear rationale, resources should be managed responsibly, and decisions should be evaluated against their intended outcomes. Innovation and affordability can create opportunities to serve different market segments, but they must always operate within appropriate quality standards and organisational processes.

Equally, I believe ethical leadership requires consistency, particularly when commercial pressure makes shortcuts appear attractive. The responsibility of a leader is to make decisions that protect the long-term interests of the organisation, its customers, its employees and its partners, rather than pursuing short-term gains at the expense of trust.

Sustainability, in my view, also means building an organisation that can continue creating value over time. This includes strengthening capabilities, developing people, nurturing relationships and making decisions that support long-term business resilience.

My guiding principle is that success should be measured not only by what we achieve, but also by the standards we uphold and the people we bring forward along the way. Trust is built through consistent actions, and protecting that trust is fundamental to sustainable leadership.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond the brands we build, the products we develop and the commercial results we achieve, I would like my lasting contribution to be the people whose confidence, capabilities and opportunities have grown through working with me.

I believe a manager's influence should extend beyond the immediate responsibilities of a role. Business results are important, but the ability to help people recognise their potential, overcome limitations and become confident decision-makers is equally meaningful.

I want to be the kind of leader who takes the time to understand people from their perspective, recognises what makes each individual different and creates opportunities that allow them to develop. Sometimes this means giving someone responsibility they have not held before. Sometimes it means encouraging them to express an idea, challenging them to think more strategically or helping them see a capability they have not yet fully developed.

For me, empowering people is not about having all the answers or being the person everyone depends on. It is about helping others develop the judgement, confidence and independence to find answers for themselves. If the people I work with become stronger leaders who, in turn, recognise and develop the potential of others, I would consider that a meaningful legacy.

At LAUGFS Lubricants, I also want to contribute to building a stronger homegrown Sri Lankan brand that can compete confidently in a challenging market while remaining relevant to local customers. I believe commercial growth and people development should go hand in hand, creating opportunities for employees, strengthening partnerships and delivering value to customers.

For the marketing profession, I hope to demonstrate that creativity, commercial accountability and people-centred leadership are not separate priorities. They are complementary elements of building successful organisations.

Ultimately, I would like to be remembered not only for the results I helped deliver, but for the people I helped develop, the confidence I helped build and the opportunities I helped create. Business achievements may define a period of leadership, but the positive influence we have on people can continue long afterwards.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first piece of advice is to understand before you decide. Spend time with customers, learn how the business operates and listen to the people closest to the work. Some of the most valuable insights come from perspectives that are different from your own. The willingness to listen and understand is often what separates a good decision from a great one.

Second, learn to understand people, not just performance. Targets and results are essential in business, but behind every result are individuals with different strengths, motivations, challenges and aspirations. If you want people to perform at their best, take the time to understand what enables them to do so. Leadership is not about treating everyone identically; it is about giving people the guidance, trust and opportunities they need to succeed.

Third, do not underestimate the potential of the people around you. A leader's responsibility is not to be the most capable person in every situation, but to build a team where others are encouraged to develop their capabilities. Delegate meaningful responsibilities, invite different perspectives and allow people to take ownership. Give them room to learn, while remaining available to guide and support them.

Fourth, be willing to challenge convention. The business environment will continue to evolve, and yesterday's solutions may not address tomorrow's challenges. Remain curious, question assumptions and encourage your team to look for better ways of doing things. Innovation often begins with the willingness to ask whether something can be done differently.

Fifth, connect ambition with execution and integrity. Ideas matter, but they create value only when translated into action. Understand the commercial implications of your decisions, take responsibility for the outcomes and never compromise the trust placed in you for short-term gains.

Finally, remember that leadership is not about how much you can achieve alone. It is about what becomes possible when you help others recognise their strengths, overcome their limitations and reach their potential.

My advice is simple: understand deeply, listen with an open mind, challenge people to grow, give them the trust to lead and remain grounded in integrity. The strongest leaders do more than achieve results themselves; they create the conditions in which others can achieve more than they thought possible.



Mr. Ranjaka Kulatunga

Mr. Ranjaka Kulatunga is a senior finance and management professional with over 30 years of experience in diversified business, financial and commercial establishments, including publicly quoted and multinational enterprises. He has held senior management and director-level positions, with extensive expertise in corporate policy, business planning, financial and risk management, credit management, supply chain, business development, and legal and statutory matters. He is professionally qualified through the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka and Institute of Administrative Accountants – UK, with additional qualifications in banking and ISO Standards. He has also contributed to Government and donor-funded projects.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

At PHDT, we operate in a space where competition is not just about market share, it is about securing donor funding, attracting scarce professional talent, while maintaining national policy as well. Positioning my organization for sustainable growth requires turning ethical and operational standards into distinct competitive advantages.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

Looking back, my most impactful decision was transitioning our financial and administrative workflows from manual processes to a centralized, digital system. The organization was struggling with a complex network of restricted donor funds, rigid budgets, and escalating compliance demands. Instead of taking the safe path of hiring more clerical staff, I stepped out of our comfort zone to overhaul our systems. We automated fund segregation, integrated real-time project metrics with financial reporting, and implemented data-driven performance dashboards. To overcome staff resistance to new technology, I evolved from a financial custodian into an organizational change agent. Through intensive upskilling and clear communication about eliminating repetitive tasks, I empowered the team to embrace productivity and successfully complete the digital transformation.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Building an empowering, ownership-driven workplace requires replacing rigid oversight with decentralized responsibility, structured professional pathways, and non-monetary value systems.

Few of the key strategic approaches to deploy within the organization were

- Empowering employees to discharge their job responsibilities and building an environment where responsibility is clearly delegated with responsibility.
- Instead of micromanaging the administrative processes, gave my middle managers clear, measurable targets and the freedom to design the execute tasks.
- Inculcated Cross-Functional Communication
- Training staff towards professional development

Through delegation subordinates actively involve in preparation work for donor evaluations, government tender committees, and expose them to see how strategic decisions are negotiated prepare them to confidently discharge their duties.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

When funding is restricted, fear of overspending can stall innovation. We counter this by optimizing fixed budgets through low-cost processes and using rolling cash flow forecasts to reallocate operational savings toward modernization.

When engaging new donors, we align projects with cost-recovery models that fund organizational development. We also view strict regulatory compliance as a foundation for structural innovation, utilizing performance dashboards to predict bottlenecks and spark improvements.

Because tight budgets limit financial rewards, we build an innovation culture through non-monetary empowerment. By cross-training finance, administrative, and operational teams, we foster collaborative problem-solving.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Pursuing organizational objectives while upholding ethics requires transparency, governance and sustainability directly embedded into our strategic growth metrics, rather than treating them as secondary checks.

We have already proven that compliance and transparency can coexist with national-scale impact. To scale our ambitions without compromising our values, we adopt a leadership approach where governance acts as an accelerator for growth, rather than a bottleneck and focusing in expanding the reach to the community.

True sustainability requires expanding targets to balance

1. Financial Resilience i.e. to continue to scale our long-term sustainability strategy by diversifying donor portfolios and ensure that expansion never outplay capital reserves or cash flow cushions.

2. Social Impact: Every operational target must directly correlate with the measurable well-being of the plantation communities we serve.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My lasting impact on PHDT is transforming a vulnerable catalyst organisation into an enduring, digitally empowered institution capable of sustaining itself beyond my tenure. Through SMART PHDT, I have promoted automation, strict fund segregation and predictive internal controls, strengthening compliance and safeguarding against financial risks. I have helped shift PHDT from a reactive funding model towards proactive, long-term financial sustainability, supported by reserves and diversified donor confidence. Consistent recognition from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka reflects strengthened transparency, accountability and governance. Effective stewardship of restricted funds ensures resources reach plantation communities, while collaboration with the stakeholders supports sustainable national social development.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

The most vital guidance I can offer to emerging leaders is that true leadership is measured not by the resources you command, but by the resilience, ethics, and human dignity you build into an organization.

Transparency and accountability are the greatest assets while maintaining governance standards is what wins the long-term confidence of stakeholders.

Reliance on human memory or goodwill should be minimal. Instead, use of technology and automation scales up organizational growth.

The modern workforce is looking for more than a salary. They want to contribute and be a part in the decision-making process. Amidst talent shortages and tight budgets, purpose-driven leadership is your greatest recruitment tool.

True corporate excellence is achieved when financial successes are converted into tangible value, well-being, and elevated dignity for the workforce and the wider community.



Mr. Amila Rajapaksha

Amila Rajapaksha is Chief Financial Officer of People's Insurance PLC, with over 21 years of experience in financial management, taxation, corporate governance and strategic finance across Sri Lanka's General and Life Insurance sectors. A Fellow member of CA Sri Lanka, Chartered Tax Advisor and Associate Member of CMA, he also chairs the Tax Subcommittee of the Insurance Association of Sri Lanka. He holds an MBA from Cardiff Metropolitan University and a BSc (Special) in Finance from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. His leadership focuses on financial resilience, governance, sustainable growth and data-driven decision-making.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, leadership vision becomes meaningful only when it is translated into clear priorities, measurable actions and disciplined execution. In Finance, this means looking beyond reporting and positioning the function as a strategic partner to the business. I focus on maintaining the right balance between growth, profitability, liquidity, capital strength and risk.

As the Company expanded, we strengthened capital planning, liquidity monitoring, investment governance, reinsurance strategy and management reporting. We also refined incentive structures to encourage profitable business rather than growth at any cost. This enables management to make informed decisions while protecting long-term financial resilience. Sustainable growth is ultimately about creating value without compromising financial discipline or the organisation's capacity to withstand future shocks.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant decisions was to approach SLFRS 17 not simply as a Finance compliance project, but as an organisation-wide transformation. Successful implementation required Finance, Actuarial, Underwriting, Reinsurance, IT and Risk Management to work towards a common objective.

That experience reinforced an important leadership lesson: complex transformation cannot be delivered successfully through functional silos. A leader must create shared ownership, communicate the purpose clearly and ensure that different teams understand how their contribution affects the wider organisation. Our work towards SLFRS 17 demonstrated the value of early preparation, collaboration and disciplined execution. It also strengthened my conviction that regulatory change can be used as an opportunity to improve governance, data quality and decision-making.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Empowerment begins with clarity. People need to understand what is expected of them, why their work matters and how their decisions contribute to organisational performance. I therefore believe in providing teams with clear accountability, reliable information and an environment where decisions are supported by data rather than assumptions.

At the same time, empowerment must be accompanied by responsibility. Within Finance, we have strengthened management reporting, financial controls and cross-functional engagement so that teams can make informed decisions while remaining accountable for outcomes. I also encourage people to look beyond their immediate functional responsibilities and understand the wider business. Future leaders must be capable not only of performing their technical roles but also of understanding strategy, risk and stakeholder expectations.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Periods of uncertainty demand both discipline and adaptability. My first priority is to understand the financial implications of disruption, assess different scenarios and ensure that the organisation has sufficient liquidity, capital and risk protection to respond effectively.

Cyclone Ditwah was a good example of the importance of strong reinsurance planning and financial discipline in managing increased claims exposure while maintaining stability. Similarly, economic volatility, inflation in repair costs and declining interest rates required us to continually reassess investment, capital and profitability strategies.

Innovation becomes possible when the underlying organisation is resilient. When teams have reliable information, strong governance and financial capacity, they are better positioned to challenge established practices and develop new solutions with confidence.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Growth and governance should never be viewed as competing priorities. Sustainable growth is only possible when decisions are supported by sound controls, transparency and accountability.

My approach is to ensure that financial strategy remains anchored in regulatory compliance, disciplined capital allocation, reporting integrity and effective risk management. Even during rapid business expansion, we continued to focus on liquidity, solvency, reinsurance, investment governance and internal controls. We also achieved an important reporting milestone by holding the Company's AGM within three months of the balance sheet date and publishing the Annual Report within the regulatory timeline.

Strong governance builds stakeholder confidence, and that confidence ultimately becomes a strategic asset for the organisation.

Q06 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like my lasting contribution to be the development of a Finance function that is recognised not merely for producing accurate numbers, but for enabling better decisions and strengthening the organisation for the future.

That means building systems, governance practices and professional capabilities that remain effective regardless of who occupies a particular position. I also believe leadership has a responsibility beyond the organisation. Through my involvement with the Insurance Association of Sri Lanka's Tax Subcommittee, I have had the opportunity to contribute to greater clarity, compliance and sustainable practices within the wider insurance sector.

Ultimately, I would like to leave behind stronger institutions, stronger professionals and a culture where financial discipline supports responsible and sustainable growth.

Q07 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice would be to understand the business beyond the boundaries of your own function. Technical expertise is essential, but leadership requires a broader understanding of customers, people, risk, technology, regulation and long-term value creation.

Use data to guide decisions, but do not underestimate the importance of judgement and stakeholder engagement. Be prepared for change rather than reacting to it after it arrives. Most importantly, never sacrifice governance or integrity for short-term results.

Emerging leaders will operate in increasingly complex environments. Those who combine analytical thinking, adaptability, collaboration and disciplined execution will be better equipped to build organisations that are not only successful today, but resilient enough to succeed tomorrow.


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Mr. Kandiah Pathmananthan

K. Pathmananthan is Country Director of Room to Read Sri Lanka, where he leads the organisation's strategic direction, system-level engagement, partnerships, people development and sustainability. An education and development professional with over four decades of experience across government, UN agencies, international development organisations and the private sector, he brings extensive experience in education reform, institutional development, humanitarian recovery and strategic leadership. His current focus is strengthening Room to Read's contribution to Sri Lanka's education system through government ownership, evidence-based approaches and strategic partnerships. He is also a writer, author, poet, publisher, trainer and motivational speaker.



Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, a leadership vision becomes meaningful only when people can see how it connects to their daily work and to the people we ultimately serve.

At Room to Read Sri Lanka, I have focused on moving beyond the idea of delivering successful projects in selected locations. Our longer-term direction is to ensure that the knowledge, evidence and approaches we develop can strengthen the education system itself. This means working closely with government institutions, universities, development partners and communities so that successful approaches can be owned, adapted and sustained locally.

I also believe resilience comes from not depending on one programme, one funding source or one relationship. We are therefore strengthening partnerships, using evidence more deliberately in decision-making, developing our people and looking for opportunities where Room to Read can contribute its technical expertise in new ways.

My earlier experience in government, UN agencies and international organizations taught me that sustainable growth is not always about becoming bigger. Sometimes it is about becoming more relevant, more trusted and more deeply connected to the systems around you. That is the direction I want Room to Read Sri Lanka to continue taking.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important decisions I have made in leading Room to Read Sri Lanka has been to move the organisation beyond stand-alone programme delivery and place greater emphasis on institutionalisation, government ownership and system strengthening.

At Room to Read, we had strong technical experience in literacy, libraries, life skills and student support. It would have been easier to continue delivering these approaches directly within our own programmes. However, I believed our greater contribution would come from working with government institutions to incorporate proven approaches into existing national structures.

That thinking has guided our engagement with the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education, including work around teacher education, reading and school counselling and career guidance.

The most important lesson for me has been that a good leader must sometimes be willing to give up visibility in order to achieve sustainability. If an approach becomes part of a government system, Room to Read may not always be at the centre of the story - but children and teachers can continue benefiting long after a particular project ends.

My career has repeatedly shown me that ownership creates sustainability. Leadership is not about ensuring that everything carries your name; it is about helping good ideas survive without you.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I do not believe an organization becomes strong when every decision has to reach the Country Director.

My role is to provide clarity about direction, expectations and accountability, and then give people enough space to exercise their own judgement. At Room to Read, I encourage managers and technical colleagues to take ownership of their areas, engage directly with partners, bring solutions rather than only problems, and make appropriate decisions within their responsibilities.

Empowerment, however, is not simply delegation. People also need support. I believe in coaching, asking questions, giving constructive feedback and allowing people to learn from difficult situations. There must also be space for staff to disagree respectfully. Some of the best decisions come when a team is confident enough to challenge an initial idea.

I have worked with very different teams throughout my career, from teachers and community workers to technical specialists and senior government officials. One lesson has remained consistent: people grow when they are trusted with meaningful responsibility.

A leader's success should therefore not be measured by how dependent the team is on that leader, but by how confidently the team can perform when the leader is not in the room.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During periods of uncertainty, I first try to separate what has changed from what has not.

Funding environments, technology, government priorities and operating conditions can change very quickly. But our purpose - to improve opportunities for children through education - remains constant. Once that is clear, we can be much more flexible about how we achieve it.

At Room to Read Sri Lanka, this means continuously looking at evidence, listening to our field teams and partners, and being prepared to adjust approaches when circumstances require it. It also means exploring new partnerships, digital solutions and different ways of taking technical knowledge to scale.

I encourage teams not to treat innovation as something that happens only through a major new project. Innovation can be a better process, a simpler tool, a different partnership or a decision to stop doing something that no longer adds sufficient value.

My approach during disruption is therefore to provide stability around purpose, while allowing flexibility around methods.

People are more willing to experiment when they know that thoughtful failure will not automatically be punished. At the same time, innovation needs discipline. New ideas should ultimately create better outcomes, not simply more activity.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I see ethics and governance as part of good leadership, not as separate compliance requirements.

At Room to Read, decisions relating to programmes, partnerships, finances, people and resources must be considered not only in terms of what we can achieve, but also how we achieve it. A result is not truly successful if it compromises our values, exposes the organization to unnecessary risk or weakens the trust of the communities and partners we work with.

As Country Director, I therefore place importance on clear accountability, financial stewardship, compliance, safeguarding, transparency and evidence-based decision-making. Difficult issues need to be discussed openly, documented properly and escalated when required.

Sustainability is also part of this responsibility. Before investing heavily in an initiative, we should ask whether local institutions can eventually own it, whether our partners have genuine participation and whether the benefits can continue beyond the funding period.

Throughout my career I have managed complex programmes and significant public and donor resources. That experience has reinforced one principle for me: the pressure to deliver should never become an excuse to compromise integrity. Trust takes years to build and can be lost through one poor decision.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

At Room to Read Sri Lanka, I would like my leadership contribution to be reflected not only in the programmes delivered during my tenure, but in the strength of the organisation that continues beyond it.

I would like to see Room to Read Sri Lanka recognised as a trusted technical partner - one whose knowledge contributes to stronger national education systems, whose partnerships continue to grow, and whose staff are confident leaders in their own right.

If some of the approaches we have developed together become embedded within teacher education, school systems, children's books, counselling or other national structures, that would be a meaningful legacy because the impact would continue beyond our direct involvement.

Internally, I would like to leave behind people who are more capable and confident than when I first worked with them. Developing successors is, in my view, one of the most important responsibilities of leadership.

My wider career has taken me through classrooms, humanitarian settings, government institutions and development organizations. Across all of those experiences, I have increasingly come to believe that lasting leadership is about strengthening systems and people so that they no longer depend on the individual leader.

That is the impact I would value most.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

I would offer emerging leaders a few lessons that my own journey has taught me.

First, stay close to the people affected by your decisions. As leaders move into senior positions, it becomes easy to see organizations through reports, meetings and numbers. Those are important, but they never tell the complete story.

Second, listen before you decide. Listening does not mean avoiding difficult decisions; it means making them with a better understanding of their consequences.

Third, do not confuse authority with leadership. A designation may give you the right to make a decision, but trust determines whether people will genuinely follow you.

Fourth, develop people who are capable of challenging you and eventually succeeding you. An organization filled with people waiting for instructions is not a strong organization.

Finally, remain adaptable in your methods but consistent in your values. Technology, markets, institutions and expectations will continue changing. Leaders must change with them, but integrity, respect and responsibility should not change according to circumstances.

At Room to Read Sri Lanka, I try to apply these principles by giving teams space to lead, keeping our decisions connected to children and communities, and ensuring that organisational growth does not come at the expense of our values.

If I could summarize it in one thought, it would be this: leadership is not about becoming the most important person in the organization; it is about making the organization, its people and its purpose stronger because you were there.

Room to Read® is creating a world free from illiteracy and gender inequality.

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WHAT WE DO

Literacy
We develop children's literacy skills and nurture a love of reading through quality curriculum and books in local languages, trained and supported educators, and enriching learning environments that help children become independent readers.

Gender Equality
We support adolescents, particularly girls, to develop essential life skills that promote gender equality. Our approach strengthens skills including collaboration, resilience, leadership, decision-making and critical thinking, helping young people navigate important life choices.

HOW WE CREATE LASTING IMPACT SINCE 2005 IN SRI LANKA

Our programs are built on four core competencies developed through decades of implementation and learning:

- Curriculum & Content
- Educator Training & Coaching
- Delivery Structures
- Research & Insights

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375+	Story Books developed in Sinhala and Tamil mediums.
1.6M+	Story books are printed and distributed nationwide.
200,000+	Children reached through supplementary learning materials.
10,000+	Educators trained in Literacy Instructions, Reading Promotions & Life Skills.
2,500+	Home libraries set up.
16,636+	Girls are reached through Life Skills Education.
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Mr. Halin Prasad Hettigoda

Halin Prasad Hettigoda is a seasoned banking professional with over 34 years of experience in banking operations, international banking, trade finance, deposit mobilisation, business promotion, and strategic leadership. Currently serving as Assistant General Manager – Business Promotions at Sampath Bank PLC, he has played a significant role in leading transformational initiatives and strengthening business performance. A Fellow Member of several professional bodies and former President of the Association of Professional Bankers of Sri Lanka, he is recognised for his contributions to leadership excellence, banking innovation, and the development of Sri Lanka's financial services sector.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I believe leadership vision creates value only when it is translated into clear strategic priorities, actionable plans, and measurable outcomes that benefit customers, employees, and other stakeholders. My approach is to align long-term organisational aspirations with practical business objectives while remaining responsive to evolving market conditions and emerging opportunities.

Throughout my career, I have focused on driving innovation, improving operational efficiency, and developing customer-centric solutions. Whether leading international banking operations, deposit mobilisation initiatives, or business promotion strategies, I have encouraged teams to embrace continuous improvement, adaptability, and a shared commitment to excellence.

In my view, sustainable growth requires a careful balance between innovation and prudent risk management. It also depends on investing in people, strengthening organisational capabilities, and cultivating a resilient culture that enables the organisation to navigate uncertainty while remaining focused on long-term value creation.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most defining experiences in my professional journey was my involvement in transformational initiatives that modernised banking operations, particularly the Cheque Imaging and Truncation (CIT) Project. This initiative contributed to greater operational efficiency and represented an important step in the evolution of Sri Lanka's banking infrastructure.

The experience reinforced my belief that meaningful progress requires the courage to challenge established practices, the ability to build consensus among diverse stakeholders, and the discipline to maintain a clear strategic direction throughout periods of change.

It also taught me that transformation is not simply about introducing new systems or improving processes; it is fundamentally about people. Successful leaders must communicate purpose, build confidence, and create an environment in which individuals understand the value of change and feel empowered to contribute to its success. This lesson continues to shape my leadership philosophy: sustainable transformation occurs when strategic vision is supported by collective ownership and commitment.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people perform at their best when they are trusted, respected, and given the opportunity to grow. Creating such an environment requires open communication, collaborative decision-making, clear accountability, and a genuine commitment to recognising individual strengths and potential.

My leadership approach places considerable emphasis on mentoring, knowledge sharing, and providing individuals with opportunities to take on new responsibilities. I encourage team members to contribute ideas, make informed decisions, and learn from both their successes and their challenges. I also believe that continuous learning is essential in an industry as dynamic as banking, where customer expectations, technology, and regulatory requirements continue to evolve.

Ultimately, developing future leaders is a responsibility that every leader must embrace. By empowering people today, we strengthen not only individual capabilities but also the organisation's leadership pipeline, institutional knowledge, and long-term capacity to achieve excellence.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Periods of uncertainty test both the resilience of an organisation and the quality of its leadership. During such times, I believe leaders must remain composed, communicate transparently, make timely decisions, and keep their teams focused on the organisation's strategic priorities.

My approach is to encourage agility, strengthen collaboration across functions, and ensure that emerging challenges are assessed objectively so that appropriate responses can be implemented. Equally important is recognising that disruption often creates opportunities to rethink established practices, improve processes, and develop more effective solutions for customers.

Innovation flourishes when employees feel confident enough to share ideas, question conventional thinking, and explore better ways of working. As leaders, we must create that environment while maintaining sound governance, disciplined execution, and effective risk management. By bringing together resilience, adaptability, and innovation, organisations can respond to immediate challenges while building the capabilities needed to thrive in the future.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I firmly believe that sustainable organisational success must be built on integrity, accountability, transparency, and sound governance. Achieving business objectives is important, but the manner in which those objectives are achieved is equally significant. In a profession founded on trust, ethical conduct must remain non-negotiable.

My experience across banking operations, audit, risk-related functions, and governance committees has reinforced the importance of maintaining robust controls, adhering to regulatory requirements, and making decisions that serve the long-term interests of the organisation and its stakeholders.

I view governance not merely as a compliance obligation but as an essential foundation for responsible growth. It provides the discipline and accountability necessary to balance commercial ambitions with prudent risk management and stakeholder expectations. By embedding ethical principles into everyday decisions and organisational culture, leaders can strengthen public confidence, protect institutional reputation, and create sustainable value for customers, employees, shareholders, and the wider community.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

I would like my professional legacy to reflect three enduring contributions: strengthening institutions, developing people, and advancing the banking profession. While business performance and organisational achievements are important measures of success, I believe the most meaningful legacy is the positive difference we make in the lives and careers of others.

I am particularly passionate about mentoring emerging leaders, sharing professional knowledge, and supporting the continuous development of individuals within the banking industry. My involvement in professional banking associations and leadership roles has provided valuable opportunities to contribute to the advancement of professional standards, collaboration, and innovation.

Looking ahead, I hope to continue supporting initiatives that build leadership capabilities, encourage knowledge exchange, and strengthen the relationship between professional excellence and social responsibility. Ultimately, I would like to be remembered not only for the results achieved during my career but also for the people I helped develop and the positive contribution I made to the profession and the wider community.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to remain committed to continuous learning, uphold the highest ethical standards, and always recognise that people are at the heart of organisational success. Technical knowledge and professional expertise may create opportunities, but integrity, resilience, emotional intelligence, and the ability to inspire others are what distinguish truly effective leaders.

The business environment will continue to evolve, shaped by technological advancements, changing customer expectations, and global economic developments. Future leaders must therefore remain adaptable, welcome diverse perspectives, and view challenges as opportunities to learn and innovate. Equally important is the willingness to listen, acknowledge mistakes, and make decisions guided by both sound judgement and strong principles.

Above all, I encourage emerging leaders to lead by example. Leadership is not simply about authority, position, or personal achievement; it is about creating a meaningful impact, serving a purpose greater than oneself, and enabling others to realise their full potential. When leaders combine competence with character and ambition with responsibility, they can build organisations that are not only successful but also resilient, trusted, and sustainable.


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Mr. Kanishka Nalienda

Kanishka Nalienda Weerasinghe is an accomplished apparel manufacturing professional with over 20 years of industry experience, including more than a decade in senior management. Currently serving as Assistant General Manager – Production at Omega Line Ltd., he specializes in large-scale production operations, lean manufacturing, productivity improvement and people leadership. He holds an MBA from the University of Colombo and a Bachelor of Applied Science in Textile Technology from RMIT University, Australia, where he received the Gold Medal for Academic Excellence. A certified TPM Practitioner, he has gained international exposure through leadership training and factory consultancy assignments in Bulgaria, Japan and Italy.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Leadership begins with understanding the reality of business and having a clear vision of where we need to go. However, a vision only becomes meaningful when it is translated into practical actions that people can understand, own and execute.

In manufacturing, sustainable growth is not simply about producing more. It requires reliable processes, capable people, disciplined systems and the ability to respond quickly when something goes wrong.

One of the key challenges I encountered at Omega II was machine reliability. Machine breakdowns accounted for around 30% of total downtime and affected not only production time, but also line balance, operator utilization, delivery performance, quality and cost.

I therefore looked beyond the traditional approach of treating breakdowns purely as a maintenance issue. We began creating a culture where machine reliability became a shared responsibility involving operators, team leaders, mechanics and production teams.

We strengthened preventive maintenance, developed technical capabilities, introduced focused improvement teams and established clearer response and escalation mechanisms. The results demonstrated the value of this approach. Machine breakdown downtime reduced from 738,272.77 minutes in 2023 to 236,426.11 minutes in 2025, while operational efficiency improved from 79.2% to 87.6% during the same period.

For me, sustainable growth is therefore about more than achieving today's targets. It is about building people, systems and capabilities that make the organization stronger and more resilient for tomorrow.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most significant leadership decisions in my professional journey was to move away from the mindset that machine reliability was solely the responsibility of the maintenance team. With more than 1,800 sewing machines supported by 20 mechanics, it was clear that the traditional approach had limitations.

I decided that we needed to bring the people closest to the machines into the solution. Operators, team leaders and module champions were encouraged to become the first line of defense through basic cleaning, lubrication, inspection and minor adjustments. At the same time, mechanics were supported through competency development and focused improvement activities.

This decision taught me an important lesson: a leader cannot personally solve every problem, but a leader can create a system where people collectively solve problems. It also changed the way I look at operational challenges. A machine breakdown may appear to be a technical problem, but its consequences can spread across production, quality, cost, employee morale and customer delivery. Therefore, leadership requires us to look beyond the immediate symptom and understand the wider business impact.

Most importantly, I learned that ownership creates sustainability. When people understand why something matters and are given the knowledge and responsibility to contribute, improvement becomes part of the culture rather than something driven by one individual.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe that people become empowered when they are given three things: trust, knowledge and responsibility.

I try to create an environment where people understand that their contribution matters beyond their individual task. For example, machine reliability was traditionally viewed largely as a maintenance responsibility. We changed that mindset by involving operators, team leaders and module champions in machine care and early problem identification.

We introduced a five-minute machine-care routine at the end of each shift and encouraged operators to take responsibility for basic machine conditions. We also created small improvement teams involving operators, mechanics and team leaders so that people could participate directly in identifying and solving recurring problems.

I also believe that people need to feel that their contribution is recognized. Recognizing mechanics during KPI meetings and identifying training requirements based on competency gaps helped create an environment where development became part of the process.

Another important aspect is collaboration. Production and engineering should not operate as separate teams with competing priorities. Joint KPIs, monthly reviews and cross-functional improvement projects help create shared ownership.

Ultimately, my objective is not simply to develop people who can perform their current roles well. I want to develop people who can identify problems, make decisions, support others and eventually lead teams themselves. For me, that is what true empowerment means.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

In manufacturing, disruption can happen within seconds. A machine breakdown can stop an operation, create a bottleneck and affect an entire production module. Therefore, when faced with disruption, I believe leadership must provide clarity, speed and confidence.

One approach we introduced was a clear Breakdown Escalation Matrix, defining response times and responsibilities. We also began tracking breakdowns by line, machine type and mechanic and introduced visual dashboards to make problems visible. A short morning meeting brought production and engineering teams together to review the previous day's breakdown trends and align priorities.

However, I believe resilience is not simply about responding quickly when something fails. It is about learning from failures and reducing the possibility of recurrence. That is why we strengthened preventive maintenance, focused improvement activities, spare-parts management and technical competency development.

I also encourage people to ask a simple question when they face a recurring problem: “Why are we continuing to solve the same problem?” That question can open the door to innovation. For me, innovation does not always mean introducing new technology. Sometimes, it means changing the way people think about an existing problem.

When people are encouraged to identify root causes, work across functions and test better solutions, disruption becomes an opportunity to strengthen the organization.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe that achieving a target is important, but how we achieve that target is equally important. My approach is based on transparency, accountability, measurable objectives and shared responsibility. When responsibilities and expectations are clear, people understand what is required and can be held accountable for their contribution.

One example is the way we addressed the relationship between production and engineering. Rather than allowing each function to focus only on its own targets, we introduced a joint KPI structure, supported by monthly production-engineering reviews and cross-functional improvement projects.

I also believe that sustainable performance comes from prevention rather than continuous reaction. Strengthening preventive maintenance, improving technical capabilities and managing spare parts more effectively helped reduce both operational losses and maintenance costs.

For me, sustainability also means developing people. If an improvement depends entirely on one expert, it is difficult to sustain. But when knowledge is transferred, capabilities are developed and responsibility is shared, the improvement becomes part of the organization.

The results reflected this approach. The initiatives generated an estimated LKR 14.7 million financial benefit, while improved maintenance practices contributed to approximately LKR 8.01 million in spare-parts cost savings. I therefore see governance and sustainability not as limitations on performance, but as the foundation that allows performance to continue responsibly over the long term.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

Beyond the measurable results, I would like my lasting impact to be the culture of ownership and continuous improvement that I help create. The reduction in machine breakdowns is an important achievement, but I consider the capabilities developed within the organization equally valuable.

When an operator understands how to identify an early machine issue, when a mechanic develops stronger technical capability, and when production and engineering teams work together to solve a recurring problem, the organization becomes stronger. That is the kind of impact I want to leave behind. I would like to create systems and develop people in such a way that improvements continue even when individual leaders move into different roles.

I also want to contribute to changing the perception that operational excellence belongs to one department. Production, engineering, maintenance and operators are parts of one system, and sustainable improvement requires them to work together.

The improvements achieved during this journey were significant. Efficiency increased from 79.2% in 2023 to 87.6% in 2025, while AQL failure reduced from 0.98% to 0.73%. But ultimately, I would measure my leadership legacy differently. I would like to look back and know that people have become more capable, more confident and more willing to take ownership because they had the opportunity to work and grow with me. That, to me, is lasting leadership.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first advice to emerging leaders is to understand the business before trying to change it. Spend time with the people who do the work. Understand the process, listen to their challenges and identify the real causes behind the problems.

Secondly, learn to see the organization as an interconnected system. A machine problem can become a production problem; a production problem can become a delivery problem; and a delivery problem can ultimately become a customer problem.

Thirdly, measure what matters. Data helps leaders move beyond assumptions and understand whether an improvement is genuinely creating value. But measurements should lead to action, not simply become numbers in a report.

I would also encourage emerging leaders to develop people rather than trying to solve every problem themselves. Our experience demonstrated that when operators, mechanics and team leaders are given the knowledge, responsibility and opportunity to contribute, they can become powerful drivers of improvement.

Finally, remain humble enough to learn from setbacks. Not every solution will work the first time. Leadership requires the courage to make decisions, the patience to learn and the discipline to keep improving.

If I had to summarize my advice in a few words, it would be: Understand deeply; Measure objectively; Empower people; Act decisively; Learn continuously. Because the strongest leaders are not those who create dependency on themselves. They are the leaders who build people and systems that can continue creating results without them.

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Mr. Mahen De Silva

Mahen De Silva has served as Chief Human Resources Officer of People's Insurance PLC since 2023 and brings over 30 years of multidisciplinary leadership experience spanning human capital management, sales and marketing, customer service, administration and facilities management. He holds an MBA in Human Resources from the Postgraduate Institute of Management and is an SHL-certified assessor and former lecturer. His career is distinguished by recognised leadership in talent management and HR. At People's Insurance, he has strengthened governance, leadership development, employee engagement and performance culture, positioning HR as a strategic partner in long-term growth.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

My leadership philosophy is to ensure that people strategy and business strategy operate as one integrated agenda. Organisational growth cannot be sustained unless the workforce has the capabilities, leadership pipeline and governance structures required to support it.

At People's Insurance, we aligned annual manpower planning with the corporate plan and projected business volumes while strengthening recruitment, succession planning, performance management, employee development and engagement initiatives. We also increased the use of workforce data such as attrition, productivity, time-to-hire and quality-of-hire in decision-making.

This enables us to anticipate people-related risks rather than responding to them after they occur. When employees understand expectations, experience fair processes and see opportunities for development, the organisation becomes more stable, productive and resilient.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important leadership decisions I made was to move HR away from being primarily an administrative function and establish it as a strategic business partner supported by a consistent people-governance framework.

I assumed the CHRO role at a time when employee attrition was a significant organisational challenge. Rather than treating retention as an isolated HR issue, we addressed recruitment, remuneration, performance, development, succession and engagement as interconnected elements of the same system.

The experience taught me that sustainable organisational change requires consistency and trust. Employees need to see that decisions are transparent and equitable, while the business must be confident that people decisions support performance. Bringing those two expectations together has been one of the most valuable lessons of my leadership journey.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe employees become empowered when they are given clear expectations, meaningful opportunities to develop and confidence that performance will be recognized fairly.

Our Performance Management System connects organizational objectives with departmental and individual goals and uses appraisal outcomes to support promotions, rewards, training and coaching. We have also invested significantly in learning and development, role-specific capability building and succession planning while creating greater opportunities for internal mobility.

The results demonstrate the importance of that approach. During 2025, 178 employees were promoted and more than 53,000 training hours were delivered. Developing future leaders is not simply about identifying a small group of high performers; it is about creating an organizational environment where people at every level can learn, contribute, take responsibility and progress.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

During disruption, leaders have to provide stability without becoming resistant to change. My approach is to rely on transparent governance, workforce information, continuous communication and structured planning.

Rapid growth, competition for skilled talent and changing employee expectations required us to continually reassess how we attract, develop and retain people. At the same time, employee wellbeing and workplace safety cannot be separated from organizational resilience. We therefore strengthened safety procedures, employee engagement, health awareness and recognition initiatives alongside performance and capability development.

Innovation thrives when people feel secure enough to contribute ideas and confident that decisions will be made fairly. A resilient workplace combines disciplined systems with an environment where employees are encouraged to learn, adapt and contribute to organizational improvement.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

For me, ethical conduct and good governance are fundamental components of performance, not constraints on it. Ambitious business objectives must be pursued through processes that employees and stakeholders can trust.

Our HR governance framework operates under Board oversight and a Board-approved HR policy and incorporates principles relating to non-discrimination, grievance handling, whistle-blowing, anti-fraud, anti-bribery, ethics and gender equity. Recruitment and progression are supported by structured assessment and approval mechanisms, while performance decisions are linked to clearly established processes.

When governance is embedded into the employee life cycle, the organization can pursue growth with greater confidence because decisions are consistent, transparent and accountable. Ultimately, sustainable performance depends as much on how results are achieved as on the results themselves.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The lasting impact I would like to create is a people system that continues to develop leaders and sustain organizational performance long after any individual leader has moved on.

I would like employees to experience People's Insurance as an organization where opportunity is based on capability and performance, where people are treated fairly and where continuous learning is part of the culture. Developing a strong internal leadership pipeline is especially important because it protects institutional knowledge and gives talented employees a visible future within the organization.

If we can build a workplace in which strong governance, employee wellbeing, learning and accountability reinforce one another, then the HR function will have contributed not only to business performance but also to a sustainable institution.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

I would encourage emerging leaders to remember that leadership is ultimately about people. Strategies, technologies and systems are important, but they deliver results through individuals who must understand the purpose of the organization and believe that their contribution matters.

Be consistent in your decisions and transparent in your expectations. Use data, but also listen carefully to employees. Invest continuously in capability because the skills required tomorrow will not necessarily be the skills that created success yesterday.

Most importantly, balance empathy with accountability. Supporting employees does not mean lowering performance expectations. Effective leadership creates an environment in which people are respected, developed and supported while still being accountable for delivering the standards the organization requires.



Mr. Sampath Karunarathna

I am **Sampath Karunarathna, Head of Nawaloka One Wellness Centre**, with more than 34 years of experience in Sri Lanka's healthcare sector across healthcare operations, wellness management, customer service and team leadership. Over the years, I have focused on improving service quality, strengthening operational discipline, empowering teams and creating a more integrated approach to preventive healthcare. At Nawaloka One Wellness Centre, I have led the transition towards a concierge-led wellness model supported by multidisciplinary collaboration, standardised processes and KPI-driven performance management. My leadership philosophy is centred on client experience, accountability, continuous improvement and sustainable value creation.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

For me, leadership begins with understanding where we are today, where we need to go, and what must change to get there.

At Nawaloka One Wellness Centre, I recognized that traditional wellness services operating independently would not be enough to meet the expectations of modern clients. Consultations, diagnostics, therapies, fitness and aesthetic services needed to work together as one integrated client journey.

My focus was therefore to transform the Centre into a more **integrated, concierge-led and outcome-focused wellness model**.

I worked with our multidisciplinary teams to strengthen coordination, standardize operating procedures, improve client follow-up and introduce KPI-based performance management. These changes helped us improve consistency, accountability, service quality and operational efficiency.

For me, sustainable growth comes from aligning **people, processes and client experience** around a clear purpose and making sure that purpose is translated into measurable results.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most important decisions in my professional journey was to move away from a fragmented service model and build an **integrated wellness-management approach**.

Before the transformation, several services operated independently. This created inconsistent follow-up, manual processes, limited visibility over client outcomes and fewer opportunities for retention and cross-service engagement.

I believed we could do better.

I therefore worked closely with our medical, diagnostic, nutrition, physiotherapy and wellness teams to improve coordination and create a more seamless and personalized experience for each client.

That experience taught me that transformation is not achieved by introducing one new service or one new system.

It happens when people understand the purpose of change and begin to work differently together.

The most important lesson I learned is that sustainable improvement comes when the entire team takes ownership of the client journey.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe people perform at their best when they are **trusted, supported and held accountable**.

At the Wellness Centre, I introduced regular team reviews, structured staff coaching, performance discussions and KPI-based monitoring. My intention was not simply to measure performance, but to help people understand where improvement was needed and how their contribution influenced the overall client experience.

I also encourage multidisciplinary teamwork because it helps people understand the business beyond their own function.

When team members are encouraged to contribute ideas, solve problems and take responsibility for outcomes, they become more confident and capable.

For me, developing future leaders means giving people opportunities to **think, decide and take ownership**, while remaining available to guide and support them when needed.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Change in healthcare and wellness is constant.

Client expectations continue to evolve, competition is increasing, and people are looking for more personalized, evidence-based and digitally enabled wellness solutions.

My approach is to first understand what our clients genuinely need and then assess how our people, processes and technology must evolve to meet those expectations.

At Nawaloka One Wellness Centre, this meant moving from fragmented services towards an integrated concierge-led model combining diagnostics, personalized programmes, coordinated follow-up and greater service continuity.

I believe innovation must always serve a practical purpose.

It should make the client journey easier, improve quality, reduce delays, strengthen outcomes or help our teams work more effectively.

For me, innovation is not about changing for the sake of change.

It is about continuously finding better ways to create value for our clients and the organization.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

In healthcare and wellness, **trust is fundamental**.

Growth is important, but I do not believe it should ever come at the expense of professional standards, client confidentiality, service quality or accountability.

My approach has been to strengthen operations through **standard operating procedures, KPI-driven performance management, multidisciplinary collaboration, continuous staff development and data-driven quality improvement.**

I also believe sustainability comes from balancing growth with quality.

Increasing enrolments is meaningful only if clients continue to receive a consistent, professional and valuable experience.

Therefore, I try to ensure that every improvement supports three things:

better client outcomes, stronger operational discipline and long-term organizational value.

That balance is central to how I lead.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The legacy I would like to leave is a stronger culture of **preventive healthcare, service excellence and continuous improvement**.

I believe wellness should not be viewed simply as an additional healthcare service. It should become part of how people proactively manage their health and quality of life.

I would like Nawaloka One Wellness Centre to continue developing as a trusted environment where clients receive coordinated, personalized and outcome-focused support.

I also want the people I work with to grow professionally and become confident leaders in their own right.

The recognition received by the Centre as the **Winner of the Best Management Practices Company Awards 2026 – Wellness Centres & Beauty Parlours Categor**y was encouraging, but for me, recognition is meaningful only when it reflects stronger practices and better outcomes.

Ultimately, I would like my contribution to be remembered not simply for improving numbers, but for helping build a more integrated, professional and client-centred model of wellness care.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My first message to emerging leaders is to stay close to the people you serve and the people you lead.

It is easy for management to become focused on targets, processes and performance indicators, but behind every number there is a client, an employee or a decision that affects someone.

Second, develop discipline.

Good leadership requires consistency in standards, follow-up, accountability and execution.

Third, remain open to change.

What worked yesterday may not be enough tomorrow. Leaders need to continue learning, listening and adapting.

Fourth, give your people opportunities to contribute.

Some of the best improvements come from the people who work closest to the process and the customer.

And finally, never compromise on trust.

In healthcare and wellness, trust is one of the most valuable assets an organization can build.

Professional Closing

After more than three decades in healthcare, I have learned that sustainable success is built through a combination of **people, purpose, discipline and trust**.

Systems can improve, technology can evolve and service models can change, but lasting transformation happens only when people understand the purpose behind the change and take ownership of delivering it.

At Nawaloka One Wellness Centre, my journey has been about creating a culture where **client experience, teamwork, accountability, innovation and continuous improvement** come together.

The progress we have made is encouraging, but I do not see leadership as a destination. It is a continuing responsibility to strengthen the organization, develop our people and improve the value we provide to those we serve.

For me, the true measure of leadership is not simply what I achieve personally, but what remains stronger because of the work I have done.

“The most meaningful legacy I can leave is stronger people, stronger standards and an organization better prepared for the future.”

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Mr. Imith Weerasooriya

Mr. Imith Weerasooriya, Manager- Key Accounts in Lanwa Sanstha Cement Corporation, is a forward-thinking business leader with a strong engineering background, bringing over 10 years of extensive experience spanning civil engineering and technical marketing within the building material sector and major construction companies in Sri Lanka. He holds an MBA from the University of Kelaniya, a Bachelor of Engineering from UWE Bristol-UK, and an NDT in Civil Engineering from the University of Moratuwa. Deeply committed to advancing sustainable practices in the industry, he combines technical expertise with strategic commercial vision to drive sustainable infrastructure partnerships, ethical governance, and long-term organizational resilience.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

Transforming vision into strategic direction begins with aligning daily commercial operations directly with long-term sustainability and environmental stewardship. In the construction materials sector, this means moving beyond conventional supply models to champion green building initiatives and responsible manufacturing. By fostering close collaboration with major national infrastructure projects and key stakeholders, we establish rigorous material standards, streamline supply logistics, and ensure that our growth strategy directly supports national development while minimizing environmental impact.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

The most impactful leadership decision has been prioritizing transparency, rigorous quality assurance, and proactive stakeholder engagement across complex, high-stakes infrastructure supply chains—such as major expressway projects. This approach taught me that true leadership in a competitive industry is not merely about meeting transactional targets, but about building deep-rooted trust with engineering partners, contractors, and internal teams. It reinforced the insight that enduring success relies on empowering cross-functional collaboration and standing firm on uncompromising standards of quality and governance.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

Empowering individuals requires creating an environment of open communication, trust, and accountability where team members are encouraged to take ownership of operational milestones. I believe in delegating meaningful responsibilities—such as managing critical technical trials, client relations, and project logistics—while providing the necessary mentorship and structural support. Recognizing individual initiative and fostering a collaborative culture ensures that team members feel valued, gain confidence, and naturally evolve into capable decision-makers

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Navigating disruption demands agility, meticulous planning, and a proactive approach to risk management. When faced with macroeconomic or supply chain uncertainties, we focus on strengthening our operational flexibility, optimizing inventory and logistics schedules, and maintaining transparent communication with all stakeholders. Innovation thrives in such environments when teams are encouraged to look beyond immediate bottlenecks, embrace digital tools for better execution, and collaboratively engineer creative solutions to operational challenges.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

Ambitious targets and sustainable governance are mutually reinforcing rather than competing priorities. In every commercial initiative—from large-scale tender qualifications to complex material supply agreements—we embed ethical compliance and environmental responsibility directly into our operational framework. Winning recognition in environmental governance underscores our belief that long-term business viability depends on transparent decision-making, responsible resource management, and an unwavering commitment to corporate integrity.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

My aspiration is to help redefine standard practices within the construction materials sector by proving that large-scale industrial growth and environmental governance can go hand in hand. Within my organization and the wider profession, I hope to leave a legacy of integrity, resilience, and operational excellence—inspiring future professionals to champion sustainable practices, build strong collaborative relationships, and contribute meaningfully to national infrastructure development.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

For emerging leaders, my primary guidance is to anchor your career in integrity, continuous learning, and a genuine commitment to ethical governance. Business landscapes will constantly evolve, but the ability to build authentic relationships, earn trust through consistent execution, and maintain a clear vision during times of uncertainty will always be your greatest assets. Listen to your teams, take responsibility for challenges, and always strive to leave a positive, sustainable footprint in everything you do.



Ms. Nahaziya Irshad

Nahaziya Irshad is Head of Marketing and Employer Branding at People's Insurance PLC, where she leads corporate brand positioning, employer branding and women-focused business initiatives. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Management, majoring in Marketing, from Charles Sturt University, Australia, and a Diploma in Law from the University of London, Malaysia. With over 12 years of experience across Australia and Sri Lanka, she has worked in marketing, branding, business development, communications, sales, hospitality, logistics and fleet management. Her leadership integrates women's empowerment with employee engagement, customer strategy, financial literacy and community impact.

Q1 How do you transform your leadership vision into strategic direction, while positioning your organization for sustainable growth and greater resilience in an increasingly competitive business environment?

I translate leadership vision into strategy by first identifying where the brand can create meaningful value for both the organisation and its stakeholders. For me, brand building is not limited to communications; it should influence employee experience, customer engagement, product relevance and social impact.

A key focus has been integrating women's empowerment into our broader employer-branding and business strategy. This meant looking at women not only as employees, but also as leaders, customers, entrepreneurs, professionals and community representatives.

By bringing together Corporate Communications, Marketing, Human Resources, Product Development and the business units, we have been able to transform individual activities into a more integrated platform. Sustainable growth becomes possible when a brand genuinely understands evolving stakeholder needs and responds with tailored solutions that deliver meaningful value.

Q2 Which leadership decision has had the greatest impact on your professional journey, and what valuable insights did that experience offer you as a leader?

One of the most impactful leadership decisions in my professional journey was to broaden our approach to women's empowerment, moving beyond employee engagement and annual celebrations to establish a more meaningful and sustained focus on financial literacy, insurance awareness, risk mitigation and community development.

I recognised that empowering women requires more than creating opportunities for participation. It also means equipping them with the knowledge, confidence and resources to make informed decisions about their financial security and future. This understanding shaped our efforts to integrate financial literacy and insurance awareness into our women-focused initiatives. By helping women understand financial protection, identify potential risks and appreciate the importance of insurance in managing unforeseen circumstances, we seek to encourage more informed decisions that protect their families, livelihoods and businesses. For me, financial literacy is not simply about understanding financial products; it is about building the confidence and capability to make uniformed decisions that support long-term financial resilience.

Translating this vision into practical initiatives required collaboration across diverse stakeholders, including internal teams, industry partners and community-level organisations. Each stakeholder brought different perspectives, priorities and expertise. Bringing these contributions together required clear communication, relationship-building and a shared understanding of the outcomes we wanted to achieve. It also reinforced the importance of understanding the actual needs of the communities we serve, rather than designing initiatives based contextual consideration. Alongside our external community initiatives, we continued to develop women-focused employee engagement activities covering professional development, wellbeing and personal growth, creating a broader approach to empowerment both within and beyond the organisation.

This experience taught me that effective leadership is not only about setting a direction; it is about connecting people around a purpose and turning that purpose into action. I learned that sustainable initiatives depend on stakeholder trust, collaboration and the ability to demonstrate practical value. Most importantly, I came to understand that leadership impact should not be measured only by the activities conducted, but by the knowledge shared, the confidence built and the positive changes those initiatives can contribute to over time. This continues to shape my leadership approach, with a stronger emphasis on purposeful collaboration, financial resilience and creating value that extends beyond the organisation.

Q3 What approaches do you use to build a workplace where individuals feel empowered, take ownership of their responsibilities, and are encouraged to develop into the leaders of tomorrow?

I believe building an empowered workplace begins with creating a culture of trust, inclusion and accountability, where individuals are encouraged to contribute ideas, take initiative and recognise their potential to grow. This requires leaders to go beyond providing opportunities and to actively create an environment where people can develop their capabilities, gain exposure to new challenges, and take ownership of their professional growth. Equally important is ensuring that employees have access to role models and visible examples of leadership that demonstrate what they can aspire to achieve.

Our initiatives have therefore combined training, wellbeing programmes, leadership visibility, employee engagement and opportunities for international exposure. More than 100 female employees participated in development programmes annually, while women also gained overseas training opportunities. We have highlighted our female leaders through corporate publications, interviews and communication platforms so that female employees can see real examples of leadership within our own organisation.

When individuals are given opportunities to learn, contribute and be recognised, they become more confident in taking ownership. Leadership development begins when people can see a pathway forward and feel encouraged and supported to progress along it.

Q4 When faced with rapid change, uncertainty, local and global setbacks how do you guide your organization through disruption while fostering an environment where innovation can thrive?

Rapid change requires leaders to remain engaged with stakeholders and responsive to their concerns while ensuring strong governance, strategic alignment and effective decision-making. Market conditions, employee expectations and community needs can change quickly, so I strongly believe in listening, collaboration and adapting our approach in response to evolving needs and emerging challenges.

Our women-focused insurance propositions were developed around real protection needs, while recognising the importance of financial literacy and risk management in helping women understand, assess and manage risks affecting their families and businesses. Our community initiatives have also focused on raising awareness of health, economic and disaster-related risks and helping people better understand the importance of proactive planning and financial protection.

Following natural disasters, for example, our approach has highlighted the importance of educating communities, particularly those in flood-prone areas, about risk awareness, preparedness and the role of insurance in managing potential financial losses. Financial literacy is an important part of this effort, as it helps individuals and families understand their exposure to risks, make informed financial decisions and recognise the value of having appropriate protection before a crisis occurs.

Innovation is most effective when it is guided by a clear understanding of people's needs, encourages new ways of thinking and translates ideas into practical initiatives that strengthen resilience and create lasting value for both the organisation and the communities it serves.

Q5 How do you pursue ambitious organizational objectives while ensuring that ethical conduct, strong governance, and sustainable practices remain at the heart of your decision-making?

I believe the strongest brands are built on credibility. If an organisation communicates values such as inclusion, empowerment or sustainability, those values must be visible through its actions.

That is why our women-focused agenda has extended across employee development, financial literacy, customer solutions, health awareness, community engagement and support for women entrepreneurs. These initiatives also align with broader environmental, social and governance (ESG) objectives, particularly those relating to inclusion, employee wellbeing, equal opportunity and community development.

From a marketing perspective, responsible decision-making and good governance mean ensuring that brand promises are supported by meaningful programmes rather than symbolic messaging. Commercial objectives and social responsibility can reinforce each other when the organisation creates products, services, experiences and initiatives that genuinely address stakeholder needs while remaining consistent with its values.

Q6 Beyond the achievements and results associated with your role, what lasting impact would you like to have on your organization, your profession, or the wider community?

The impact I would most like to leave is an environment where women's empowerment is no longer viewed as a separate initiative, but as an integral part of how the organisation develops its people, serves its customers and pursues sustainable growth.

Internally, I would like more women to see leadership as an achievable path and feel confident taking on challenging opportunities. I hope to contribute to a workplace where women are encouraged to develop their capabilities, share their perspectives and progress into leadership positions. Creating visibility for female role models and supporting professional development are important steps towards building that culture.

Externally, I would like more women to recognise insurance as a tool for financial protection, risk management, resilience and business continuity rather than simply another product. Through financial literacy and insurance awareness, I hope to help women make informed decisions about protecting their families, livelihoods and businesses. This is particularly important for women entrepreneurs and women-led families, who may face challenges such as property damage caused by unforeseen events, business interruptions due to natural disasters, vehicle accidents, theft and other unexpected losses that can disrupt their livelihoods, affect their financial stability and make recovery difficult.

I also believe organisations have an important role to play in strengthening communities through meaningful engagement, awareness and support for underserved communities and individuals facing social and economic difficulties. By connecting business objectives with community needs, organisations can create positive outcomes that extend beyond immediate commercial results.

Ultimately, I would like my work to contribute to a culture where women are better equipped to lead, build businesses, protect their families and participate confidently in economic and social development. If our initiatives can help develop more confident female professionals, financially informed customers, better-protected women entrepreneurs and more resilient communities, while strengthening customer trust and creating opportunities for sustainable business growth, I would consider that a meaningful and lasting impact.

Q7 What key lessons or words of guidance would you offer to emerging business leaders who will be responsible for shaping the future of organizations in the years ahead?

My advice to emerging leaders is to look beyond the traditional boundaries of their roles and recognise the broader contribution they can make to an organisation. For instance, marketing should go beyond campaigns, as it can influence organisational culture, customer experience, social impact and business strategy.

Be resourceful and learn to navigate challenges with creativity, sound judgement and a willingness to explore alternative approaches. When faced with limited resources, competing priorities or established ways of working, focus on identifying opportunities for improvement and finding effective solutions. Collaborate across functions, consider feedback from stakeholders and target audiences, and translate insights into meaningful action by identifying market gaps and responding to unmet customer needs.

Most importantly, remain authentic. People quickly recognise the difference between symbolic communication and genuine action. Future leaders will need to build organisations that are commercially successful while also acting responsibly, creating inclusive opportunities and contributing positively to society. I believe the greatest leadership impact comes from aligning business performance with purpose and ensuring that the value an organisation creates extends to its employees, customers and the wider community.

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CPM SRI LANKA MARKS SUCCESS WITH SECOND EDITION OF MLE AWARDS 2026

Honouring Leadership Excellence

The second edition of the **Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2026 (MLE Awards)**, organised by the Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka), celebrated outstanding leadership achievements across the country's public and private sectors.

The prestigious Awards Night, held at Cinnamon Grand Colombo, brought together over 600 corporate executives and distinguished guests from diverse industries. Prof. Yuosre Badir, Professor of Technology and Innovation Management and Dean of the School of Management at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand, graced the occasion as Chief Guest, adding international distinction through his inspiring address and insights on leadership and innovation.

The MLE Awards 2026 recognised **193 corporate leaders**, comprising 123 Gold, 57 Silver and 12 Bronze Award winners, alongside one recipient of the prestigious Lifetime Eminent Leadership Award. Their leadership journeys and perspectives are featured in exclusive interviews in a special edition of the Chartered Manager journal, providing valuable insights for aspiring and established professionals.

The awards recognised achievements across diverse sectors, including banking, finance, insurance, healthcare, manufacturing, technology, hospitality, agriculture, plantations and public administration, reflecting the breadth of leadership talent contributing to Sri Lanka's economic and social development.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the **Lifetime Eminent Leadership Award to Eng. Nahil Wijesuriya, FIMarEST**, in recognition of his exceptional leadership, vision and contributions of national significance. Overall Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards were also presented to the highest-scoring applicants from C-Suite Leadership Category, Executive Decision Maker Leadership Category and Emerging Managerial Leadership Category following a rigorous evaluation process.

Established as more than an awards ceremony, the MLE Awards provide a national platform to benchmark leadership excellence against seven leadership competencies introduced by CPM Sri Lanka. The judging process, chaired by **Dr. Samantha Rathnayake** and supported by a distinguished panel of CPM Fellows, ensured credibility, transparency and inclusivity throughout the evaluation.

The successful delivery of the event reflected the collective commitment of the CPM Sri Lanka Governing Council and Secretariat team, whose strategic direction and dedicated efforts ensured the highest standards of professionalism and execution.

Building on the foundation established by the inaugural MLE Awards 2025, the second edition further strengthened the initiative's position as a platform for recognising exemplary leadership, promoting ethical management and inspiring the next generation of corporate leaders. Through this initiative, CPM Sri Lanka continues to advance professional management standards and contribute to shaping the country's leadership landscape.







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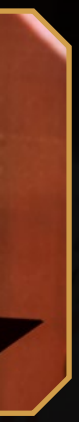


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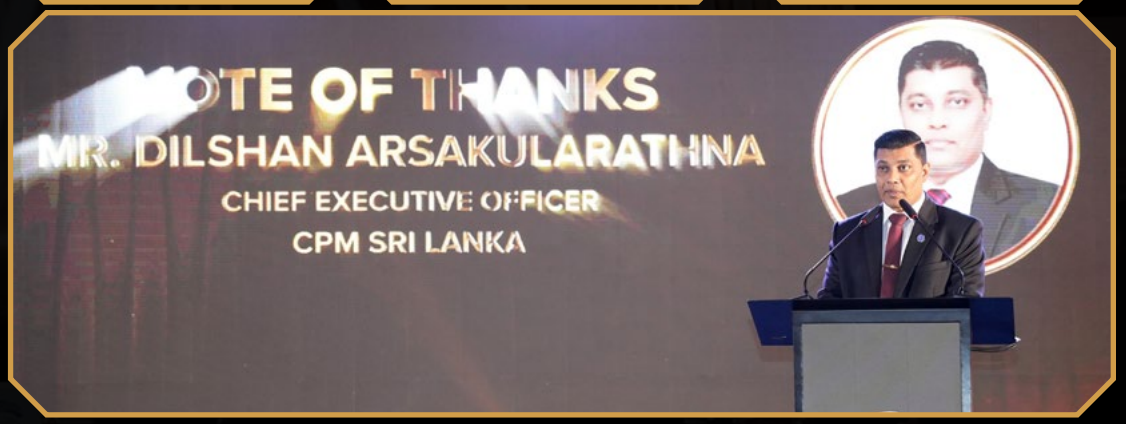
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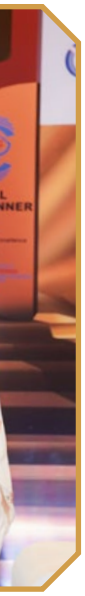




















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