

CPM MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025

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Awards 2025

VOLUME 01 | NOV 2025 | www.cpmsrilanka.org

ISSN 978-955-3729-05-7



9 789553 729057 >

ISSN 3051-472X



9 773051 051472 >



THE INSTITUTE OF
CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS
OF SRI LANKA

CHARTERED MANAGER

SPECIAL EDITION





CPM SRI LANKA MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025

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.

TECHNICAL EVALUATION REPORT

The CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 is a fresh initiative to recognizing and honouring exceptional leadership across a diverse range of industries. It is a testament to the exemplifying management and leadership skills of c-suite individuals. The awards ceremony was designed to celebrate individuals that demonstrate outstanding leadership, innovation, and ethical governance. By upholding the highest standards of integrity and professionalism, the CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 highlights those who not only achieve organisational success but also contribute to the broader growth and transformation of the economy and society.

The CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards were established drawing on insights from leading global research domains, including studies by the Boston Consulting Group. Extensive literature related to “**strategy, growth, and mindset**”, spanning the years 2000 to 2020 was reviewed to formulate the most robust and credible criteria for the Awards. The framework is grounded on key dimensions of leadership excellence, with particular emphasis on “**survive, thrive, and inspire**”.

Based on the reviewed literature, the CPM Management Leadership Excellence Awards framework identified seven actionable competencies as the foundation for recognising outstanding leadership. These competencies were developed with the support of five distinctive characteristics that guided the strategic formulation of the Awards' core criteria as exhibited in the

leadership framework. The seven competencies comprise of demonstrating visionary leadership, driving innovation and creativity, showcasing community service orientation and corporate social responsibility, engaging in brand building and marketing or business excellence, enabling diversification and growth strategies, exhibiting exemplary management skills, and inspiring strategic leadership with trend capitalization. These competencies, grounded in research and practice, serve as the cornerstone for evaluating individuals who exemplify management and leadership excellence.



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

Executive Director Level	The Executive Director Level recognised the highest tier of management, including positions such as Executive Chairman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Managing Director (MD), General Manager (GM), and Secretaries of Government Ministries, Departments, and Authorities
Corporate Management Level	The Corporate Management Level honoured the second tier of management, encompassing a wide range of C-suite and senior leadership 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), and Chief Operating Officer (COO). It also included senior positions such as Additional/Assistant General Manager (AGM), Deputy General Manager (DGM), Assistant/Additional Secretaries in Government Ministries, as well as Directors and Heads of Departments.

Together, these categories ensured comprehensive recognition of leadership across both the topmost and second tiers of organisational management.

Moving on, the judging process was conducted with utmost rigour and fairness to ensure the highest standards were maintained in recognising individuals and organisations that exemplify visionary leadership. Applicants were required to submit their entries using a structured reporting template, designed to capture core leadership values and competencies aligned with the seven key areas of excellence. The evaluation framework comprised of three components as follows.

■ **A comprehensive desk review of the reports, which accounted for 80% of the final score**

■ **Assessment of compliance with deadlines, rules, templates, and related instructions, which contributed 10%**

■ **The final judgment of the evaluation panel, which formed the remaining 10%.**

This structured approach ensured both credibility and consistency in the selection of awardees.

Furthermore, to ensure impartiality, a “**blindfold review**” process was implemented, whereby

all reports were anonymised and coded with unique numerals specific to each applicant. This prevented the judging panel from having prior knowledge of the applicants and allowed for unbiased evaluation. Each judge independently assessed the reports, with average scores calculated to maintain consistency. In addition, a special jury was convened to discuss on the selection of the Overall Gold, Silver, and Bronze winners, adding further rigour and credibility to the evaluation process. A total of 126 submissions were received, of which 112 were recognised, reflecting the thoroughness and selectivity of the process. This outcome demonstrates that the judging was carried out independently and systematically, ensuring that only deserving candidates were honoured and that no submissions bypassed the well-defined grading criteria.

Moreover, of the 112 recognised awardees, 60% represented the Executive Director Level category, reflecting strong participation from top-tier leadership. Among the seven competencies, the highest number of applications were submitted under Visionary Leadership and Exemplary Management Skills, each accounting for 18% of the total. In contrast, the lowest representation was observed in the area of Strategic Leadership and Trend Capitalisation, which received 10% of applications. This trend highlights the need to further educate on strategic foresight and trend-oriented leadership capabilities among future

corporate leaders.

On the other hand, within the Corporate Management Level category, the highest number of applications were recorded under the competencies of Innovation and Creativity and Brand Building and Marketing/Business Excellence, each accounting for 18% of the total submissions. Conversely, the competency of Visionary Leadership received the lowest representation, with 10% of the total applications. This distribution underscores the growing emphasis on innovation and market-oriented excellence at the corporate management level, while also indicating the need to strengthen visionary leadership capacities within this tier.

The overall technical foundation of the CPM Sri Lanka Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 reflects the meticulous effort undertaken to ensure a professional, transparent, and unbiased awarding process. This rigorous approach guaranteed that the awardees were rightfully recognised for their dedication and achievements. The judging methodology, marked by its sophistication and precision, reinforced both the validity and credibility of the outcomes. Beyond serving as a platform of recognition, the Awards stand as a landmark in management and leadership, bridging together literature, practice, and skills, while setting new benchmarks for future exploration and advancement in the field.

Types of Awards

- **Lifetime Eminent Leadership Award**
- **Overall Gold, Silver, and Bronze Winners**
(Executive Director Category/ Corporate Management Category)
- **Special Sector Awards**
- **Outstanding Leadership Competency Awards**
- **Sector Awards;**

Banking <i>Banking (Private Sector)</i>	
Finance & Leasing <i>Finance & Leasing (Private Sector)</i>	
Insurance <i>Insurance (Private Sector)</i>	
Healthcare <i>Hospitals & Medical Laboratories</i> <i>Pharmaceuticals</i> <i>Equipment & Accessories</i>	
Manufacturing <i>Food & Beverage</i> <i>Apparel & Garments</i> <i>Metal & Wood Furniture</i> <i>Energy Innovator</i>	
Power and Energy <i>Oil and Gas</i> <i>Renewable</i>	
Agriculture & Plantations	
Construction, Condominium & Real Estates	
IT & BPO Services	
Government, Semi-Government and Authorities	

- **Sector Awards;**
 - Transport, Logistics, Shipping and related Services
 - Educational and Professional Institutes
 - Beauty, Health & Cosmetics
 - Diversified Group of Companies
 - Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) /Charitable Institutions/Societies
 - Security Guards and Patrol Services
 - Industrial Chemistry
 - Investment Banking
 - IT and Business Related Solutions
 - Plantation Human Development
 - Project & Engineering
 - E-Commerce and Retails
 - Automobile
 - Eye Care and Services
 - Technology and Engineering Services
 - Diamonds, Gems & Jewellery
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)
 - Governance, Ethics & Risk Management
 - Sustainability & Circular Economy
 - Digital Literacy
 - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
 - Exports
 - Industry Case Analysis
 - Media & Short Videos
 - Entrepreneurship & Start-Up

CPM Sri Lanka continues to champion leadership excellence by honouring individuals who redefine standards of vision, resilience, and innovation. The Management Leadership Excellence Awards not only celebrate outstanding leaders but also inspire a new generation to embrace transformative leadership that shapes organizations and strengthens society.

CONTENTS

09	About us
10	Messages
13	Panel of Judges
14	List of Winners
16	Stories of Winners
128	Highlights of MLE Awards Night
150	Event Press Article



INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL MANAGERS OF SRI LANKA (CPM SRI LANKA)

The **Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka)**, established in 2009 by Professor Lakshman R. Watawala, is a premier professional body dedicated to advancing excellence in management and leadership. Upgraded to its current status in 2019, the Institute has grown into a dynamic community of over **3,800 professionals** across diverse industries.

Through leadership development, strategic insights, and impactful educational initiatives, CPM Sri Lanka equips future-ready leaders valued by both professionals and the business community. Each year, it introduces meaningful programs and events that promote knowledge sharing, networking, and recognition of emerging trends.

On the international stage, CPM Sri Lanka is a member of the **Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia (AMDISA)** and maintains academic partnerships with the **Malaysian Institute of Management** and the **Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIM Ahmedabad)**, reinforcing its commitment to global standards in management education.



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 2025 (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 2025. 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.



We were indeed honoured to have the presence of Prof. Dr Abdol Ali Khatibi, the Senior Vice President for Postgraduate Studies at the Management and Science University, Malaysia, as our Chief Guest at this year's awards night. His participation underscored the importance of cultivating leadership that strengthens institutions and fosters collective prosperity. Their involvement further affirmed the value of recognizing leaders who set benchmarks for excellence and inspire others to follow.

The Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 go beyond recognition; they provide a platform for dialogue, reflection, and shared learning on what it means to be a leader in times of transformation. By highlighting diverse success stories across sectors, the awards reaffirm our belief that Sri Lanka's future rests on the strength of leaders who are adaptable, ethical, and forward-thinking.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Governing Council, Organizing Committee, director, senior management, and staff of CPM Sri Lanka for their tireless commitment in making the MLE Awards 2025 a resounding success. Your dedication continues to elevate the standing of CPM Sri Lanka and contribute to building a culture of leadership excellence that will inspire generations to come.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF PANEL OF JUDGES OF THE MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025 AND TECHNICAL CHAIRMAN OF MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2025

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 2025. 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 2025, 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.

Sri Lanka faces unprecedented challenges that demand leaders who can navigate uncertainty with clarity, purpose, and adaptability. The discussions and deliberations around the awards reaffirmed that leadership rooted in ethics, accountability, and innovation will be the cornerstone of our progress as a nation.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the award winners and participants of the MLE Awards 2025. Your achievements are a source of inspiration, and your dedication to leadership excellence will encourage others to follow in your path.

I am confident that the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 will leave a lasting impact by celebrating leaders who set new benchmarks of excellence and by inspiring the next generation to lead Sri Lanka with vision, responsibility, and courage.

Dr. Samantha Rathnayake
Chairman of the Panel of Judges of the
Management Leadership Excellence Awards
2025

Technical Chairman of CPM Sri Lanka
Management Leadership Excellence Awards
2025

Governing Council Member of CPM Sri
Lanka

Senior Faculty, Postgraduate Institute of
Management, University of Sri J'Pura





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOURNAL COMMITTEE

Welcome to the Special Edition of the Chartered Manager journal dedicated to the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025. In the first edition of the Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025, 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. A special note of gratitude goes to Prof. Dr. Abdol Ali Khatibi, who graced the occasion as our Chief Guest. His presence underscored the significance of cultivating leadership that sets new standards of excellence and responsibility.

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 special edition. Your contributions enrich

this publication, making it a valuable platform for learning, reflection, and the exchange of ideas.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to the Director and dedicated staff of CPM Sri Lanka, whose tireless efforts made this edition possible. Their commitment ensured a seamless transition from concept to publication.

Together, let us continue to celebrate and cultivate leadership that inspires others and drives Sri Lanka toward a brighter and more sustainable future.

Kosala M. Dissanayake
Chairman of the Journal Committee

The Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 honoured 111 outstanding corporate leaders for their remarkable achievements across diverse sectors. Among them, 31 distinguished Gold Award winners from diverse categories and the recipients 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.

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PANEL OF JUDGES

Mr. Kiron Shenoy

Dr. P. Niranjana

Mr. M. M. M. Rizley

Mr. Lalith Bandaranaike

Prof. B. Nishantha

Dr. Piumi Perera

Mr. Anton Nallathamby





LIFETIME EMINENT LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

MS. KUSHANI ROHANADEERA

*The Secretary General
Parliament of Sri Lanka*

MR. ALI ASGHAR AKBARALLY

*Executive Director
Akbar Brothers Group of Companies*

OVERALL WINNERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CATEGORY

- OVERALL
GOLD
WINNER

**MR. SUSIL CHANDRA
WEERASEKERA**
*Group Director
Capital Maharaja Group*
- OVERALL
GOLD
WINNER

**MR. SUJITH DAMMIKA
BANDARA SAMARADIWAKARA**
*Chairman
Technomedics International (Pvt) Ltd
and JF & I Packaging (Pvt) Ltd*
- OVERALL
SILVER
WINNER

**MR. ERANGA ROHAN PEIRIS
GOONETILLEKE**
*Managing Director / C.E.O.
Hayleys Fabric PLC*
- OVERALL
BRONZE
WINNER

**MR. NILANTHA
JAYANETTI**
*C.E.O.
Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC*

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT CATEGORY

- OVERALL
GOLD
WINNER

**MR. K. SANJEEWA
BANDARANAYAKE**
*C.E.O.
People's Leasing and Finance PLC*
- OVERALL
SILVER
WINNER

**MS. JEEVANI
KARIYAWASAM**
*C.E.O.
Peoples Insurance PLC*
- OVERALL
SILVER
WINNER

**MR. KUSHAN INDIKA
SAMARATNE**
*C.E.O.
Colombo Coffee Company (Pvt) Ltd*
- OVERALL
BRONZE
WINNER

**MR. SAMPATH
WEERAKOON**
*Assistant General Manager - Human
Resources and Administration
Omega Line Ltd*

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY AWARDS

- 1

**DEMONSTRATING VISIONARY
LEADERSHIP**

MR. DASANTHA FONSEKA
*Chairman
Vision Care Group*
- 2

**DRIVING INNOVATION AND
CREATIVITY**

MR. SANDUN HAPUGODA
*Country Manager, Sri Lanka and Maldives
Mastercard*
- 3

**SHOWCASING COMMUNITY SERVICE
ORIENTATION AND/OR CORPORATE
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

MR. SUSIL CHANDRA WEERASEKERA
*Group Director
Capital Maharaja Group*
- 4

**ENGAGING IN BRAND BUILDING AND
ACHIEVING MARKETING/BUSINESS
EXCELLENCE**

**MR. SUJITH DAMMIKA BANDARA
SAMARADIWAKARA**
*Chairman
Technomedics International (Pvt) Ltd and JF & I Packaging
(Pvt) Ltd*
- 5

**ENABLING DIVERSIFICATION AND
GROWTH STRATEGY**

MR. ERANGA ROHAN PEIRIS GOONETILLEKE
*Managing Director/CEO
Hayleys Fabric PLC*
- 6

**EXHIBITING EXEMPLARY
MANAGEMENT SKILLS**

MR. NILANTHA JAYANETTI
*CEO
Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC*
- 7

**INSPIRING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP
AND TREND CAPITALIZATION**

MR. NALEEN EDIRISINGHE
*Director/CEO
Pan Asia Banking Corporation PLC*

STORIES OF
WINNERS

**LIFETIME EMINENT
LEADERSHIP**
AWARD WINNERS

Ms. Kushani Rohanadeera

Ms. Kushani Rohanadeera, Attorney-at-Law, serves as the Secretary General of Parliament, the second woman to hold the position. She holds a B.Sc. in Biological Science with second class honours from the University of Colombo and an LL.B from the Open University of Sri Lanka. She has held several positions including Assistant Secretary General, and Chief of Staff & Deputy Secretary General of Parliament. Before joining the Parliament, she has also served in the private sector starting her career at Sampath Bank. Ms. Rohanadeera has undergone extensive training on Parliamentary Procedures, Practices and Legislative Drafting in many countries including the United Kingdom, Canada and India, and has published articles on parliamentary procedures and practices



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is to make all employees convinced that their work is valuable, essential and appreciated. Primarily, this helps an institution not just to set its direction but to give meaning to daily tasks and helps every employee realize how their work supports shaping the bigger picture of the institution. Simply said, I believe that this vision teaches that inclusivity is vital.

Parliament, being an institution, which shares unique characters, has an environment with intense political pressure, power dynamics and public scrutiny. Given this uniqueness, working in Parliament is considered challenging and a highly complex experience.

Further, the organizational strategy of a Parliament is not profit gaining but strengthening democratic values, enhancing public engagement and transparency. This is a very challenging process as it needs to strike a balance between the political dynamics with the administrative needs of a complex institution.

Therefore, I always believe in acknowledging the importance of human resources and taking measures to develop it in every possible way to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment since I believe that workplaces are nothing without employees and they are the drivers of organizational strategy.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision that I have taken in my career so far is initiating a formal disciplinary inquiry for an incident on sexual harassment, which was reported in print media in August 2023. As reported in two leading newspapers in Sri Lanka, some female employees of the Department of Catering and Housekeeping Services in Parliament of Sri Lanka were mentioned to be the victims of this sexual harassment incident. Since this incident relates to workplace harassment, as the Secretary General of Parliament, I took immediate measures to commence a preliminary investigation based on the allegations reported in those newspaper articles.

Accordingly, a three-member committee consisting of female high-ranking officials in Parliament of Sri Lanka was appointed to receive the complaints as I observed that the female workers who have been identified as victims of this sexual harassment incident were very reluctant to lodge their complaints.

Following the preliminary investigation, I moved forward to initiating legal proceedings before the courts under the general criminal law of the land, and I must mention that this happened for the first time in the history of Parliament of Sri Lanka. This decision was made to offer a path to safety,

justice, and accountability for the victims and the workplace. I know that such a process can have severe implications, including negative impacts on the alleged harasser's employment and the overall work environment. However, initiating action is crucial for fostering a safe and respectful workplace, ending inappropriate conduct, and ensuring that victims feel supported and have their complaints taken seriously.

Based on my experience, every leader must have the courage to execute the best option possible based on correct decisions no matter how challenging the process and how unpopular the decision is. This is the best lesson a leader could learn from this career decision that I made.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I have taken several initiatives to provide the staff of Parliament with extensive training to improve their work competencies. We provide our staff with foreign study tours, which focus on legislative procedures and parliamentary affairs. These study tours help our staff connect themselves and share their experiences with officers of other Parliaments from across the world.

Further, knowledge sharing sessions are conducted periodically to ensure that the institutional knowledge - a unique component in Parliament culture - is transferred to every officer, especially with a view to developing a set of competent second liners. Moreover, continued communication is encouraged at all levels to ensure that all employees are comfortable sharing ideas and opinions, which is essential to maintaining accountability.

Similarly, assigning challenging tasks to the employees will always be a learning experience. This will help them dive deep into the subject concerned, learn and actively engage themselves in the assigned task. Therefore, it is up to the leader to identify those who make the most of such challenging but great opportunities as those with potential to become promising leaders in the future.

To put it simply, my policy is to groom the second liners to be future leaders and give them as many opportunities to grow.





4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

The secret behind navigating disruption and inspiring innovation within an institution is the leader's ability to engage in lifelong learning. To simply put, a leader needs to have an unquenchable thirst for learning new knowledge.

In the 21st century, knowledge is considered the new currency. We live in a world where science and technology reign the world influencing the human progress, modernization and innovation. The moment we fail to move forward with the vastly changing world, we stagnate. It is to stop stagnation that a leader needs to be open to new knowledge. A visionary leader always encourages the staff to improve knowledge, competencies and skills. This will prepare us to endure future challenges with confidence.

Keeping this in mind, I always encourage my staff to continue learning and be conscious of what is happening in the world right now. This is not just for career advancement but for self- improvement. Constant learning will also create a group of educated employees for the future.

In addition, believing in the young employees from Gen Z and alpha is also crucial to the future of an organization. Young employees must be given responsibility in order to gain hands-on experience from the start. Hence, this will help them realize their potentials and weaknesses as well. A leader must always identify the priorities of youth employees. What they need is enthusiasm, positive feedback, encouragement and above all proper training. A leader who takes initiatives to retain the youth employees and take the best out of them, has undoubtedly set his /her institutions future-ready.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Targets or goals can be achieved; however, the question lies at how they are achieved. Whenever, a leader prioritizes results over ethical conduct, the work environment becomes toxic, it breaks the trust, and also creates legal issues, financial instability within the institution. Above all, this would result in employee turnover. This could ultimately disrupt the long term sustainability, reputation and success of an institution.

This is why a leader must demonstrate integrity, honesty, and empathy when making decisions. Clear codes of conduct, and consistent reinforcement to embed ethical standards throughout the institution are essential tools to uphold ethical standards. Create an environment where integrity, fairness, and compassion are valued and rewarded, building trust among employees and always appreciate when employees work responsibly, show accountability, and show respect to each other. These may seem very trivial, simple even and often go unnoticed, but they form the foundation for sustainability, accountability and transparency.

It is with pleasure I mention here that I initiated the drafting of the Code of

Conduct for Members of Parliament back in 2018 when I served as the Assistant Secretary General. The primary objective of this was to establish the standards and principles relating to conduct expected of every Member of Parliament, and specify the rules of conduct which strengthen the standards and principles, which every Member shall adhere to. This has helped a lot in ensuring public confidence in the standards expected by the Members and in the commitment of the House to uphold such rules. Further, I contributed in making the content of the Standing Orders of Parliament gender neutral to avoid depicting certain genders in fixed roles.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

As I previously shared with you the career decision, which I consider one of rational decisions I made so far, I honestly believe that I have mainly contributed to creating a safe work environment both for male and female staff of Parliament. I acknowledge that initiating investigations and inquiries are tiring, tedious and often challenging. However, fostering an atmosphere where employees feel secure enough to voice their concerns and share mistakes without fear of punishment is far more important to establish a productive work culture. In this sense, I believe that I have, and I will always strive hard to establish a work culture of trust and transparency by encouraging open dialogue, actively listening to feedback, and keeping employees informed about goals and organizational changes.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message for future leaders is to be strong and improve adaptability as we live in a constantly evolving world. Those who fail to change and adapt to new situations would succumb to despair and ultimately give up. True leaders never give up but build courage and transfer that courage to his/her staff as well. Therefore, the ability to be adaptable to changing environments is vital for a leader.

I also want to spread the idea that leadership is not for popularity or limelight, but for true responsibility. A true leader understands the weight of responsibility that comes with their position, rather than seeking power or glory. Once you take responsibility, you will stay in the hearts of people as a people's leader and true glory will forever follow you as a blessing.

Moreover, life-long learning is most importantly the secret to staying connected with the changing world and helping make decisions that are relevant to the current world. This is also crucial for senior leaders as it helps them understand the thinking pattern and emotions of the present generation. Not only as just leaders, life-long learning is a core-competent and a skill that everybody should develop to live a meaningful life.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY AWARD WINNERS



Mr. Naleen Edirisinghe

I am a professional banker with over 35 years of experience in Retail and SME banking, covering diverse areas such as credit, recoveries, and branch operations. At present, I serve as the Chief Executive Officer of Pan Asia Bank, where I currently oversee Credit, Deposits, Operations and Administration, Marketing, and IT Security. My career has been defined by a strong focus on resilience and growth, and I remain committed to driving the Bank forward while creating long-term value for all stakeholders.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

At Pan Asia Bank, my vision is rooted in creating a forward-looking institution that balances innovation with trust. I align my leadership with organizational strategy by focusing on three pillars: sustainable growth, digital transformation, and customer engagement. Every strategic decision is measured against our ability to deliver long-term value to stakeholders, adapt to market dynamics, and remain resilient in the face of challenges.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The defining decision in my career was pushing our digital-first agenda at a time when many were cautious. This meant committing resources to Customer onboarding, digital banking, loan originating system, CRM's, paperless processes and new products, even before customers or our own staff were demanding them at scale. It was a risk, but when the industry and the country as a whole faced disruptions, including the pandemic, that decision proved to be crucial in keeping us connected to customers and maintaining operations seamlessly. The lesson I carry is that leadership is about seeing around corners. You won't always have perfect data, but you need conviction and the courage to act when your instincts and vision align.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe culture is shaped by consistent actions, not slogans. At Pan Asia Bank, we cultivate ownership by encouraging staff to take responsibility for outcomes and contribute ideas for improvement. Leadership development programs, transparent communication, and recognition of performance ensure accountability. More importantly, we provide platforms for young professionals to take on challenging projects so they develop the skills and confidence to become future leaders.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is now the norm, whether it is technological, economic, or environmental. Leaders need to prepare their organizations not by predicting every disruption but by building adaptability into their DNA.

For me, this means encouraging forward-thinking across all levels, from senior management to frontline staff. When people are forward-thinking, they see opportunities where others see problems.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I have always believed that both ambition and ethics are go hand in hand. At Pan Asia Bank, we set ambitious growth targets, but we also achieve them within a framework of strong governance, compliance, and sustainability. For example, when we launched new lending products, we also build in the strict risk assessments and responsible banking principles necessary to protect both the bank and the customer. In my view, a good leader is not only focused on targets at any cost, but about building an institution that can sustainably stand the test of time because it is trusted for how it achieves success.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

When I think about legacy, I do not just want to be remembered for the profit margins or market share achieved. I want my contribution to be measured by how Pan Asia Bank has become a stronger, more inclusive, and more responsible institution under my leadership. I also hope to contribute to raising the standards of the industry as a whole by proving that Sri Lankan banks can be both innovative and ethical, both ambitious and community-driven. Ultimately, I want to leave behind an organization that continues to thrive long after me, because it is built on values as much as performance.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation is do not chase titles, but always chase purpose. Leadership is not about being at the top of the hierarchy, but about being responsible for others growth especially for the direction of an organization. You will face pressure to deliver fast results, to take shortcuts, and to focus only on numbers. But the leaders who will stand out are those who maintain the values at the core level. Be open to change, embrace new technology, and surround yourself with people who challenge you. And most importantly to remember is that leadership is not about being the smartest in the room, but about creating a room where everyone can contribute their best.

Mr. Sandun Hapugoda

Sandun Hapugoda, Country Manager for Mastercard in Sri Lanka and Maldives, has over two decades of experience in banking and payments. He is also the President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Sri Lanka. Prior to Mastercard, he held leadership roles at Hatton National Bank, Amana Bank, ICICI Bank Sri Lanka, and Sampath Bank, contributing to digital banking, payments, IT, and risk management. Recognized for driving digital financial innovation in Sri Lanka and South Asia, he has also served on committees of the Central Bank, Ministry of Technology, and other institutions, shaping the future of payments, fintech, blockchain, and open banking



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

For me, vision and strategy are not two separate things, they need to move together. A vision without a clear strategy is just a statement on paper, and a strategy without vision becomes mechanical and uninspiring. So the first step is to be very clear about where we want to go, and then translate that into actions people can connect to.

At Mastercard, our global vision is to power an inclusive digital economy. But here in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, that means something very real: giving small businesses tools to go digital, helping consumers feel confident about cashless payments, and working with governments on national priorities like tourism growth and digital literacy. That's how I make sure the bigger picture comes alive locally.

The other part is resilience. We all know the environment is competitive and constantly shifting, technology changes overnight, regulations evolve, and consumer expectations keep rising. To stay resilient, I believe in keeping the vision steady but the execution flexible. You should never compromise on the destination, but you must be willing to adapt the route depending on circumstances.

And finally, it's about people. No strategy survives unless your team feels connected to it. I spend time making sure my team understands why we do what we do, because when people believe in the purpose, they will find ways to deliver even in difficult times. That's how I try to connect my leadership vision to the organization's long-term growth.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining decision in my career was saying yes to leading Mastercard in Sri Lanka as the first Sri Lankan in that role. It was a proud moment but also a heavy responsibility, because it wasn't just about me, it was about proving that local talent could deliver on a global stage.

That decision pushed me to raise my own standards and shaped how I approach leadership today with accountability, purpose, and the awareness that every choice has a ripple effect. The lesson is simple: the opportunities that define you are often the ones that scare you. Don't wait until you feel "ready." Back yourself, take the leap, and surround yourself with the right people. Growth never happens in the comfort zone.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

For me, culture starts with trust. If people feel trusted, they automatically feel empowered. I encourage my team to take ownership, make decisions, and even make mistakes, because that's where real learning happens. When people know they won't be penalized for trying something new, they push boundaries and grow.

Accountability, on the other hand, has to begin with the leader. If I expect my team to own outcomes, then I need to model that myself. When something doesn't go as planned, I openly take responsibility. That sets the tone, accountability isn't about blame, it's about ownership.

As for nurturing future leaders, I believe in giving people exposure. Sometimes it's a cross-functional project, sometimes it's letting them lead a client meeting or represent us at a forum. These experiences stretch people beyond their comfort zones. I've seen team members discover strengths they never knew they had simply because they were given that chance.

At the end of the day, leadership is not about titles. It's about creating an environment where people feel they can grow, contribute, and influence outcomes. If you build that culture, leaders emerge naturally.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I believe disruption isn't something to fear, it's a signal that the world is changing and we need to change with it. Every disruption, whether it's new technology, regulation, or consumer behavior, comes with an opportunity hidden inside. The question is whether leaders are willing to see it that way.

In payments, we've seen huge shifts with AI, blockchain, and digital identity. Instead of resisting, we've leaned into these changes, experimenting, learning, and scaling what works. The way I see it, you can't future-proof an organization by building walls, you do it by staying open, curious, and adaptable.

Inspiring innovation is really about creating an environment where people feel encouraged to try new things. Not every idea will succeed, and that's okay. What matters is showing your team that new thinking is valued and that taking calculated risks is part of the culture. When people feel safe to innovate, that's when breakthrough ideas come.





For me, being future-ready is not about predicting the next big disruption, it's about building teams and systems that can respond quickly, learn fast, and turn challenges into opportunities. That's why at Mastercard, our values: Create Value, Grow Together, and Move Fast guide how we navigate disruption. They remind us that innovation is not just about speed, but also about creating meaningful impact and ensuring no one is left behind.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I don't see this as a balancing act, it's the foundation. Ambitious goals only matter if they're achieved responsibly. Growth without ethics or governance may look good for a while, but it won't last.

At Mastercard, "doing well by doing good" is part of our DNA. Whether it's digitizing SMEs, expanding payment acceptance, or sharing insights with governments to strengthen tourism, everything we do is backed by strong governance and accountability. Trust is the currency that sustains growth.

For me, sustainability also means Nation Building, contributing to priorities like digital literacy, financial inclusion, and transparent systems that strengthen economies for the long term. Ambition is important, but the true test of leadership is delivering results that create lasting value for society.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

If I had to sum it up in one line, I'd like my contribution to be about unlocking potential. Business results are important, but what truly matters is the impact you leave behind on people, industries, and communities.

For my team, that means creating opportunities for Sri Lankan and Maldivian professionals to shine on regional and global stages. I want them to look back and say this was a place where they grew, where their talent was recognized, and where they were trusted to lead.

For the industry, I want to be remembered for helping shape a stronger, more inclusive digital ecosystem, one where SMEs can grow, consumers feel secure, and governments can leverage technology to build resilience.

And for the community, I hope the work we've done contributes to something bigger than ourselves: Nation Building. If we can leave behind systems, talent, and confidence that outlast us, then I believe we've done our job as leaders.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Lead with purpose, not ego. Titles fade, but the impact you create will always remain.

Be bold enough to take risks, growth never happens in the comfort zone. Stay humble enough to keep learning, the day you stop learning is the day you stop leading. And never forget that leadership is a team sport. Take care of your people, and they'll take care of the mission.

The world you're stepping into will be faster, more complex, and full of disruption. Don't fear it, embrace it. This is your chance to redefine leadership as digital-first, inclusive, and globally relevant.

My message is simple: don't just walk the paths others have left. Build new ones. And when you do, make sure you take others with you. That's how real leadership leaves a mark.

Mr. Dasantha R. Fonseka

Mr. Dasantha R. Fonseka, Chairman of the Vision Care Group, is a pioneering entrepreneur and visionary leader with over three decades of excellence in eye care and diversified industries, including healthcare, hospitality, and real estate. Beginning his career as an ophthalmic technologist, he established Vision Care Optical Services Pvt Ltd in 1992, Sri Lanka's leading optical chain. Today, as Chairman of the Group, he oversees a portfolio including Vision Care Optical Services Pvt Ltd, Global Vision Lanka Pvt Ltd, Essilor Lanka Pvt Ltd, Mount Lotus Hospitals Pvt Ltd, Philo Biotics Pvt Ltd, Vision Care Academy Pvt Ltd, VC Villas and Resorts Pvt Ltd, Dental One Pvt Ltd, and Vision Care Pharmaceuticals Pvt Ltd. He has attended over 100 global optometry conferences and holds memberships in esteemed organizations, including CCOO, SLOA, AOA (USA), IACLE (Australia), and the College of Optometrists (UK), and is celebrated for innovation, ethics, and community impact. Renowned for mentoring hundreds of professionals and honored with prestigious awards such as the National Gold and Silver Awards, Mr. Fonseka is celebrated for his unwavering commitment to innovation, ethics, and community impact across multiple sectors.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is rooted in three principles: innovation, inclusivity, and integrity. I ensure alignment with organizational strategy by consistently translating these values into actionable goals. For example, investing in cutting-edge eye care technology and diversifying into health care and hospitality are not just business decisions but strategic steps to future-proof the group. I also encourage collaborative decision-making, where the leadership team translates vision into operational excellence. This ensures long-term resilience, as we remain adaptable, customer-focused, and ethically grounded in a competitive environment. Regular stakeholder engagement ensures strategies reflect customer and employee needs, while diversified portfolios across industries like health and real estate enhance resilience, ensuring sustained growth in competitive landscapes.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career was purchasing the Ward Place property in Colombo in 1996. It was a bold step—I took a large loan to acquire the building, house, and land all at once, despite having only a small amount of capital. Many considered it a risk too great, but I saw the opportunity to expand my modest practice into something far bigger. That decision laid the foundation for Vision Care's transformation into a nationally recognized brand.

The lesson for others is that leadership often requires courage to take calculated risks, especially when backed by vision and conviction. With persistence and adaptability, even daunting challenges can become turning points that shape long-term success. With persistence and adaptability, even daunting challenges can become turning points that shape long-term success. That is how I built a trusted brand together with my team that serves thousands daily.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe culture is shaped by example. For me, creating and sustaining such a culture starts with clarity and trust. I believe people feel empowered when they clearly understand the organization's vision and their role in achieving it. I make sure communication is open and transparent so everyone feels their voice matters. At the same time, I

encourage accountability by setting clear expectations and giving teams the autonomy to make decisions. When people own their work, they naturally take responsibility for outcomes.

Further, I see leadership as something to be grown, not assigned. My journey in mentorship began at the National Eye Hospital, where I served as an optometry tutor and trained over 100 ophthalmic professionals from across Sri Lanka. Later, at Vision Care, I personally trained more than 150 ophthalmic professionals, many of whom came from rural areas seeking stability and opportunity. To further this commitment, I established the Vision Care Academy, which now produces 70–100 optometrists and dispensing opticians each year, supported by a structured management system to ensure quality and continuity.

Training and mentorship remain at the heart of our culture. Through Vision Care Academy, we invest in continuous professional development, ensuring that future leaders are equipped with not only technical expertise but also the values of empathy, integrity, and service. Over time, this approach creates not just strong teams, but also a steady pipeline of capable leaders who can take the organization forward.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I see disruption not as a threat, but as an opportunity for growth. Leaders need to create an environment where curiosity and experimentation are encouraged. At Vision Care, we incorporated digital platforms and tele-optometry early, anticipating shifts in healthcare.

To inspire innovation, I focus on trusting ideas, rewarding creative thinking, and demonstrating openness to change. We also invest in technology and human capital, ensuring our teams are future-ready. As an example, our adoption of state-of-the-art eye care equipment and expansion into dental, hospital and hospitality ventures stemmed directly from empowering teams to experiment and explore new opportunities.

Another important aspect is exposure. We send our people to national and international conferences and congresses in optometry and other related sectors of our group. This helps them improve their knowledge, gain new perspectives, build connections, and strengthen their leadership qualities.

So, for me, the best way to navigate disruption is by building a culture of collaboration, creativity, and adaptability because that's what keeps an organization truly future-ready.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ambition without responsibility is meaningless. I firmly believe that growth must be anchored in ethics, transparent governance, and sustainable practices. At Vision Care Group, whether in optical services, hospitals, or hospitality, we uphold strict quality controls, ethical sourcing, and compliance with regulatory frameworks. Sustainability extends beyond operations to people we prioritize employee well-being and community outreach programs that improve access to healthcare.

Balancing ambition with ethics is not a trade-off; it is the foundation for meaningful, enduring success. We make sure every decision is guided by integrity, allowing us to pursue ambitious goals like expanding access to healthcare while staying transparent and following strong governance standards. Sustainability is further reinforced through eco-friendly practices across our sectors, and ethical leadership ensures that growth aligns with social impact, exemplified by restoring vision for thousands. Regular audits and stakeholder engagement reinforce accountability, enabling us to pursue bold objectives without compromising our core values.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond financial achievements, I hope my legacy will be one of empowerment, education, and accessibility. I want to be remembered as someone who expanded access to world-class eye care in Sri Lanka while nurturing generations of professionals who continue to advance the field. Through initiatives like mentoring over 300 optometrists and establishing the Vision Care Academy, I've built a strong foundation of skilled professionals.

Expanding Vision Care Group into hospitals and dental care, along with collaborating with organizations like NAITA, the Ceylon Council of Optometry and Orthoptics (CCOO), and the Sri Lanka Optometric Association (SLOA), allows me to strengthen the healthcare ecosystem and improve community health. My goal is to leave behind an environment where organizations balance profit with purpose ensuring sustainable growth that truly serves people, elevates industry standards, and transforms lives with innovation and compassion.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

To the next generation, my advice is simple: lead with purpose, not just ambition. The world needs leaders who combine vision with compassion, and innovation with responsibility. Stay adaptable, embrace digital transformation, and never lose sight of ethics in pursuit of growth. Continuously learn from global experiences and best practices, and be willing to take calculated risks with confidence. Remember that leadership is not about titles - it is about service. If you invest in people, uphold integrity, and build organizations that contribute positively to society, success will follow naturally, and your impact will outlast your career.

OVERALL WINNERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CATEGORY

Mr. S C Weerasekera

I serve as Group Director and Chief Operating Officer at The Capital Maharaja Group, providing leadership to S-lon Lanka, PE+ (Pvt) Ltd., and Kevilton Electricals. With over 27 years of experience, I have driven transformation, diversification, and sustainable growth across many leading Sri Lankan brands.

As a Harvard-trained business leader, I have enriched my MBA from the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, with executive programs at the National University of Singapore, the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, Marcus Evans (India), and the Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Currently pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration at the University of Kelaniya, I remain deeply committed to lifelong learning, applying global insights to strengthen Sri Lankan enterprise.

I was honored with the Group's Executive of the Year Award in 2000, a once-in-a-lifetime recognition given to the best performer across all the companies in the Group. I continue to champion ethical governance, youth empowerment, and the advancement of Sri Lankan values in corporate leadership and equality.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is anchored on resilience, innovation, responsibility, and strict adherence to our value system. At S-lon, Kevilton, and PE Plus, this vision is brought to life through several strategic priorities:

- **Visionary Leadership:** Shaped by my Harvard and global executive learning, I set a long-term direction focused on digital transformation, ESG integration, and market diversification—ensuring sustainable, competitive growth.

- **Innovation and Creativity:** I drive cross-functional collaboration and strategic technology investments that enhance agility, quality, and adaptability, positioning our businesses as leaders in their categories.

- **Community Service Orientation:** CSR is embedded in our core strategy, with initiatives in education, skills development, reforestation, and social awareness that strengthen communities while reinforcing our brands.

- **Brand Leadership:** S-lon has become synonymous with PVC pipes and fittings in Sri Lanka. Beyond consumer recognition, we maintain very close relationships with key stakeholders such as plumbers, electricians, roofers, welders, and fabricators. Through these trusted partnerships, we have cultivated brand evangelists who not only consistently purchase our products but actively promote our brand while disparaging competitors, creating an organic and loyal advocacy network.

- **Diversification and Growth:** Originally, PE+ and Kevilton began by serving the same customer base as S-lon, offering an enhanced basket of products. As these businesses grew, we established them as separate Strategic Business Units (SBUs), giving them operational autonomy and unique growth strategies. Today, both have evolved into independent businesses, while our portfolio restructuring and innovation-led approach continue to drive expansion across all units.

- **Exemplary Management:** I emphasize KPI-driven clarity, ethical governance, and inclusive leadership—fostering a culture of accountability, engagement, and low attrition. Equally important, I cultivate a family culture within our teams, recognizing that the emotional bonds we build at work are just as crucial as formal reporting lines. The office is where we spend the majority of our active, awake time, yet leaders often fail to nurture affection, care, and kindness toward their teams. True growth relies on respecting and supporting every level of the organization, especially those at the base of the pyramid who ultimately enable the success of senior leaders.

- **Trend Capitalization:** By leveraging foresight tools, digital adoption, and export opportunities, I ensure that our companies remain agile and future-ready. One

of our greatest strengths lies in being proactive and alert to early-warning signals, allowing us to anticipate market shifts, identify emerging opportunities, and respond swiftly to potential disruptions before they impact the business. This approach ensures that we stay ahead of trends and maintain a competitive edge across all our markets.

This alignment allows us to stay true to our purpose while adapting swiftly to disruption.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining leadership decisions of my career was to dedicate myself to spending quality time with people at all levels, both internally and externally. From team members within the organization to key stakeholders such as plumbers, electricians, roofers, welders, and even the last person in the system, I ensured they could reach me directly without barriers. This hands-on approach-built trust, loyalty, and emotional connection across the entire value chain.

At the same time, we introduced the concept of brand evangelism, cultivating a loyal group of influencers who not only purchased our products but actively promoted our brands and disparaged competitor offerings. This human-centered approach, combined with bold strategic initiatives, enabled us to transform S-lon from a category leader in the uPVC piping system into a diversified building materials enterprise. It required portfolio restructuring, venturing into adjacent categories, and investing heavily in technology and innovation at a time when the market was uncertain.

The lesson is that true leadership requires courage, foresight, and resilience. Leaders must be willing to disrupt their own success, make bold, future-oriented decisions, and bring people along on the journey. Success comes not only from strategic vision but also from valuing relationships at every level and creating advocates who genuinely believe in your purpose.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

A culture of empowerment and accountability is built on clarity of vision, values, and trust. At S-lon, Kevilton, and PE Plus, I emphasize:

- **Empowerment:** Granting teams autonomy to take decisions, fostering collaboration, and embedding continuous learning and upskilling.

- **Accountability:** Clear KPIs, measurable outcomes, and transparent evaluations, with leaders accountable not only for results but also for values.

- **Future Leaders:** Structured mentorship, development programs, and exposure to challenging roles that build resilience and vision in emerging talent.

This is sustained by open communication, recognition, and aligning personal growth with organizational purpose. The result is a motivated workforce that takes ownership of today and is prepared to lead tomorrow.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is now a constant, and leaders must embrace it as an opportunity rather than a threat. My global executive learning, including Harvard Business School, NUS, and IIM-Ahmedabad has reinforced the importance of anticipating disruption with foresight and transforming it into a platform for innovation.

For me, the foundation is a strong value system. When values anchor decision-making, organizations can respond to disruption without compromising ethics, trust, or long-term sustainability. Our vision, combined with a proactive approach and alertness to early signals, enables us to anticipate market shifts and position ourselves ahead of change rather than reacting to it.

At the same time, navigating disruption requires empowering teams at all levels, giving them equity of voice, the freedom to innovate, take calculated risks, and learn from failure. This is reinforced by the family culture I strive to cultivate, where relationships are built on care, respect, and inclusivity. When people feel emotionally connected and valued, they are more confident in exploring bold ideas.

Innovation also comes from brand evangelism, the ability to build loyalty so strong that customers, stakeholders, and even frontline influencers become advocates who promote our brands and disparage competitor offerings. This network of trust creates resilience beyond the balance sheet.

Finally, leaders must lead by example, demonstrating clarity, vision, and ethical consistency. When employees and stakeholders see leaders embracing disruption with confidence and humanity, they too are inspired to innovate, collaborate, and ensure the organization remains future-ready, competitive, and purpose-driven.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, performance and purpose are inseparable. Ambitious goals must be pursued through disciplined strategies, clear KPIs, and accountability, but never at the expense of ethics, governance, or sustainability.

Our value system is the foundation of this balance. Governance frameworks ensure transparency, equity, and compliance across all levels, internally and externally. At the same time, ESG principles are embedded in every decision, from responsible sourcing and sustainable manufacturing to community development and CSR initiatives.

I also believe that ambitious targets are only meaningful when pursued in a culture of trust and belonging. By fostering a family culture within teams and treating every member of the organization with dignity, we create the emotional bond that inspires people to work toward shared goals with integrity. Externally,

through close engagement with stakeholders such as plumbers, electricians, roofers, and welders, we have cultivated brand evangelists who extend this sense of purpose into the marketplace.

True leadership lies in proactively anticipating change, staying alert to early signals, and aligning people, profit, and purpose. This balance not only delivers results but also builds trust, resilience, and a legacy that endures well beyond financial outcomes.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business results, I aspire to leave a legacy of empowered people, responsible leadership, and sustainable progress. For my organizations, this means not only building resilience and future-readiness but also nurturing a family culture where individuals feel valued, supported, and inspired to grow into leaders themselves.

For the industry, my hope is to set benchmarks in ethical governance, equity, and brand leadership. By fostering deep emotional bonds with stakeholders such as plumbers, electricians, roofers, and welders, I have championed the concept of brand evangelism, creating influencers who sustain loyalty, promote our values, and set higher standards for the sector.

For the community, my contribution extends to education, skills development, and environmental stewardship, guided by our proactive vision and alertness to early signals of societal need. In this way, our initiatives go beyond philanthropy, building inclusivity, opportunity, and long-term social progress.

Ultimately, I want my enduring contribution to reflect the belief that leadership is not only about shaping organizations, but also about uplifting people, industries, and communities for generations to come.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Lead with vision, integrity, and courage. The business world ahead will be more complex, digital, and uncertain, but success will come to those who adapt with agility, inspire trust, and create sustainable value while staying anchored to their value system.

Remember: leadership is not about authority, but about responsibility, towards people, stakeholders, society, and the planet. Treat every individual with dignity and equity, from the newest team member to the most senior partner. Build a family culture that nurtures emotional bonds because organizations thrive when people feel they belong.

Stay proactive and alert to early signals of change and embrace disruption as an opportunity. Encourage innovation, foster brand evangelism through authentic relationships with stakeholders, and empower your teams to grow into leaders themselves.

Above all, align ambition with purpose. If you strive to build not only stronger businesses but also a stronger society, you will leave behind a legacy worth carrying forward.



Mr.Sujith Samaradiwakara

As the Founder of Technomedics Group, he has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to translating a clear, futuristic vision into tangible success. He is credited with pioneering cutting-edge healthcare technologies and fundamentally reshaping the industry with a purpose-driven concept centered on making healthcare accessible to all. His leadership has been pivotal in building Technomedics group through strategic diversification, anticipating market shifts across sectors like Healthcare, Sustainable Packaging, Medical Aesthetics, Leisure, and Real Estate



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is deeply rooted in the philosophy of “ Saving lives through innovative technology. “ This concept has served as a guiding principle for every strategic decision I've made. I align this vision with the company's long-term growth by establishing ambitious yet achievable targets, such as our goal to build a \$300 million revenue group by 2035. This is more than a financial target; it's a strategic roadmap that unites the entire team. By focusing on **future-oriented thinking** and anticipating market shifts, I've ensured the company remains resilient and well-positioned for sustained growth in a dynamic landscape.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining decisions in my career was the strategic acquisition of a separate packaging company, which we successfully turned around to create JF&I Packaging. This was a significant step outside of our core healthcare business. The key lesson I've learned is that visionary leadership requires the courage to pursue synergistic opportunities, even if they lie in an unrelated field. By applying my core management and analytical skills, we transformed the company into a highly successful, USD-earning entity, demonstrating that a strong vision and agile leadership can drive **transformational impact** across diverse industries.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe that a company's greatest asset is its people. I have built a culture of empowerment through an open-door policy and a deep commitment to **people development**. This is not just a philosophy, but a strategic practice. A comprehensive leadership development series was created to identify and shape the next generation of leaders. By implementing an internal transfer system, we provide employees with diverse career opportunities, which has been crucial in reducing turnover and fostering loyalty. This approach creates a culture where individuals feel inspired to take ownership of their growth and contribute to a shared purpose.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I believe a keen sense of awareness, knowledge and ability to foresee & predict what's coming your way is the key. Keep your strategies aligned, navigate through disruptions and Innovations & convert them into your advantage, and this will keep the organizations future ready.

Leaders must not be reactive to disruption; they must be proactive & even create their own. I navigate disruption by constantly anticipating industry shifts and seeking opportunities to introduce **breakthrough solutions**. For instance, I have pioneered in introducing many state-of-the-art technologies to Sri Lanka, including the use of Robotics for precise surgical procedures, pneumatic medicine transfer systems and advanced Hybrid Catlab theatres. This focus on **technology integration** and **continuous improvement** has fostered a culture of innovation across the organization, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the industry and is future-ready.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ethics, governance, and sustainability are not constraints but the very foundation of long-term success. The company's ambitious growth and diversification strategies are always rooted in our core values. I ensure transparent and fair practices in all business dealings, including our ventures into new countries like Rwanda and Kenya. By prioritizing **purpose-driven leadership**, our growth is intrinsically linked to creating positive social and environmental impacts, ensuring that success is both profitable and responsible.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond the business results, I hope to leave an enduring legacy of a company known for its vision and integrity. To my organization, I want to have instilled a culture of continuous learning and entrepreneurial spirit that will guide future generations. To the healthcare industry, I hope my contribution will be the fundamental shift towards making advanced healthcare more accessible. To my community, my work as a social activist, focusing on improving the lives of others, remains the most meaningful part of my journey. I believe that true leadership is about creating a lasting positive impact that extends far beyond business metrics.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation is this: **have a clear, long-term vision and relentlessly pursue it**. Leadership is not just about managing day-to-day operations; it's about anticipating the future and steering the organization toward it. I advise them to embrace strategic diversification, not just to grow revenue, but to build resilience. Empowering people is paramount, as they are a company's greatest asset and the key to its success. Finally, I remind them to lead with purpose and integrity, as these are the pillars upon which sustainable success is built.

Mr. Nilantha Jayanetti

In an era where the financial sector is being redefined by technology, sustainability, and purpose, Mr. Nilantha Jayanetti, Chief Executive Officer of Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC (SDF), stands out as a leader who blends compassion with commercial acumen. Under his stewardship, SDF has evolved into a purpose-driven institution that not only delivers financial growth but also uplifts rural livelihoods and champions' inclusive progress. In this candid conversation, Mr. Jayanetti shares his insights on leadership, ethics, innovation, and the human spirit behind sustainable finance offering a glimpse into how values and vision can together shape a better future for Sri Lanka's development landscape.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

At Sarvodaya Development Finance (SDF), my belief is that business success and community well-being must go hand in hand. Our strategy reflects that conviction. Every initiative we take whether in agri-finance, digital transformation, or community empowerment is designed to create shared value. Long-term growth, for us, isn't just about numbers; it's about sustaining livelihoods. By embedding sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation into everything we do, we ensure resilience while staying true to our purpose.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The boldest and most defining moment came when we decided to reposition SDF as a sustainable agri-finance leader. At that time, many saw it as a risky move. But I believed it was the right direction supporting farmers and rural entrepreneurs rather than chasing quick returns. It took courage and conviction, but that decision reshaped who we are today. The lesson I've learned is that purpose-driven decisions may seem difficult at first, but when grounded in values and strategic clarity, they create lasting impact.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Culture begins with trust. At SDF, we've built an environment where every individual feels they're part of a greater mission. We give our people autonomy to innovate while holding them accountable for results. We invest deeply in training, mentorship, and leadership development so that future leaders can emerge from within. Recognition, transparency, and openness to feedback are also key. When you combine empowerment with accountability, you create a high-performing, purpose-led organization rooted in integrity.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I see disruption not as a threat, but as an opportunity to evolve. The world is changing fast, and leaders must stay agile, adaptive, and people-focused. At SDF, we embraced technology not just for efficiency, but to serve rural communities better offering digital solutions that make financial access

easier. We also encourage experimentation and partnerships beyond our traditional space. When teams are encouraged to think differently and continuously learn, the organization becomes future-ready by design.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ambition and ethics aren't opposing forces they complement each other. Our success at SDF is built on setting bold goals while maintaining unwavering integrity. Every decision is filtered through a framework of strong governance and sustainability principles. We embed ESG considerations into our strategy, ensuring that progress never comes at the cost of people or the planet. True success isn't measured only by profit it's about the positive legacy we leave behind.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

My greatest hope is to demonstrate that finance can be a true force for good. I want SDF to be living proof that a financial institution can thrive while uplifting communities and advancing sustainability. If I've inspired others especially young leaders to think beyond profits and prioritize purpose, that will be my proudest legacy. For the people of Sri Lanka, particularly in rural areas, I want SDF to remain a trusted partner for generations to come.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Lead with purpose, courage, and humility. The world you're stepping into will demand innovation, but it will also test your values. Never lose sight of the human element in leadership listen deeply, act decisively, and stay true to your principles. Real leadership isn't about short-term wins; it's about creating lasting positive impact. The future belongs to those who can balance ambition with compassion and performance with responsibility.



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Mr. K. Sanjeewa Bandaranayake

Sanjeewa Bandaranayake, the first internal CEO of People's Leasing & Finance PLC, brings 30 years of NBFI experience to his role. A Chartered Accountant, he joined PLC in 2007, and his leadership combines technical expertise with a focus on human insight. He champions financial inclusion for underserved communities and has successfully navigated major national crises. Bandaranayake is driving digital transformation and pioneering green finance pilot projects. His leadership style, based on openness and empowerment, fosters a culture of innovation and trust, positioning PLC for future sustainable growth.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision with organizational strategy by fostering a performance-driven culture and creating an environment where employees are motivated and inspired to give their best. I believe sustainable growth and resilience come from empowering employees through trust, collaboration, and shared purpose. At the same time, I prioritize technology enablement, ensuring the Company fully leverages digital innovation to enhance efficiency, elevate customer experience, and stay ahead in a competitive environment.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision was accepting the challenge of leading the Company's turn around at a time when it was falling behind the competition. It required making bold decisions, rebuilding the mindset and confidence among teams, and driving cultural and operational transformation. The key lessons others can learn from this experience are the importance of resilience and empowering people to take the ownership of change. When a leader aligns vision with action and inspires collective belief in a shared goal, even the toughest challenges can become opportunities for growth.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe in building a culture that attracts people who think differently and are willing to challenge the status quo, bringing fresh perspective and innovative ideas. I believe a thriving workplace is built on trust, collaboration, and a culture that truly values its people. I strive to ensure employees feel inspired, empowered, and motivated to bring their best selves to work each day. To sustain this culture, I place strong emphasis on leadership development and succession planning, so that future leaders grow with a clear understanding of our sustainability ethos and strategic direction.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I believe leaders can best navigate disruption by embracing innovation and leveraging technology as a catalyst for transformation. At the Company, we have fully embraced the digital revolution to enhance agility

and deliver faster, more efficient, and secure solutions to our clients. My focus is on fostering a culture that welcomes change, encourages experimentation, and continuously invests in technology and people ensuring we remain future-ready and resilient amid evolving market dynamics.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I believe that achieving ambitious goals must go hand in hand with integrity, transparency, and accountability. I prioritize a strong governance framework and actively encourage adherence to all regulatory requirements. At the same time, I drive initiatives that promote financial inclusion and economic empowerment, aligning our growth with ESG principles and creating sustainable impact for underserved communities.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Looking beyond business results, I aspire to leave a legacy by creating sustainable value for the organization, industry, and wider community. Guided by the ethos of "prosperity for all," my focus is on empowering SMEs, promoting financial inclusion, and enabling economic independence for underserved communities. Also, I aim to inspire a culture of ethical leadership, innovation, and social responsibility, ensuring that the organization not only thrives commercially but also contributes meaningfully to society.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation of leaders is to lead with integrity, courage, and resilience. Uphold strong work ethics and professionalism, think strategically, and challenge the status quo when needed. True leadership lies in inspiring others, fostering collaboration, and driving innovation while delivering sustainable results.

Ms. Jeevani Kariyawasam

Ms. Kariyawasam was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Principal Officer of People's Insurance PLC in February 2022. Prior to assuming her duties as CEO, she served as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Company from April 2021 to January 2022.

Ms. Kariyawasam has been associated with People's Insurance since its establishment in October 2009, where she served as the Head of Operations until her appointment as the COO in 2021. Prior to joining People's Insurance, Ms. Kariyawasam has held various senior roles in Underwriting and Claims Management at organizations such as HNB Assurance and the National Insurance Corporation.

Ms. Kariyawasam has actively contributed to the development of the Insurance profession in Sri Lanka. She served as the Membership Secretary of the Association of Chartered Insurance Professionals (Sri Lanka) from 2016 to 2019. She was also a Council Member of the Sri Lanka Insurance Institute from 2011 to 2014. With over 25 years of industry experience in Sri Lanka, she brings valuable expertise to her position as the CEO of People's Insurance PLC.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is built on clarity, consistency, and adaptability. Long-term growth demands a strategy that not only strengthens core capabilities but also embraces continuous innovation. I drive alignment by engaging with teams across all levels, translating strategy into actionable priorities, and embedding resilience into daily operations. By keeping customers at the heart of what we do, integrating technology, and advancing sustainability, we remain competitive while staying true to our purpose.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision I made was to embed transparency at the heart of our organization. By opening up decision-making processes, strengthening governance, and fostering honest dialogue, we built a culture of trust and accountability. It wasn't always easy—true transparency often requires confronting uncomfortable truths—but it ultimately created stronger alignment, credibility, and resilience. The key lesson is that when leaders lead with openness, they not only strengthen performance but also inspire people to give their best with confidence and commitment.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Empowerment begins with trust. I make it a priority to set clear goals, allow freedom to innovate, and recognize achievements meaningfully. Accountability is reinforced through transparent expectations and fair performance measures. To nurture future leaders, we invest in continuous learning, mentorship, and opportunities to lead challenging projects. This approach creates a culture where individuals evolve alongside the organization's growth.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is inevitable, but leadership is defined by how we respond to it. I view disruption as an opportunity to rethink business models, harness new technologies, and listen more closely to shifting customer needs. Leaders must encourage experimentation, embrace calculated risks, and create safe spaces for new ideas. With openness and agility, disruption becomes less of a threat and more of a catalyst for competitive advantage.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I firmly believe that growth without ethics is unsustainable. Ambitious goals must be pursued within a framework of strong governance and sustainability principles. By upholding transparency and accountability to all stakeholders—not just shareholders—we ensure that our success is both responsible and enduring. This balance is not a compromise; it is a source of credibility, trust, and long-term resilience.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond financial results, I hope my lasting contribution will be in strengthening trust within our industry and expanding access to protection for underserved communities. If I am remembered for building an organization that balanced profitability with social responsibility, cultivated a culture that empowered our people to realize their potential, and contributed meaningfully to national progress and community well-being, I would consider that my greatest legacy.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

To the next generation, I would say: lead with courage, humility, and purpose. The challenges ahead will be complex, but if you put people and integrity at the center of your decisions, you will build organizations that are both enduring and respected. Stay curious, embrace technology, and never stop learning. Leadership is not defined by titles it is defined by the impact you create on your teams, your industry, and society at large.

Mr. Kushan Samararatne

Kushan Samararatne is the Chief Executive Officer of Colombo Coffee Company (Pvt) Ltd and under his leadership the company has had a remarkable growth over the last 5+ years where he took the initiative to establish a fully-fledged production plant and diversifying the business. As Chairperson of the Lanka Coffee Association, he leads private sector stakeholders to elevate Sri Lanka's specialty coffee identity and advocate policy expansion. Kushan Samararatne is an MBA holder from University of Wales and a B.Sc. Applied Science degree holder from University of Peradeniya, Faculty of Science. He was also the VP – membership at Innovative Minds Toastmasters club for 2024/25.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

For me, leadership vision and organizational strategy cannot exist in isolation—they must constantly reinforce each other. I start by ensuring that my leadership vision is rooted in values that the organization itself embodies integrity, innovation, and impact. This makes alignment natural rather than forced.

In practice, I focus on three areas. First, clarify a clear purpose that everyone in the team can connect with. When people understand “why,” they can adapt to the “how” even when markets change. Second, adaptability—building systems and mindsets that embrace change rather than resist it. In a competitive environment, resilience comes from treating disruptions as opportunities to innovate. Finally, empowerment—investing in people, because strategy is only as strong as the team driving it.

By combining vision with practical execution, I aim to create a culture where long-term growth isn't just about financial outcomes, but also about building an organization that is resilient, relevant, and respected. That balance is what ensures sustainability in today's environment.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career has been guiding Colombo Coffee Company through diversification. For many years, we were primarily a HORECA-focused player, serving the hospitality sector. While this gave us a strong foundation, it also left us exposed to the volatility of a single market segment. I realized that to ensure long-term growth and resilience, we needed to expand beyond this comfort zone.

We made the strategic decision to diversify into multiple segments—retail, corporate sales, exports, and private labelling. Each step required us to rethink our capabilities and reimagine our value proposition. For instance, entering retail means understanding consumer behavior in a very different way from serving hotels or cafés. Corporate sales pushed us to develop tailored solutions for businesses, while exports demanded we raise our standards to compete internationally. Private labelling opened opportunities to collaborate with partners and extend our reach under different brand identities.

This diversification has not only strengthened our financial resilience but also elevated Colombo Coffee Company's role in shaping the future of Sri Lankan coffee. The lesson for others is that diversification is not about diluting focus—it's about strategically broadening your base to unlock growth, hedge against uncertainty, and remain relevant in an ever-changing market. True leadership lies in having the foresight to pivot

before circumstances force you to, and the courage to lead your team into uncharted but promising territory.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At Colombo Coffee Company, I believe culture is the true driver of long-term success. Creating and sustaining a culture that empowers people starts with trust. We encourage our team members to take ownership of their work, make decisions, and bring forward ideas without fear of being second-guessed. Empowerment is not just about giving freedom, but about providing the clarity and support that enables people to thrive.

Driving accountability comes from setting clear expectations and linking individual roles to the bigger organizational vision. We measure outcomes, but we also focus on learning. When mistakes happen, they are treated as opportunities for growth, not blame. This balance ensures accountability feels constructive rather than punitive.

Nurturing future leaders require deliberate investment. We expose our people to different parts of the business—whether it's moving from HORECA to retail, or from local operations to exports, so they develop a holistic understanding of the industry. We also encourage continuous learning, mentorship, and open dialogue, because leadership is not built in isolation.

By creating an environment where empowerment, accountability, and growth coexist, we are not just building a stronger company today but shaping the next generation of leaders who will carry Sri Lankan coffee forward on the global stage.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

In my view, leaders navigate disruption best by treating it not as a threat but as a catalyst for growth. At Colombo Coffee Company, we have faced our share of challenges—from shifts in global supply chains to the sudden impact of the pandemic on the HORECA sector. What allowed us to respond effectively was the mindset that disruption creates opportunities to reinvent, diversify, and strengthen.

Inspiring innovation starts with curiosity and openness. Leaders must create a culture where new ideas are welcomed, tested, and scaled when they prove value. For us, this has meant expanding beyond our traditional base into retail, exports, corporate sales, and private labelling—innovations that emerged precisely because we dared to reimagine our business model during uncertain times.

To keep organizations future-ready, leaders must balance adaptability with vision. It's not enough to respond to change; we must anticipate it by staying close to market trends, customer needs, and emerging technologies. Equally important is investing in people—giving teams the skills, confidence, and freedom to innovate themselves.

Ultimately, resilience and innovation are two sides of the same coin. Leaders who inspire both create organizations that don't just survive disruption but use it as fuel to build a stronger and more sustainable future.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ambitious goals and strong ethics are not opposing forces—they are mutually reinforcing. At Colombo Coffee Company, our growth has always been tied to a commitment to do business responsibly. Ambition sets the pace, but ethics, governance, and sustainability define the path.

We balance this by embedding responsibility into every strategic decision. For instance, while pursuing diversification into retail, exports, and private labelling, we ensured that governance structures were strengthened to maintain transparency and accountability across new business lines. This means setting clear policies, measuring impact, and holding ourselves accountable not only for financial results but also for how those results are achieved.

Sustainability plays a central role in this balance. Coffee is an agricultural product deeply connected to farmers, communities, and the environment. As we scale, we prioritize sourcing practices and partnerships that uplift local growers and encourage sustainable farming. This ensures our growth benefits the entire value chain, not just the company.

The lesson is that true leadership is not about choosing between ambition and responsibility, it's about proving that long-term success can only come when the two move hand in hand. By holding ourselves to the highest standards, we ensure that our growth is not only significant, but also sustainable and respected.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Looking beyond business results, I hope my enduring contribution will be building a culture and ecosystem that outlives me. At Colombo Coffee Company, success is not only about revenues or market share—it is about shaping an industry, empowering people, and uplifting communities connected to coffee.

Within the organization, I want to be remembered for creating an environment where people felt empowered to grow, take risks, and become leaders themselves. If future leaders of CCC say they found their voice, their confidence, and their purpose here, that will be the true measure of impact.

For the Sri Lankan coffee industry, my vision is to help position our coffee on the global stage while strengthening the livelihoods of local farmers. By driving quality, innovation, and sustainability, I hope to leave behind an industry that is more resilient, respected, and globally recognized.

At the community level, my aspiration is to contribute to a culture of pride—where Sri Lankans see coffee not just as a commodity but as part of our identity and potential. If my work inspires others to take Sri Lankan coffee further, I will consider that my greatest legacy.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation of leaders is simple: lead with purpose, not just ambition. The world you are stepping into is more interconnected, competitive, and uncertain than ever before. Results will matter, but how you achieve those results will matter even more.

First, embrace adaptability. Disruption will be constant—whether through technology, shifting consumer expectations, or global crises. The leaders who thrive will be those who see change not as a setback, but as an invitation to innovate.

Second, put people at the center. Leadership is not about titles or authorities about enabling others to succeed. Invest in your teams, listen deeply, and create cultures where people feel valued and empowered. Your greatest legacy will be the leaders you help develop.

Finally, never compromise on ethics and sustainability. In business, shortcuts may bring quick wins, but integrity builds trust—and trust is the currency of long-term success. Remember that your decisions ripple outward, impacting industries, communities, and even future generations.

If you can balance vision with responsibility, and ambition with empathy, you will not only build successful organizations, but you will also shape a better future.



Mr. Sampath Weerakoon

I am the Group Chief Human Resources Officer – HR Operations, overseeing HR across four factories with 15,000+ employees in five companies. My career began in 2008 as an Executive – Administration, and I joined Omega Line Ltd. in 2016 as Manager – HR. I became AGM – HR & Administration in 2022 and assumed my current role in January 2025.

I hold a B.Sc. in Management, an MBA in HR, and a Diploma in HRM. I am a CIPM Associate Member, passionate about people, teamwork, and operational excellence.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is built on balancing organizational growth with employee well-being while ensuring operational excellence. At Omega Line, this vision directly aligns with the company's post-pandemic strategy of expanding production capacity by 50% to strengthen competitiveness in the global apparel market.

To achieve this, I recognized that recruitment alone was not enough; long-term growth required workforce stability, skill retention, and employee engagement. Therefore, I introduced the Employee Relations (ER) Officer role, placing HR professionals at the heart of the production floor. This initiative created real-time engagement between HR and operators, fostering trust, resolving issues immediately, and directly supporting production KPIs.

The outcomes reflect strong alignment with organizational goals: operator attrition was reduced from 2.5% to 2.0%, absenteeism from 7.4% to 6.6%, and skilled operator retention improved from 62% to 82% in 2024.

These results not only stabilized the workforce but also contributed to higher efficiency (Italy-Sewing efficiency improved from 137.4% to 143.3%) and an 11.5% increase in production output.

By embedding HR leadership into the operational core, I ensured that our people strategy supported productivity, profitability, and sustainability. This approach has also enhanced Omega Line's reputation as a Great Place to Work®, one of the Top 15 Workplaces in Manufacturing, and a Best Workplace for Women and Young Talent.

Ultimately, my vision aligns with organizational strategy by ensuring that business resilience is built on empowered people, enabling Omega Line to grow sustainably while remaining competitive in a dynamic global market.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career was the creation of the Employee Relations (ER) Officer role at Omega Line. Following the company's post-pandemic expansion, we faced the daunting challenge of sustaining nearly 800 newly recruited operators while battling high attrition and absenteeism. Recruitment had solved our short-term capacity needs, but I realized that retention and engagement were the true levers of long-term resilience.

Placing HR officers directly on the production floor was a bold move. It

shifted HR from being a support function at a distance to becoming an embedded partner in operations, building daily trust with employees, addressing concerns in real time, and creating a culture of accountability. The results were profound: attrition fell from 2.5% to 2.0%, absenteeism from 7.4% to 6.6%, and skilled operator retention jumped from 62% to 82%. These improvements directly strengthened productivity and operational excellence.

The key lesson for others is this: leadership is about anticipating challenges and daring to reimagine roles to meet them. It is not enough to expand capacity or hit recruitment targets; leaders must think deeper about culture, engagement, and sustainability. By aligning people-focused innovation with strategic goals, leaders can turn operational crises into competitive advantages.

This decision reaffirmed my belief that visionary leadership lies not in grand speeches, but in practical actions that empower people and transform organizations from within.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At Omega Line, I believe culture is the foundation of both performance and resilience. To create and sustain a culture that empowers people, I focus on three pillars: empowerment through presence, accountability through ownership, and leadership through development.

1. Empowerment through presence

The introduction of the Employee Relations (ER) Officer role placed HR professionals directly on the production floor. This initiative empowered operators by giving them immediate access to support, enabling real-time problem-solving, and fostering a sense of being heard and valued. When employees feel empowered, engagement and trust naturally follow.

2. Accountability through ownership

Embedding HR within operations created shared accountability between HR, Production, and Work Study teams. ER Officers acted as "guardians" of the sewing floor, ensuring KPIs were met while also safeguarding employee well-being. This model reinforced that accountability is not top-down—it is collective and rooted in transparency.

3. Leadership through development

I emphasize structured learning and succession planning to nurture future leaders. We educate new recruits on the importance of stable employment, highlight growth opportunities, and ensure employees understand how their roles contribute to the larger strategy. By identifying talent early and coaching them into leadership roles, we strengthen organizational continuity.





4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

In today's environment, disruption is no longer an exception but a constant. Leaders must therefore respond not with short-term fixes but with adaptive strategies that combine resilience, agility, and innovation.

For me, the starting point is embracing disruption as an opportunity. When Omega Line faced the dual challenge of rapid expansion and unsustainable attrition, I recognized that traditional recruitment-driven solutions would not suffice. Instead, I reimagined HR's role by creating the Employee Relations (ER) Officer position—embedding HR directly on the production floor. This innovative move turned a workforce risk into a sustainable competitive advantage, reducing attrition and absenteeism while strengthening engagement and retention.

Leaders must also inspire innovation through empowerment. By giving teams the autonomy to solve problems close to the ground and encouraging cross-functional collaboration, we create an environment where new ideas are not just welcomed but operationalized.

Finally, keeping organizations future-ready requires balancing technology with human capital. Process efficiency and digital tools are vital, but people are the real drivers of transformation. Leaders must invest equally in employee skills, culture, and well-being to ensure that organizations adapt not just structurally, but culturally.

In essence, leaders navigate disruption best when they listen, innovate, and empower—turning challenges into platforms for growth and positioning the organization for long-term readiness.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Balancing ambitious goals with ethics, governance, and sustainability begins with a values-driven leadership mindset. For me, success is meaningful only when it is achieved responsibly and leaves a lasting positive impact on both people and society.

At Omega Line, we expanded production capacity by 50% post-pandemic, a bold move in a highly competitive industry. While the target was ambitious, we ensured it was pursued through ethical recruitment practices, transparent governance, and a strong focus on employee well-being. The introduction of the Employee Relations Officer role reflected this balance: while driving retention and efficiency, it also prioritized fairness, trust, and dignity for every employee.

Sustainability has been central to our strategy. Our organization has been recognized with the Best Corporate Citizen Award – Sustainability (Economic Contribution Category) and the Presidential Export Merit Award, affirming that growth and responsibility can go hand in hand. We have also been named among the Top 15 Workplaces in Manufacturing in Sri Lanka, further demonstrating our commitment to governance, inclusivity, and ethical practices.

The lesson is clear: ambitious goals should never come at the cost of values. Instead, when ethics, governance, and sustainability are

embedded in decision-making, they become enablers of long-term growth, resilience, and reputation.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business results, I hope my enduring contribution will be the creation of a people-centered culture that demonstrates how human capital can be the strongest driver of organizational success. At Omega Line, initiatives like the Employee Relations Officer role have shown that when employees feel supported, respected, and empowered, retention improves, skills deepen, and the organization thrives.

For the industry, I aspire to set an example of HR leadership that redefines traditional boundaries—moving beyond administration to become a strategic partner in operations and growth. By embedding HR directly into production, we demonstrated a model that others in the apparel sector can adopt to tackle retention, absenteeism, and workforce sustainability.

For the community, I wish to be remembered for developing people and nurturing future leaders, especially among young talent and women, creating pathways for them to grow within the industry rather than seeking uncertain opportunities abroad.

Ultimately, my legacy should be this: that I helped prove business success and human dignity are not competing priorities, but mutually reinforcing strengths. If my work inspires others to lead with empathy, accountability, and vision, that will be my true achievement.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message to the next generation of leaders is simple yet vital: lead with purpose, not just with targets. The future of business will demand more than financial success—it will require resilience, inclusivity, and a commitment to people and the planet.

First, embrace disruption as opportunity. The business landscape will continue to evolve rapidly. Don't fear change; instead, use it as a platform to innovate and reimagine how organizations can thrive.

Second, put people at the center. Technology and systems can enable growth, but it is people who drive it. Invest in your teams, listen deeply, and empower them to grow with you. Your ability to retain and nurture talent will define your long-term success.

Third, never compromise on values. Ambitious goals will test your integrity, but ethics, governance, and sustainability are the foundations of lasting leadership. Protect them at all costs.

Finally, remember that leadership is not about authority—it is about service. If you can inspire others to dream bigger, act responsibly, and achieve collectively, your impact will extend far beyond your organization. The next generation must carry forward leadership that is empathetic, courageous, and future-ready.

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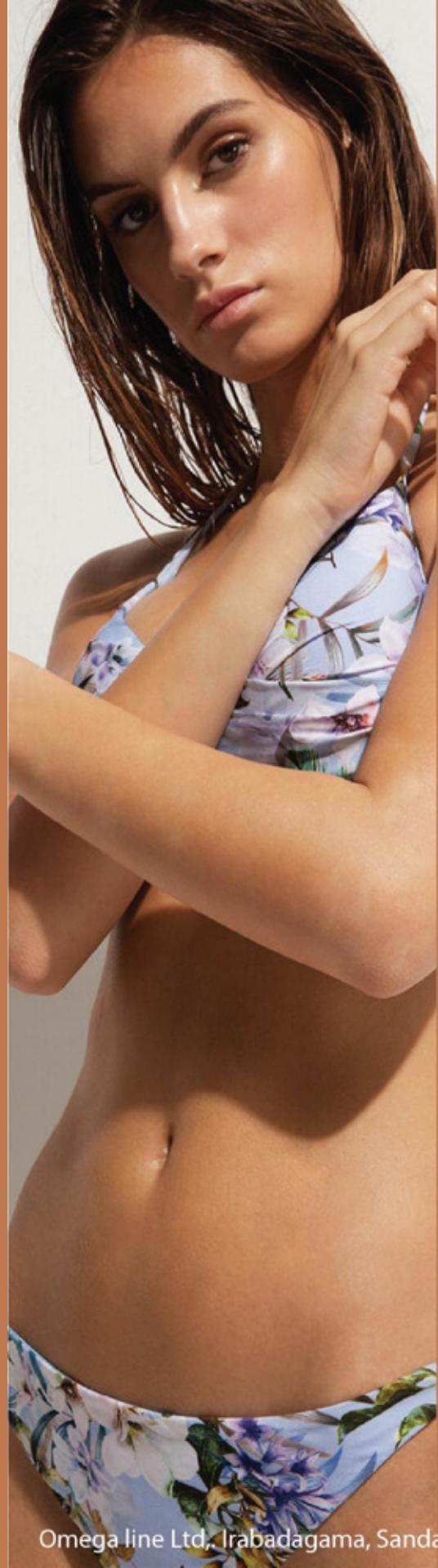
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Dr. Madura Gamanayake

Dr. Madura Gamanayake is the Founder and Managing Director of PBSS Group, a diversified IT and business solutions provider he built from the ground up with a single laptop and a vision for long-term value creation. Today, PBSS operates across Sri Lanka, the Maldives, UAE, North America, and Australia, serving over 750 clients with ERP, HRM, Sales Force Automation, and business solutions. Holding a PhD in Information Management, CIMA membership, and ACS affiliation, he has led 150+ SAP implementations and 350+ ERP deployments. His leadership blends ethics, innovation, and diversification into education, leisure, and agriculture for sustainable growth.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

From the very beginning, my vision has been to shape PBSS as a purpose-driven organisation, where growth is measured not only in financial terms but in the value created for clients, employees, and communities. Our strategy rests on four cornerstones: global partnerships, innovative products, industry credibility, and lasting customer relationships.

We believe success is mutual. Our progress is inseparable from the progress of our customers and employees. By digitising our internal processes, embedding AI into the solutions we deliver, and developing our own tools, we ensure that efficiency and innovation remain at the heart of what we do.

Resilience has been cultivated through diversification. We have expanded into education, leisure, and industry-specific solutions, opening new revenue streams and reducing reliance on any single market. Partnerships with leaders such as SAP, Odoo, Sage and Huawei Cloud strengthen our competitiveness, while a culture of agility and continuous improvement sustains us. Whether navigating the pandemic without reducing salaries or adapting to shifts in the market with financial discipline, we have aligned vision with execution by staying true to our values and responding boldly to change.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The defining decision of my career was to establish PBSS. At the time, while working as a Business and Systems Consultant, I noticed a consistent gap. Companies were adopting IT systems, yet very few were receiving the support needed to realise their full potential. Software was being delivered, but long-term value and service were absent.

I recognised the opportunity to create more than a software provider. What was needed was a trusted partner who would continue the journey with the client. In 2002, I took that leap with the conviction that customer focus, responsiveness, and lasting value should define us.

That conviction remains our foundation today. It is reflected in our position as a leading ERP implementation partner in Sri Lanka and in our ability to adapt quickly to new technologies and changing market needs. The lesson I share is that leadership is not about abundant resources. It is about clarity of vision, courage, and continuous commitment. When you commit to solving real problems, even the smallest beginning can grow into a lasting legacy.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Leadership, to me, is not about holding power but about creating it in others. At PBSS, empowerment and accountability are ingrained in our culture. We provide employees with clear career pathways, continuous training, and mentoring that balances technical and soft-skill development.

Ideas are not only welcomed but implemented. Recognition programmes and structured learning ensure that performance is rewarded, while our open-door leadership approach fosters transparency and trust. Many of our senior leaders have grown through the ranks, guided by mentorship and entrusted with responsibility.

By investing in people and placing confidence in their ability to lead, we have nurtured a workplace where creativity, loyalty, and leadership thrive naturally.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption, in my view, should be embraced as a catalyst for progress rather than feared as a threat. Over the past years, PBSS has weathered some of the most testing times. Civil unrest, the Easter Sunday tragedy, the global pandemic, and Sri Lanka's economic crisis. Each event challenged our resilience, yet it also sharpened our ability to innovate and adapt.

We responded by accelerating automation, currently expanding into new sectors such as tourism with Perfect Leisure and education with Perfect Business Academy, and by continuously reinvesting in our people. These choices were not reactive but strategic, ensuring that PBSS was not only surviving but preparing to thrive in a changing environment. Diversification has given us resilience, creating multiple growth streams and insulating us from market volatility.

Ultimately, keeping an organisation future-ready comes down to balance. Having the foresight to act early, the agility to adapt quickly, and the discipline to stay true to one's values. For PBSS, that balance has made us a trusted leader in IT and business solutions, with the highest number of ERP implementations in Sri Lanka.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ethics and sustainability are not obligations but guiding principles. Our ESG framework is woven into the way we operate. On the environmental front, we promote green IT practices through a cloud-first approach that reduces energy use, minimises e-waste, and lowers our carbon footprint.

Social responsibility is central to us. We collaborate with local universities to share domain expertise through workshops and training, preparing undergraduates for careers in IT. Our internship programmes create pathways to sustainable employment, and many interns transition into permanent roles within PBSS. We also support local communities by generating jobs in the areas where we operate, ensuring that our growth contributes directly to local livelihoods.

Governance is the foundation of these efforts. Transparency, compliance, and strong internal controls ensure that stakeholders can trust not only what we deliver but how we deliver it.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

I want PBSS to stand as proof that Sri Lankan talent can compete with the best in the world. Beyond building solutions, my focus has been on creating opportunities. Through training programmes, university partnerships, and internships, we have prepared young people for meaningful careers, many of whom now thrive within PBSS.

Equally, I want to leave behind a culture of responsibility. From scholarships and community initiatives to job creation in local areas, our growth has always been tied to uplifting others. At an industry level, through my service on the FITIS Software Chapter, I have sought to promote awareness, capacity building, and the advancement of Sri Lanka's IT sector.

If PBSS is remembered not only for business success but also for empowering people, strengthening the industry, and serving communities, that will be the legacy I am proud to leave.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Leadership is less about the spotlight. It is about holding steady when challenges arise. The early years of any venture are never easy, and it is patience, courage, and continuous commitment that carry you forward when the odds are stacked against you.

My advice to the next generation is to think long-term. Do not chase short-term wins. Focus on building value that lasts, identify the right opportunities, and take risks with care. Innovation is important, but resilience, the determination to keep going when others stop, is what shapes enduring leaders.

When vision is combined with discipline and continuous commitment, you do not simply build a business. You build a legacy.

Dr. Ranga Subash Jayakody

Dr. Ranga Subash Jayakody is a distinguished leader and the General Manager of Corporate Initiatives at Technomedics Group. A champion of digital literacy and innovation, he has spearheaded transformative initiatives that have significantly enhanced the digital proficiency of the workforce. His profound expertise is recognized by a Gold medal at the Management Research Forum 2024 for his research on organizational transformation. A Fellow of CPM Sri Lanka and an award-winning social activist, his contributions in administration, marketing, and innovation are widely implemented across the organization, shaping its future-readiness.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is centered on future-proofing the organization by embracing proactive digital transformation. I believe that in today's dynamic landscape, a static strategy is a failing one. This vision is translated into our strategic goals by treating technology not as a cost center, but as a strategic asset. By championing initiatives to embed new, transformative tools into our daily operations, we are not only streamlining processes but also cultivating a workforce that is adaptable and resilient. This approach ensures that we remain competitive and poised for sustained growth, no matter what external factors may arise.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining decision was leading the expansion of our corporate business into new, untapped markets like Rwanda during a period of economic instability. Instead of relying on traditional, cautious models, we pioneered an agile business approach, enabling a rapid yet strategic market entry. The key lesson here is the importance of embracing calculated risks with responsibility. In an environment of uncertainty, the greatest risk can be inaction. A leader's role is to challenge conventional wisdom, anticipate shifts, and empower their team to navigate uncharted territory, ensuring both growth and resilience.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I create a culture of empowerment by fostering learning and curiosity, not just mandating it. I provide the tools and frameworks for my team to experiment with new technologies and methodologies, giving them the autonomy to apply these in their work. This approach naturally drives accountability, as they take ownership of their projects and their professional development. By celebrating creativity and rewarding innovative thinking, we cultivate an Idea Generation Culture where every employee feels empowered to contribute to our collective success and is nurtured to become a future leader.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Leaders must be catalysts for change, not just managers of it. To navigate disruption, you must first champion technology integration and treat it as an ongoing journey, not a destination. I believe in not just reacting

to change but proactively leading it. Leaders can inspire innovation by creating a safe space for experimentation and calculated risk-taking. This fosters a mindset of continuous improvement, where every team member is encouraged to contribute new ideas and a "failure" is seen as a valuable learning opportunity.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ambitious goals and high ethical standards are inextricably linked. Our work is underpinned by transparent governance, and we ensure that our strategies foster long-term value creation beyond short-term gains. For instance, our international expansions are meticulously planned to ensure ethical practices and sustainability from the ground up. This commitment also extends to our employees; our comprehensive upskilling and reskilling initiatives focus on developing our existing workforce, creating a more sustainable human resource model for the future.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business metrics, I hope my enduring contribution will be twofold. First, to the organization, I want to leave a legacy of a workplace that is truly innovative and unafraid of technological disruption. I hope to have ingrained a culture of continuous learning and adaptability that will serve as a foundation for future leaders. Second, to the community, my enduring contribution is my commitment to social activism. I believe in using my professional skills to give back, demonstrating that true leadership extends beyond the boardroom to make a tangible, positive impact on society.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation of leaders is to be perpetual learners. The pace of change will only accelerate, and your ability to adapt will be your greatest asset. Embrace innovation, not as a buzzword, but as a core practice. Be proactive, not reactive, and be prepared to learn from failures. Finally, remember that true success is not measured by profits alone, but by the positive impact you have on your people, your organization, and your community. Leadership is a privilege; use it to make a difference.

Mr. Dulinda Perera

I am a purpose-driven entrepreneur with a passion for building brands and businesses that challenge convention and drive meaningful impact. My journey began in 2015 as a Digital Strategist, and since then, I've had the privilege of leading transformative brand experiences across both local and global markets.

Today, I serve as the Founder and CEO of IKON, along with its sister companies IKON Impressions and IKON Labs - a group of ventures built to deliver holistic brand transformation, digital innovation, and creative strategy. What began as a single idea has evolved into a collective that partners with ambitious brands to unlock growth and long-term value.

Beyond my entrepreneurial ventures, I also serve as Chairman of People's Microfinance Ltd, and as a Director of People's Leasing & Finance PLC, People's Insurance PLC, and Hilton Colombo. Further, I am also the Lead Lecturer for the CIMA Management Level Case Study at Imperial College of Business Studies.

My academic and professional credentials include an MBA in International Business from the University of the West of Scotland, a BSc in Chemical and Process Engineering from the University of Moratuwa, and recognition as an ACMA CGMA, MCIM (UK), and MCPM.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

At IKON, the approach has always been to anchor strategy in purpose while staying adaptable to changing conditions. The focus is on ensuring that every initiative strengthens client growth while positioning the organization to withstand volatility. When 2024 demanded reinvention, diversification into new verticals like IKON Impressions and IKON Labs allowed resilience through multiple streams of value creation. Long-term growth comes from combining agility in execution with consistency of vision.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

A turning point was repositioning IKON from a boutique consultancy into a full-spectrum brand transformation group. At a time when many were reducing risk, the decision was to expand into new industries and services. This shift not only delivered growth but also reinforced the value of making bold, well-informed choices in uncertain times. The key lesson is that resilience often comes from reimagining possibilities rather than retreating from them.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Culture is one of the hardest yet most rewarding aspects of leadership. At IKON, we shifted from hierarchical silos to agile, cross-functional teams that thrive on collaboration. Monthly innovation sprints and AI-integrated workflows have made experimentation part of our DNA. Equally, we prioritize growth pathways for talent, whether through mentorship, training, or exposure to global projects. By tying accountability to purpose rather than fear, we have built an environment where people take ownership because they believe in the impact of their work. That's how future leaders are nurtured: by giving them both responsibility and room to grow.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is no longer episodic, it's constant. Leaders must embrace it as an opportunity rather than a threat. At IKON, we tackled digital fatigue and shrinking budgets by embedding AI, martech, and low-cost high-impact solutions for startups. The key is to foster curiosity within teams

and ensure innovation is not just a department, but a mindset. Equally important is communicating a clear narrative that inspires people to see disruption as a springboard for growth. Future-ready organizations are those that combine adaptability with courage, leaders must model both.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ambition is always balanced with responsibility. Every client partnership, internal policy, or new initiative is guided by transparency, fairness, and accountability. At IKON, this ethos has helped us build trust with a 96% client retention rate. I believe that true success is measured not just by quarterly results but by the legacy of trust, fairness, and responsibility we leave behind.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

The hope is to contribute in three ways: by nurturing future leaders, by proving that purpose-led business models can thrive, and by helping elevate Sri Lankan brands to a global stage. If the work done at IKON and across board-level roles inspires others to blend innovation with responsibility, that would be a meaningful contribution to both industry and community.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice is simple: lead with purpose, act with courage, and build with resilience. The world you inherit will be shaped by disruption, uncertainty, and immense opportunity. Don't be afraid to challenge convention, but always stay anchored to values that outlast trends. Invest in your people, because they are your most sustainable advantage. Finally, remember that leadership is not about titles or recognition, it is about responsibility. If you can create value for your organization while contributing to your community, you will not just succeed - you will matter!

Major Ananda Rodrigo (Rtd) RSP

Major Ananda Rodrigo (Retd.) RSP is the Chief Executive Officer of the SITREK Group of Companies. A decorated officer of the Sri Lanka Army's Regiment of Artillery, he was awarded the Rana Sura Padakkama for gallantry and also served as an Instructor and Commanding officer at the Sri Lanka Military Academy. He joined SITREK in 2001 as a Regional Manager and rose to become CEO, leading the Group to multiple leadership awards. His journey from the battlefield to the boardroom reflects vision, resilience, and discipline, inspiring innovation and driving SITREK's continued growth as a trusted leader in diverse sectors.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision has always been centered on discipline, innovation, and people. At SITREK, we align this vision with our organizational strategy by ensuring every initiative is future-focused, yet grounded in strong values. We constantly assess market shifts, adopt technology-driven solutions, and build teams that are agile and resilient. I believe that long-term growth comes from creating a culture where strategy is not just a plan but a living, evolving commitment which is embraced by our tremendous team.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining moments was my decision to diversify SITREK's operations during a period of market uncertainty, towards business services such as Education & Air Conditioning Solutions. While it carried risks, it allowed us to reduce dependency on a single line of business and strengthened our resilience. The lesson I carry from this is that decisive leadership requires courage and foresight. Leaders must be willing to make bold decisions, guided by both data and instinct, while always putting the organization's sustainability first.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe people are the backbone of any organization, and at SITREK, empowerment begins with trust. We provide clear responsibilities, encourage ownership, and recognize outstanding performance. Accountability is directly tied to performance; our branch teams have been provided with KPI's, and achievement of them are recognized through performance incentives. There is also a robust system in place for training, mentorship and succession planning. Most importantly, the top management set the example by taking responsibility, encouraging others to follow. This culture has enabled us to build a new generation of leaders who are innovative, responsible, and committed towards delivering sustainable results.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is no longer an exception, it's the norm. To navigate it, leaders must adopt a mindset of agility and opportunity. At SITREK, we encourage innovation by empowering teams to experiment and challenge traditional

thinking. We also collaborate with external partners to bring fresh ideas into the organization. My approach is to view disruption not as a threat but as a platform to reimagine our services and strengthen our competitive edge.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ethics and governance are non-negotiable. Achieving ambitious goals means nothing if it compromises our integrity. At SITREK, we integrate sustainability into every aspect of our operations from energy efficient practices to community support initiatives. We maintain a strong governance framework to ensure accountability at every level. I firmly believe that sustainable and ethical business practices not only protect our organization but also enhances our reputation and ensures long-term profitability.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

I hope my lasting contribution will be the establishment of SITREK as a trusted, future-ready brand built on integrity, resilience, and innovation. Beyond business, I want to be remembered for building leaders who carry forward a culture of responsibility and service. Additionally, I am committed to contributing to the development of our communities particularly in areas like education and skill enhancement so that the growth of SITREK also uplifts the society around us.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message is simple: "lead with purpose" Success in leadership is not measured only by financial growth, but also by the positive impact you create. Always uphold discipline, integrity, and humility, these are values that never go out of style. Embrace innovation, stay adaptable, and remember that people are your greatest asset. Above all, understand that leadership is about service, when you serve your people and community well, sustainable success will naturally follow.

Mr. Anura Atapattu

Mr. Anura Atapattu is the Chairman of Berendina organizations in Sri Lanka, namely Berendina Micro Investment Company Ltd (BMIC) and Berendina Development Services (Gte) Limited (BDS). He was the CEO of BMIC during 2017-2024. He is a B Sc. (Agriculture) Special, MBA having 35 years of experience in many disciplines including management, poverty alleviation and rural development. He has been a consultant, researcher and trainer in these specialized areas. He is also a board member of South Asia Microentrepreneurs Network (SAMN) and was a Board of Director in SEEDS (Gte) Limited, Lanka Microfinance Practitioners Association and Development Facilitators (Pvt) Limited.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

Within the shared vision, organizations under my leadership develop medium term strategic plans of 3 to 5 years horizon in consideration, overall ecosystem, internal capacity and resource potential. Clear objectives to achieve during the planning term including growth targets are established. Annual review of the strategic plan and preparation annual plans before each year commences is also done.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

Changing the charity-based approach of Berendina to development orientation starting way back in 1992.

Commencing Sri Lankan organizations for Berendina's work with strong affiliation to Berendina Foundation in Netherlands starting from 2005.

Separation of Microfinance and other development initiatives into two separate local organisations Berendina Micro Investments Company and Berendina Development Services, in 2007.

Obtaining the first license from the central bank in 2019 for Berendina Micro Investments Company as a regulated microfinance company.

Bringing Berendina Stichting in the Netherlands as the main shareholder of BMIC who participate only in governance and not having right for dividends while making Berendina Development Services, the chartable institution in both governance and sole beneficiary for dividends of BMIC company.

Learning to others: Have a long-term vision for change you are looking for. Grab the opportunities timely after careful considerations of all facets by a team who share the vision together.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Empowering people as individuals, groups and committees were done under short term and long term arrangements. Potential, talents and capacity of individuals are identified. Enhanced responsibilities are entrusted through promotions or increasing scope and roles of positions held by such talented people. Accountability is made through KPIs both

soft and hard in nature. Performance appraisals, contribution of groups and committees for organizations sustenance and growth is recognized and rewarded where possible. Potential future leaders are identified and placed in appropriate leadership positions.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruptions can be initiated by internal as well as external forces. Having strong and accurate insights and creation of avenues to capture timely accurate information flows to the leader is essential. Externalities should be assessed through market and industry intelligence and broader environmental scanning regularly. It could be in the form of risk and vulnerability assessments. All findings should be given due care and attention leading to responsive action based on the severity of potential disruption.

The readiness for disruption due to unforeseen events such as natural or man-made events is also done within organizations. One major tool used for this is well designed business continuity planning.

Innovations are essential for a living, growing and future ready organization. Open door policy for innovations and due recognition for innovations is a success factor. The organization culture is such that innovations are invited, recognized and rewarded.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ethics, governance and sustainability are non-comprisable elements and commitments which are embedded in Berendina organizations from inception and improved over the years. For example, harassment in any nature, frauds and mismanagement are given zero tolerance. Organizational goals whether they are ambitious or not are set considering all these preconditions of commitments. For an example BMIC has a very ambitious goal of 21% growth while increasing profitability in the year 2024. The board, management and staff were well committed to maintain or improved ethical standards while endorsing and implementation of number of policies such as Anti harassments, child protection, gender, improving all levels of governance including board level and working towards environmental sustainability in this year while achieving the growth targets. Ex: Establishing a 5 year project for climate change adaptation for farming communities during 2024 to improve the contribution to environmental fruit print.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Organization: To further develop Berendina organization as a sustainable poverty alleviation while empowering all the segments of the community from men and women to youth, children differently abled, finally reaping the benefits to the whole family in coordination with all possible stakeholders including the government. Further to expand the services to currently unserved areas. Further develop Berendina's capacity to carry out its work much more efficiently and effectively through technology and other forms advanced interventions.

Industry: There are two segments of key industries/sectors led by me. They are microfinance and poverty alleviation/ rural development. Microfinance Industry is at a very important juncture where the government is taking rapid steps to improve the regulation of the industry by enacting the Microfinance and credit Regulatory Authority Act. The interviewee was an activist in the industry for many years contributing for establishing healthier microfinance -industry including contributing to the proposed the new microfinance act. He will continue to play my role in ensuring the implementation of robust growth driven industry in the future too. His limited role so far in other interventions for poverty alleviation and rural development will be increased in time to come as some of my organizational operational responsibilities are now delegated to new teams in the organization.

Community: All the work of interviewee works towards organizational development and industry level initiatives which will finally will bring larger benefits to the community at large. He will work towards building up fact based evidence with the community for policy influence while contributing the grassroots level voices are effectively head by layers above them in the society for betterment of these communities.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Lead not to be remembered by others, but to make life better for those who will never know your name. Listen more than what you speak, serve more than you command, and measure success not by power gained, but by trust earned and results evidenced. The world will change — your duty is to ensure it changes for the better.

Mr. Wasala Maduwantha Ariyapala

Mr. Wasala Maduwantha Ariyapala, the visionary Founder and Managing Director of MONIK Group of Companies, brings over 20 years of invaluable experience in the Housing and Finance industry. His journey began with Ceylinco Grameen Shop House (Pvt) Ltd, where he helped provide housing finance solutions for underserved communities. He further honed his expertise at Ceylinco Grameen Credit (HNB Finance PLC) and in leadership roles at Commercial Credit & Finance PLC and Vallibel Finance PLC, shaping his deep understanding of the financial sector.

In 2023, he achieved the prestigious Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) from Commonwealth Peace University, USA.

His leadership, rooted in unwavering dedication and a commitment to empowering others, has been pivotal in MONIK Group's transformation into a multi-sector powerhouse. Mr. Wasala's legacy is not only defined by the success of MONIK but also by the lives he has touched through his ethical, innovative, and empowering approach to business.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

As the leader of MONIK International, my vision is to ensure the company's long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment by strategically diversifying our operations across sectors such as finance, insurance, agriculture, and microfinance. By doing so, we reduce dependence on any single industry, which strengthens our ability to navigate market fluctuations. Innovation and adaptability are at the core of our strategy, as we expand into emerging global markets like Uganda and Bangladesh, positioning MONIK to stay ahead of the curve.

I believe that a motivated and empowered workforce is key to our success, and that's why we foster a culture of excellence, earning MONIK the recognition of being a Great Place to Work®.

Our customer-centric approach ensures that we provide tailored solutions to meet the dynamic needs of our clients, building lasting relationships and loyalty. Furthermore, we are deeply committed to corporate social responsibility, enhancing our reputation and contributing to the communities we serve.

Strategic partnerships, such as the acquisition of Serendib Insurance Brokers, enable us to access new markets and resources, further solidifying our competitive position. Together, these strategies form the foundation of MONIK's future growth, ensuring that we remain adaptable, innovative, and resilient in the ever-evolving business landscape.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career has been the strategic move to diversify MONIK International's operations into multiple high-potential sectors, including finance, insurance, agriculture, and microfinance. This decision was crucial in mitigating risks associated with relying on a single industry and ensuring our long-term growth and resilience. By expanding into emerging markets like Uganda and Bangladesh and acquiring companies like Serendib Insurance Brokers, I aimed to position MONIK as a dynamic player with the ability to adapt and thrive in an ever-changing global environment.

The lessons I've learned from this experience are clear. First, diversification is vital for reducing vulnerability and ensuring sustainability in uncertain times. Second, embracing innovation and adaptability is essential for staying ahead in the market. Third, strategic risk-taking is necessary for seizing new opportunities and fueling growth, even when stepping outside of comfort zones. Finally, empowering our teams to drive excellence has been critical, as building a motivated and loyal workforce is key to achieving success.



In essence, my journey has taught me that leadership requires bold decisions, adaptability, and the ability to build strong, supportive teams that share in the vision for the future.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Creating and sustaining a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders has always been a priority for me at MONIK International. I firmly believe that a company's success is built on its people, and it is my responsibility to foster an environment where everyone feels valued, motivated, and accountable for their contributions.

To empower our team, I encourage open communication, trust, and continuous development. By providing opportunities for personal and professional growth through training, mentorship, and leadership programs, I ensure that our staff is equipped to take on challenges, make decisions, and grow within the organization. I also emphasize the importance of ownership in their roles, which drives accountability and encourages them to take pride in their work.

I nurture future leaders by identifying potential early on and providing them with the tools, exposure, and experiences necessary for leadership. This includes assigning them to strategic projects, offering them mentorship, and encouraging them to take risks in their decision-making. I also believe in leading by example—demonstrating the values of integrity, resilience, and innovation that I expect from my team.

Sustaining this culture is an ongoing effort. We continuously reinforce our core values through regular feedback, celebrating achievements, and holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards. By aligning our team's growth with the company's vision, we create a culture where empowerment, accountability, and leadership development are not just aspirations—they are ingrained in everything we do at MONIK.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

In my view, leaders can best navigate disruption and inspire innovation by embracing change with a proactive mindset and creating a culture that values continuous learning and agility. Disruption is inevitable in today's fast-paced world, and rather than seeing it as a threat, I believe leaders should view it as an opportunity for growth and transformation.

The first step is to foster a culture of innovation within the organization. This means encouraging teams to think creatively, take calculated risks, and experiment with new ideas. As a leader, it is crucial to provide the space and resources for innovation to thrive. I also believe in the importance of empowering employees at all levels to bring forward their ideas and solutions, creating a bottom-up approach to innovation, not just top-down.



At the same time, leaders must remain adaptable and resilient. We cannot predict every disruption, but we can prepare our organizations to be flexible and responsive. This involves staying informed about industry trends, investing in technology, and constantly evaluating our business strategies to ensure they are aligned with the future.

To keep organizations future-ready, it's essential to lead by example—embracing change and showing that innovation is not just a priority, but a mindset that drives everything we do. I also prioritize building strong, agile teams that can pivot quickly in the face of uncertainty, ensuring that we remain competitive and resilient regardless of what disruptions come our way.

Ultimately, visionary leadership, combined with a commitment to continuous innovation and adaptability, is key to navigating disruption and keeping an organization prepared for the future.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Balancing ambitious goals with the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability is a core principle of my leadership. I believe true success isn't just about financial milestones, but about achieving them responsibly, transparently, and sustainably for the long term.

To maintain this balance, I establish ethical guidelines that align with our values and organizational goals, guiding every decision we make, from client interactions to internal processes. At MONIK, we ensure all our financial products, services, and partnerships uphold the highest standards of transparency and fairness, empowering customers to make informed choices.

Accountability is essential at all levels. We implement robust oversight mechanisms with regular audits, clear reporting structures, and open communication, ensuring every team member understands their role in contributing to MONIK's success and integrity.

Sustainability is also at the heart of our operations. Through initiatives like Monik Agri Ventures and CSR efforts, we ensure growth that benefits future generations. We embrace sustainable technologies and continuously seek ways to reduce our environmental impact while expanding.

Ultimately, achieving ambitious goals is important, but doing so with a focus on ethics, governance, and sustainability ensures MONIK's long-term success, fostering trust, long-term relationships, and positioning the company for sustained growth.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business results, my hope is to create a legacy of empowerment and sustainability that extends far beyond MONIK International. I want to be remembered not only for the financial success of the company but also for the positive impact we've had on individuals, communities, and industries.

At MONIK, my vision is to build a culture where every employee and partner feels valued, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential. I want MONIK to be recognized for its people-first approach, where empowering others—whether through innovative financial solutions for MSMEs or career development—is just as important as business growth. If we contribute to the professional and personal growth of our people, that will be my enduring legacy within the organization.

In the broader industry, I aim to inspire a shift toward ethical business practices and inclusive growth. My goal is to show that businesses can be both profitable and responsible, and that innovation should always be balanced with a strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility. I hope other businesses will follow suit, adopting sustainable and ethical practices that create lasting, positive impacts on society.

For the community, I hope to foster a ripple effect of change, particularly in underserved and marginalized groups. Through initiatives in microfinance, agriculture, and CSR, I want to empower individuals to achieve their dreams. Ultimately, my greatest hope is that my leadership inspires others to make decisions that prioritize integrity, empowerment, and social good—leaving a lasting and impactful contribution.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to future leaders is simple: lead with integrity, embrace change, and empower those around you. Success today isn't just about financial outcomes; it's about the positive impact you have on people, communities, and the world.

First, never compromise on ethics. Make decisions that align with your values, even when it's challenging. Trust, the foundation of a leader's credibility, is earned by consistently doing what's right, even when no one is watching. Leading with integrity will inspire respect and loyalty.

Second, embrace innovation and adaptability. The business world is constantly evolving. Leaders who stay curious, remain open to new ideas, and adapt to change thrive. Be proactive, stay ahead of industry trends, and embrace new approaches to stay competitive.

Third, empower your teams. Your success depends on the success of your people. Invest in them by providing tools, opportunities, and support to help them grow. Create a culture where everyone feels valued and heard. Leadership is about unlocking others' potential, not controlling them.

Finally, prioritize sustainability and responsibility. Your decisions impact more than your organization—they affect society and future generations. Lead with a mindset that creates long-term value for shareholders, communities, and the planet.

In the end, leadership isn't just about achieving results; it's about how you achieve them and the lasting legacy you create for your people, your industry, and society.

Mr. Samantha Herath

A senior corporate leader with over 30 years of experience across banking, insurance, pharmaceuticals, and lubricants. Currently General Manager – Operations at LAUGFS Lubricants, he has previously held leadership roles at John Keells Holdings, Union Assurance and Nations Trust Bank. He holds an MBA from the University of Leicester (UK), is reading for a DBA, and is a Certified Management Accountant (AUS). A Chartered Marketer and Member of CIM (UK), Samantha is also a Fellow of Chartered Institute of Professional Managers of Sri Lanka and Chartered Management Institute of UK and serves as a visiting lecturer at leading universities and professional institutes specializing in strategy, transformation, and leadership.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I've always believed that vision and strategy are two sides of the same coin. Vision provides the purpose and direction it tells us why we exist and where we're going. Strategy translates that purpose into action it tells us how we get there. If the two are not aligned, organizations risk either drifting without direction or executing busily without a clear destination.

Around two years back we were facing very real challenges: declining margins, liquidity constraints, and pressure across the value chain. It would have been easy to focus only on immediate survival, but we felt strongly that we needed to think bigger. My vision was to transform us into a demand-driven, customer-first business. That was the north star around which we wanted to align the entire organization.

Turning that vision into reality required deliberate strategy. For instance, our Distributor Financing Scheme was not simply a financial instrument it was a way of showing our partners that we trusted them and wanted them to grow with us. It directly improved liquidity in the channel, cut receivables by considerably, and reduced our finance costs by more than 100%. More importantly, it demonstrated that our vision of resilience and partnership was backed by concrete action.

We also introduced the Distributor Health-Check System, which allowed us to monitor and support the financial well-being of our partners. This initiative strengthened accountability, drove discipline in collections and inventory management, and resulted in a 19% revenue increase. Again, the connection between vision and strategy was clear: if our distributors were strong, we would be strong.

Similarly, the Product Categorization Framework helped us align frontline sales behavior with profitability goals, encouraging teams to prioritize high-margin products. This strategic shift contributed to a significant growth in Gross Profit.

What excites me most is not only the financial turnaround but the cultural shift. Employees and partners began to recognize that our vision was not abstract it was real, and they could see themselves in it. When people at every level understand how strategy connects to vision, alignment happens naturally, and the organization becomes energized.

For me, aligning vision and strategy is ultimately about people. Every initiative must answer two questions: Does this bring us closer to the future we imagine? and Can people believe in it enough to make it happen? When the answer to both is yes, growth and resilience follow.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining decision I've made came in 2023, during one of the toughest periods in our company's recent history. Our margins were under pressure, finance costs were rising, and distributors were struggling to meet obligations. Conventional wisdom suggested we should tighten credit and conserve resources. That would have been the safe, defensive choice.

Instead, we made a very different call. We chose to invest in our distributors by launching a Distributor Financing Scheme with a leading bank. The idea was simple: if we could strengthen their liquidity, they would be able to pay us on time, keep their businesses afloat, and continue driving growth in the market. At first, many thought it was too risky why provide financial support when we were under strain ourselves?

But the results validated the decision. Trade receivables dropped sharply, finance costs reduced dramatically, and our working capital cycle improved. Beyond the numbers, however, the real impact was relational. Our distributors began to see us not just as a supplier but as a genuine partner. That trust has since become one of our greatest competitive advantages.

The lesson I carry from this experience is that leadership often requires going against the grain. It is easy to focus narrowly on protecting your own balance sheet in a crisis. But true resilience comes from strengthening your ecosystem. When your partners thrive, you thrive.

That decision reminded me that leadership is about courage the courage to place long-term relationships and shared growth above short-term fixes. And it reinforced a principle I live by: in times of doubt, bet on people. They will return your faith many times over.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Culture is the foundation of any enduring organization. Strategies and structures may change, but culture determines how people behave, how they respond to challenges, and how they embrace opportunities.

At LAUGFS, we have focused on building a culture that rests on three pillars: empowerment, accountability, and leadership development.

Empowerment begins with trust. I believe people perform best when they feel ownership of their work. Accountability, meanwhile, is about transparency and shared responsibility. Through tools like advanced analytics and distributor health-checks, performance became visible and measurable. But I always emphasized that accountability was not about blame it was about learning and improving. This created an environment where people willingly took responsibility, because they knew it would be fair and constructive.

Finally, nurturing leaders is a responsibility we as leaders should take personally. I see my role as mentoring, not micromanaging. I regularly spend time with managers discussing not just performance metrics but how they think, decide, and lead. One example I recall is when a team suggested piloting digital channels for sales. It was untested, but we encouraged them to try. Their success boosted revenue and, equally importantly, their confidence as future leaders.

Recognition also plays a critical role. People need to know their ideas and efforts are valued, even when outcomes aren't perfect. By celebrating contributions, we've created an atmosphere where innovation is safe and encouraged.

Over time, this has built a culture where individuals don't just see themselves as employees but as co-owners of the company's journey. They feel empowered to make decisions, accountable for outcomes, and inspired to grow into leadership roles. If there is one cultural legacy I hope to leave behind, it is this: a high-performance organization where leadership is not concentrated at the top but distributed across every level.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption today is no longer an occasional event it is the constant backdrop of business. Economic volatility, technological shifts, geopolitical uncertainty, and evolving customer expectations mean that leaders must assume change is inevitable. The real question is not how do we avoid disruption but how do we thrive because of it?

I believe navigating disruption requires three qualities: agility, foresight, and adaptability. Agility ensures that organizations can respond quickly when conditions shift whether that means adjusting supply chains, rethinking business models, or reallocating resources. Foresight comes from continuously scanning the horizon, anticipating trends before they fully materialize, and preparing proactively rather than reactively. Adaptability ensures that both systems and people have the resilience to pivot without losing momentum.

Inspiring innovation, meanwhile, begins with culture. Leaders must create environments where curiosity is encouraged, where new ideas are welcomed, and where it is safe to experiment even to fail. Innovation is not only about groundbreaking technology; it is often about rethinking everyday processes, improving customer experiences, or finding smarter ways to work. When people at every level feel empowered to contribute ideas, innovation becomes part of the organization's DNA rather than a one-off initiative.

Future-readiness also depends on collaboration. No leader can navigate disruption alone. Building networks with employees, customers, partners, and even competitors expands perspectives and accelerates innovation. Diversity of thought and experience is a powerful defense against uncertainty.

In short, disruption should be seen as an invitation to evolve. The leaders who succeed are those who transform uncertainty into opportunity by fostering agility, empowering innovation, and keeping their organizations adaptable and forward-looking.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ambition and responsibility must go hand in hand. Ambitious goals give an organization direction and momentum, but without ethics, governance, and sustainability, those achievements rarely last. The real challenge for leaders is not choosing between performance and principles, but ensuring they reinforce one another.

Balancing the two starts with clarity of values. Leaders must articulate clearly what the organization stands for its ethical boundaries, governance standards, and sustainability commitments so that these become non-negotiable guardrails. When people understand that success will only be recognized if it is achieved responsibly, ambition takes on a healthier form.

Governance plays a critical role. Transparent decision-making, robust checks and balances, and accountability mechanisms ensure that growth is pursued with discipline. This protects both the organization and its stakeholders, creating confidence that ambition will not compromise integrity.





Sustainability must also be embedded into the way organizations operate. That includes financial sustainability, where growth strengthens long-term stability rather than creating fragility; environmental sustainability, where operations respect the planet's limits; and social sustainability, where businesses contribute positively to communities and society. When sustainability is seen as part of strategy rather than a side project, it aligns seamlessly with ambitious growth.

Leaders themselves must set the tone. People watch what leaders do more than what they say. By making decisions that prioritize ethics and responsibility even when it is difficult, leaders send a powerful message that values are not optional—they are integral to success.

In my view, ambition pursued without responsibility is short-lived, but responsibility pursued without ambition is uninspiring. The most effective leaders are those who weave the two together, creating organizations that not only achieve remarkable goals but do so in a way that earns trust, respect, and enduring relevance.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

This question invites reflection beyond the immediate metrics of business performance, and I find it both challenging and profoundly meaningful. Too often, we define leadership success solely by financial results or market share, but those are transient markers. Numbers tell a story of today, but they fade with time. What endures are culture, values, and the mindsets we leave behind how people feel, how they work together, and how they approach challenges long after we are gone.

Throughout my career, my focus has been on creating structures, systems, and approaches that enable people to thrive, rather than just treating immediate symptoms. For me, leadership is not about solving problems in isolation; it is about designing ecosystems where employees, partners, and stakeholders feel empowered to make decisions, take initiative, and innovate. If I leave behind organizations where resilience, collaboration, and a spirit of shared growth are part of the DNA, then I know I have achieved something far more enduring than quarterly targets or annual results.

I believe a leader's legacy is often defined less by the strategies they implement and more by the mindsets they instill. It is about fostering a culture where people are motivated not by fear or obligation, but by a sense of purpose and shared responsibility. When individuals feel both supported and challenged, when they are encouraged to think creatively and act decisively, that culture becomes self-perpetuating. Future leaders

inherit not just processes, but a mindset—an understanding of how to lead with empathy, integrity, and courage. That, to me, is a contribution that lasts.

On a broader scale, I hope my work leaves an imprint on the industry itself. One of the things I have always believed is that growth and responsibility are not mutually exclusive they can, and should, coexist. Too often, the industry measures success purely in terms of revenue or market share, treating partners, suppliers, or distributors as mere extensions of sales. My approach has been different: I have consistently sought to demonstrate that nurturing partnerships, empowering stakeholders, and creating shared value can drive both profitability and sustainability. If this mindset inspires others to act similarly, it contributes to the overall health and evolution of the industry.

Beyond the walls of business, I see an equally important opportunity in shaping communities. Business, at its heart, is a platform for impact. It is a means to create tangible benefits beyond profit. Whether through initiatives that promote education, inclusion, or social well-being, there is an enormous potential to leave a positive mark on society. The ultimate measure of success, for me, is seeing that future leaders and employees remember that it is possible and indeed essential to balance profitability with social contribution.

Reflecting further, I realize that enduring contribution is often less about grand gestures and more about consistent, thoughtful actions that build a foundation for the future. It is about embedding values into decision-making frameworks, modeling ethical behavior, and creating an environment where people feel safe to innovate, challenge the status quo, and grow. If I can leave behind organizations and networks where these principles are understood, appreciated, and practiced, then I will have achieved a legacy that truly matters.

At its core, I hope my enduring contribution will be the belief that leadership is about enabling others to thrive. Leadership is not measured by the power you hold, the title you carry, or even the numbers on a spreadsheet. It is measured by the opportunities you create for others, by the culture you cultivate, and by the ripple effect your actions produce. If this mindset continues to shape decisions, behaviors, and strategies long after I have moved on, then I know that I have succeeded in leaving a meaningful legacy.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Leadership today is both exhilarating and complex. The pace of change is faster than ever, and the challenges ahead are multifaceted from technological disruption and global competition to social inequality and environmental sustainability. For the next generation of leaders, the opportunity is immense, but so is the responsibility. My advice, distilled from years of experience, can be summarized in three guiding principles: lead with clarity, courage, and care.

Clarity is about vision and communication. It is not enough to have a strong strategy or a well-thought-out plan; a leader must ensure that every person in the organization understands the destination and their role in reaching it. When clarity is lacking, even the most talented teams can feel lost, demotivated, or fragmented. A leader's job is to articulate a vision in a way that inspires action, fosters alignment, and encourages ownership. Ask yourself regularly: can every person explain where we are going, why it matters, and how they contribute? If the answer is no, your vision is not yet clear enough. Leadership without clarity is like a ship navigating in the fog it may move, but it cannot reach its destination efficiently.

Courage is equally essential. Leadership is not about choosing the safe or popular path it is about making decisions that serve the long-term good, even if they are risky or unpopular in the short term. True courage is evident in the moments when conventional wisdom would advocate for caution, but a leader recognizes the bigger opportunity or the long-term necessity. It is the courage to challenge the status quo, to innovate, and to act decisively, even under uncertainty. This is what separates leaders who drive transformation from those who merely manage the status quo.

Equally important is care. Leadership is ultimately about people. Employees, partners, and communities are the lifeblood of any organization. While results define performance, relationships sustain it. Investing time, energy, and attention into developing talent, fostering trust, and nurturing well-being creates a foundation for long-term success. A leader who genuinely cares for the people they lead inspires loyalty, creativity, and resilience, even in the face of adversity. Leadership without care may yield short-term results, but it rarely produces enduring success.

I would also encourage young leaders to embrace disruption and change. The world they are stepping into will be defined by rapid technological advances, evolving markets, and unforeseen challenges. Change is not a threat—it is an opportunity. Leaders who approach disruption with curiosity, adaptability, and a willingness to experiment will not only survive but thrive. Some of the best opportunities often come disguised

as challenges, and those who are prepared to take calculated risks and learn from failures will find themselves ahead of the curve.

Finally, integrity and values must remain the cornerstone of leadership. Ambition, competition, and the pressure to deliver can tempt even the most principled individuals to compromise. Resist that temptation. Integrity is a timeless asset—it compounds over time and shapes not only personal reputation but the culture of the organization. Decisions made with ethical consistency today lay the foundation for trust, credibility, and influence tomorrow. Leadership is ultimately about impact, not position; about legacy, not accolades.

In practical terms, I would advise emerging leaders to invest in continuous learning—both professional and personal. Stay curious about the world, seek perspectives that challenge your own, and never assume that experience alone is sufficient. Surround yourself with diverse teams and listen actively; the best leaders are learners first. Cultivate emotional intelligence, understand the nuances of human behavior, and approach every situation with empathy. These qualities often distinguish exceptional leaders from competent managers.

Another key lesson is balancing ambition with responsibility. Leadership is often framed as the pursuit of growth, profits, or market share. While these are important, they must be pursued with an eye on the broader ecosystem—employees, partners, customers, and society at large. True leadership considers the ripple effects of decisions and strives to leave all stakeholders better off. The ability to balance short-term performance with long-term impact is a hallmark of leadership that lasts.

Above all, I would remind the next generation of leaders that leadership is a privilege and a responsibility. It is not about the title you hold, the authority you wield, or the profits you generate. It is about the difference you make, the opportunities you create, and the legacy you leave behind. If they embrace this mindset—with clarity, courage, care, and integrity—they will not only achieve success, but also contribute meaningfully to the organizations, industries, and communities they serve.

In a world of constant change, where challenges and opportunities appear simultaneously, this approach provides a compass. It reminds leaders that their actions ripple far beyond quarterly results, shaping culture, relationships, and the next generation of decision-makers. Leadership, at its heart, is an enduring commitment to enabling others to flourish, and the next generation has the potential to define what responsible, visionary, and people-centered leadership truly looks like.



Mr. Nilanga Karunaratne

I am Nilanga Karunaratne, Chairman of a diversified business group including Agroventures Plantations Pvt Ltd, Agroventures Exports Pvt Ltd, Agroventures Property Development Pvt Ltd, Business Media International Pvt Ltd, Hasara International Pvt Ltd, Ceylon Beauty House Pvt Ltd, and UAP Interiors Pvt Ltd. My leadership vision is to transform Sri Lanka into a global hub for premium agriculture, property, wellness, media, and lifestyle. With a mission to achieve USD 1 billion in exports by 2030, I lead with innovation, resilience, and sustainability, while creating world-class brands that elevate communities and redefine Sri Lanka's global presence.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision by embedding sustainability, innovation, and value creation across all companies in our group. Each subsidiary—from plantations to property to media—advances a shared mission: building globally competitive Sri Lankan brands. By integrating global market insights, advanced technologies, and sustainable practices, our strategy ensures long-term growth, adaptability, and resilience in a competitive global landscape.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The boldest and most defining decision was to elevate Sri Lankan vanilla into a billion-dollar export opportunity, positioning our plantations as a global disruptor. What others saw as impractical, I saw as transformational. The lesson: leadership requires visionary risk-taking, unwavering execution, and the courage to see potential where others see only obstacles.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I foster a culture of ownership, empowerment, and accountability across our companies. Executives are encouraged to act as entrepreneurs within their roles, backed by transparent governance and measurable KPIs. By entrusting young professionals with real responsibilities early, we create future leaders who learn resilience, adaptability, and innovation through experience.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is an accelerator of progress, not a setback. Leaders must embrace agility, data-driven decision-making, and creative problem-solving. Across our group, we harness disruption as an opportunity, whether by pioneering greenhouse farming, developing eco-luxury resorts, or leveraging digital platforms. By cultivating environments where creativity thrives, we ensure our companies remain future-ready and globally relevant.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ambition must walk hand-in-hand with integrity. Our governance frameworks uphold the highest standards of ethics and compliance, while sustainability is embedded into every business, organic agriculture, renewable energy in property development, eco-conscious tourism, and responsible media. For us, true success is the ability to achieve scale without compromising values or impact on people and planet.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business performance, I aspire to leave a legacy of redefining Sri Lanka's role in the global economy. My contribution will be measured not only in billion-dollar export targets but also in uplifted rural communities, empowered youth, global brand creation, and enduring institutions that strengthen our national identity and inspire future entrepreneurs.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Leadership is not authority; it is vision translated into disciplined execution. The next generation must dream ambitiously but remain rooted in ethics, innovation, and responsibility. Embrace disruption, leverage technology, and think globally—but always act with integrity. Remember that leaders do not just build companies; they build nations and legacies.

Mr. Jeevaka Wijesinghe

Jeevaka Wijesinghe, Co-Chairman of the SITREK Group, leads a dynamic and diversified conglomerate with operations spanning Security Services, Secure Logistics, Courier Services, Technology Solutions, Air Conditioning Solutions, Home Nursing and Higher Education. Together with his sister, Minoli Wijesinghe, he carries forward the legacy of their late father, Sanka Wijesinghe, with a deep commitment to innovation, resilience, and people-centric leadership. SITREK has emerged as a trusted national brand, setting benchmarks for excellence across multiple industries while staying rooted in values that prioritize integrity, service, and sustainable growth.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today’s competitive environment?

Our collective vision is to be the best in every industry we operate in. This shared aspiration naturally aligns our leadership direction with the broader organizational strategy. In today’s dynamic and competitive landscape, adaptability, continuous improvement, and agility are essential. At SITREK, we’re fortunate to have a highly motivated team that brings our vision to life with energy and purpose.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining decisions was navigating the transition from our joint venture with Certis Singapore—after over two decades—to rebrand and reposition ourselves as SITREK. While such a transformation typically requires extensive time and coordination, we successfully completed the entire transition and rebranding process in just four months. The key takeaway is that with clear planning, a unified and capable team, and a shared sense of purpose, even the most ambitious goals can be achieved.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At SITREK, our values—Structure, Integrity, Trustworthiness, Responsibility, Excellence, and Knowledge—are embedded in our brand and culture. These principles guide how we operate and lead. We place significant trust and responsibility in our teams, believing that leadership is about empowering others, providing guidance, and creating space for emerging leaders to grow and thrive.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Agility and adaptability are essential. Leaders must be willing to challenge the status quo, embrace change, and view disruption as a catalyst for innovation. It’s about being open to doing things differently and encouraging teams to think creatively and act boldly.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ethics, governance, and sustainability are not just compliance measures—they are the foundation of meaningful growth. At SITREK, we integrate these principles into our daily operations through continuous training, regular audits, and open communication. Setting purposeful goals that reflect these values ensure that our success is both impactful and enduring.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

We’ve always believed in giving back and creating opportunities. As a team we are committed to nurturing this culture of compassion and collective growth. I hope the directives of our organization will be one of empowering people, fostering talent, setting industry standards and building a narrative of success that is shared and inclusive.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

- Stay humble
- Be an active listener
- Surround yourself with people who challenge and support your growth
- Never stop learning

Leadership is continuous improvement. Embrace it with purpose, empathy, and a willingness to grow alongside those with you.

Mr. Delanjan Welikala

As a seasoned Pharmaceutical leader with well over 30Years 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 CEO's, 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 Iam 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 holds fellow membership in CIM (UK), LIFE Fellow Member CPM(SL) Fellow CAM (UK) MEMBER CIM(UK) Fellow MIM(MALASIA), Certified Member SLIM(SL)



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision with organizational strategy by focusing on three pillars: clarity, adaptability, and accountability. Clarity ensures that every team member understands how their contribution drives long-term objectives. Adaptability allows us to pivot in response to market disruptions while still pursuing sustainable growth. Accountability guarantees that performance and ethical standards can be maintained by not compromising either one of them. By integrating innovation and resilience into strategic planning, I ensure that the vision is not aspirational alone but actionable, creating a foundation for enduring competitiveness.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

Terminating an employee which can be absolutely be one of the most defining and defining and difficult leadership decisions. Leadership sometimes sometimes requires making decisions that are emotionally difficult but necessary for the overall strength of the team. Delaying those decisions for comfort will harm the business. The key is to act with fairness and give people a chance to improve.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe culture is shaped less by statements and more by consistent behaviors at every level. To build empowerment, I encourage open communication and calculated risk-taking without fear of failure. Accountability is embedded through clear expectations and transparent performance measurement. To nurture future leaders, I focus on mentorship, cross-functional exposure, and succession planning. This in turn helps to create a culture where individuals thrive, teams collaborate effectively, and leadership continuously regenerates.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Leaders must view disruption as an opportunity, not a threat. This requires cultivating curiosity, encouraging experimentation, and building agile structures that respond quickly to change. By embedding innovation into daily operations—rather than treating it as a side initiative—

leaders can normalize adaptability. Transparency during uncertainty also inspires confidence, while investing in emerging technologies ensures organizations remain relevant. Ultimately, the future belongs to organizations where leaders balance bold vision with agile execution.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Balancing ambition with integrity requires principle-driven leadership. I set ambitious goals but evaluate them against three filters: ethical compliance, long-term sustainability, and stakeholder value. Strong governance frameworks, transparent decision-making, and stakeholder accountability mechanisms help ensure execution remains responsible. True success is measured not only by what we achieve but also by how we achieve it — with integrity, fairness, and respect for future generations.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

I hope my lasting contribution to my organization will be creating a culture where people feel valued. I want to be known not only for the work I have done but for how I helped others succeed by encouraging teamwork, supporting and also leading with honesty. The way we treat people in the organization and the the values we promote can leave a big impact. At the end what matters most to be is making difference not just in numbers but in peoples lives.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to future leaders is simple yet profound: lead with purpose, not position. Titles may grant authority, but genuine leadership comes from vision, empathy, and integrity. Embrace technology and data, but never lose sight of the human element. Lead courageously through uncertainty, but stay humble enough to keep learning. Above all, measure your success not just in making profits and achieving targets, but in the positive, lasting impact you create for people, organizations, and society at large.

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Mr. Johann Rodrigo

Mr. Johann Rodrigo has over 38 years of experience in the plantation sector, starting as a Management Trainee with the Janatha Estates Development Board. With the privatization in 1992, he was absorbed into Kelani Valley Plantations PLC under Hayleys Group, rising to Director of Corporate Affairs. Since 2020, he has led Horana Plantations PLC as Director/CEO, driving sustainability milestones and industry leadership. Recognized for CSR and women empowerment, he received Business Leader of the Year 2025 in India, CEO of the Year 2025, and was listed among Sri Lanka's Top 10 Diversity Champions 2024. He also serves key roles in national plantation organizations.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision with organizational strategy by anchoring it on sustainability, diversification, and inclusive growth. At Horana Plantations, we embed long-term resilience into strategy through crop diversification, renewable energy adoption, and regenerative agriculture, ensuring reduced dependence on monocultures and volatile markets. My leadership fosters innovation, community empowerment, and data-driven decision-making, so every initiative—from women empowerment to carbon-neutral teas—creates business and social value. By aligning purpose-driven leadership with environmental stewardship and stakeholder trust, we build a forward-looking, competitive organization capable of sustained growth even in uncertain global conditions.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career has been steering Horana Plantations away from its dependence on monoculture toward a diversified, sustainable, and socially responsible business model. By introducing high-value crops, renewable energy, and initiatives such as She Essentia—which addressed period poverty and boosted women's productivity—I demonstrated that profitability and social impact can reinforce one another. The key lesson for others is that true leadership lies in turning challenges into opportunities: aligning business growth with environmental stewardship and community empowerment creates resilience, inspires loyalty, and builds long-term value.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At Horana Plantations, we create and sustain a culture of empowerment and accountability by aligning visionary leadership with people-centered practices. We empower individuals through inclusivity, open communication, and structured mentorship, enabling young professionals to take on key roles and contribute fresh perspectives. Accountability is reinforced by transparent decision-making, performance ownership, and a values-driven approach that integrates sustainability and social responsibility. Initiatives like She Essentia—which enhanced productivity and dignity for women employees—and diversification strategies exemplify our commitment to employee well-being and innovation. By fostering continuous learning, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, we nurture a resilient leadership pipeline ready to guide the organization into the future.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

A future-ready leader embraces disruption not as a threat but as a catalyst for transformation. At Horana Plantations, challenges like climate volatility and labor migration became opportunities to reimagine the business. By fostering creativity—eco-friendly bamboo pots, biochar, and community-driven solutions—leadership nurtured a culture of ownership and purpose. Empowering women through She Essentia proved that social responsibility and profitability are deeply connected. True leadership lies in anticipating change, inspiring innovation, and weaving sustainability into every decision. This approach transforms uncertainty into resilience, ensuring the organization thrives in a rapidly evolving world.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Horana Plantations PLC (HPL) balances ambitious business goals with high standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability through a multifaceted approach. The company aims for growth and diversification by expanding into oil palm, coconut, and intercropped crops while improving operational efficiency, quality, and profitability. At the same time, HPL upholds ethical and sustainability standards through rigorous certifications, including ISO 22000, ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001, Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Wayamba University, Arthur C Clark Foundation and EUDR compliance verified by Preferred by Nature. Governance and transparency are reinforced via integrated reporting, alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, and commitments to global initiatives such as the UN Global Compact, Climate Neutral Now, Leopard Corridor and Science-Based Targets. HPL also implements comprehensive sustainability and environmental projects, including reforestation, riverine restoration, T Shade programme, renewable energy adoption, rainwater harvesting, and carbon-neutral production practices. Social responsibility is embedded through programs for worker welfare, housing, women's empowerment, and community development. By investing in compliance systems and third-party verification, HPL ensures global standards are met without compromising productivity or market access. These initiatives, alongside risk management strategies, allow the company to pursue ambitious goals while maintaining ethical operations, minimizing environmental impact, and fostering community goodwill. Recognition such as Gold Awards in CSR and Environmental Sustainability at the Commonwealth Business Excellence Awards 2023, 2024 and 2025 reflects the effectiveness of this integrated approach.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

My enduring contribution lies in redefining the role of plantation leadership—transforming it from a purely profit-driven endeavor into a purpose-led movement that integrates sustainability, innovation, and social equity. At Horana Plantations PLC, we’ve demonstrated that resilience and profitability can coexist with environmental stewardship and community empowerment.

Through initiatives like She Essentia, we’ve addressed period poverty, improved female workforce participation, and elevated productivity—proving that human dignity is a driver of business success. Our circular economy model, renewable energy adoption, and regenerative agriculture practices have positioned us as a benchmark for climate-smart plantation management in Sri Lanka.

I hope my legacy will be a culture of inclusive leadership, where ethical governance, community well-being, and ecological responsibility are not just values—but strategic imperatives. By fostering innovation, empowering future leaders, and aligning our operations with global sustainability goals, I aim to leave behind a blueprint for a plantation sector that is resilient, regenerative, and socially conscious—one that uplifts lives, restores ecosystems, and inspires transformation across industries.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

As you step into leadership roles, remember that true leadership is not measured solely by profits or performance metrics—but by the positive legacy you leave behind.

Lead with purpose and empathy. The world needs leaders who listen deeply, act ethically, and uplift others—especially the most vulnerable. Prioritize people, planet, and progress equally. Your decisions should not only drive business success but also restore ecosystems, empower communities, and inspire innovation.

Be bold in embracing sustainability and inclusivity. The challenges ahead—climate change, inequality, and digital disruption—demand courage, creativity, and collaboration. Don’t just adapt to change—be the change.

Above all, lead with integrity and humility. Build cultures where others can thrive, where diversity is celebrated, and where every action reflects your values. Your enduring contribution will not be the titles you hold, but the lives you touch and the future you help shape.

Mr. M. Theja De Silva

I am M. Theja De Silva, Group Chief Financial Officer at Nawaloka Hospitals PLC, with over 19 years of transformative leadership across healthcare, pharmaceuticals, IT, construction, and banking. A Chartered Accountant by profession, I am recognized as a strategic steward of financial resilience and governance excellence. I am an Associate Member of CA Sri Lanka and CMA Sri Lanka, a Fellow Member of AAT Sri Lanka, and a Member of The Sri Lanka Institute of Directors. I also serve on the Council and Board of AAT Sri Lanka, advancing the profession while shaping ethical leadership. My passion lies in building sustainable, future-ready institutions that balance growth with integrity and leave a legacy of trust for society.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

As Group CFO, I believe finance is not only about managing numbers, it is about being a strategic partner in shaping the future. My vision is rooted in financial stewardship that empowers innovation while ensuring long-term resilience.

At Nawaloka, this balance has meant channeling investments into advanced digital health platforms, specialized medical expertise, and modern infrastructure, while embedding robust governance and risk management into every initiative. For instance, through the introduction of real-time financial dashboards, we reduced reporting cycles by 30% and improved decision-making speed significantly. These changes not only improved efficiency but also strengthened our ability to withstand external shocks.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career came when Nawaloka was confronted with overwhelming loan obligations and severe liquidity pressures, compounded by the national financial sever compliance issues and economic crisis. The obvious path was to cut costs drastically, scale back services, or defer investments. However, I believed that such actions would have eroded patient trust and undermined the very purpose of the institution.

Instead, I chose to pursue a strategy of restructuring over retrenchment. By negotiating with financial institutions and maintaining transparent dialogue with lenders, we successfully restructured loans, eased repayment pressures, and rebuilt stakeholder confidence. At the same time, I made the deliberate choice to reinvest in core healthcare services safeguarding more than 2,000 jobs, sustaining patient care, and preserving the hospital's reputation.

This dual approach not only stabilized our financial position but also created a stronger platform for recovery and future growth. The key lesson I carry, and one I encourage others to embrace, is that true leadership in times of crisis is not about reacting with cuts, but about balancing immediate financial pressures with long-term sustainability, and always keeping people and purpose at the heart of every decision.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

In healthcare, where every decision can impact lives, culture is not a soft concept, it is the heartbeat of organizational excellence. At Nawaloka, we foster empowerment through a culture of transparency, shared responsibility, and recognition. Every department has visibility into how its work contributes to our larger mission, creating a sense of purpose and ownership across the organization.

To nurture future leaders, we introduced the "Future Leaders Program", where emerging managers are mentored by senior executives. Already, more than 50 participants have advanced into top line leadership roles, strengthening our talent pipeline. We also emphasize structured accountability through

clear KPIs and performance scorecards, but always pair this with recognition and mentorship. Our "Excellence in Service" platform celebrates outstanding clinical and non-clinical contributions every quarter, reinforcing pride and teamwork. This dual approach accountability with recognition, and discipline with mentorship has built stronger teams while nurturing a pipeline of leaders who embody financial discipline, operational excellence, and compassionate care.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is the new constant driven by technology, shifting consumer expectations, or global challenges. Leaders cannot treat it as an obstacle; they must view it as a springboard for transformation.

We navigated disruption by accelerating the adoption of telemedicine services during challenging times, enabling patients to access care remotely and safely. We also began experimenting with AI-driven solutions to optimize patient flow and reduce wait times, and implemented data analytics frameworks that gave us sharper insights into operational efficiency. These moves not only solved immediate challenges but also laid the groundwork for long-term competitiveness.

For me, the key lies in fostering a culture of agility and experimentation encouraging teams to pilot ideas, learn quickly, and adapt. The most future-ready organizations are not the ones that avoid disruption but the ones that embrace it, learn from it, and transform it into opportunity.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Ambition without ethics is hollow. True leadership is measured not only by growth but by the ability to achieve it without compromising on values. At Nawaloka, this principle guides every decision. Our expansion and modernization initiatives are always pursued within a framework of strong governance, regulatory compliance, and sustainability.

For example, we have digitized core financial processes, reducing manual errors and significantly improving transparency across the organization. Our paperless workflow program has cut paper usage by nearly 45%, contributing to environmental sustainability. Meanwhile, our CSR health camps have provided free healthcare services to over 10,000 underserved patients in rural Sri Lanka, extending our mission beyond the hospital walls.

These initiatives demonstrate that profitability, ethics, and social responsibility are not contradictions, but complementary drivers of long-term success. In my view, real ambition is not only about profitability it is about credibility, trust, and the positive legacy an organization leaves for future generations.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

I believe my enduring contribution must go beyond financial stability and operational milestones. My aspiration is to help shape an institution that embodies trust, resilience, and ethical leadership a hospital group respected not only for its medical excellence but also for setting benchmarks in governance, accountability, and community impact.

In here I strive to embed a culture where integrity and responsibility guide every decision, ensuring that growth is sustainable and aligned with societal well-being. I am equally proud to contribute to the wider profession through my service on the Council and Board of AAT Sri Lanka, where I work to shape future professionals who are both technically skilled and ethically grounded.

If I am remembered for strengthening organizational resilience while instilling a culture of integrity, accountability, and purpose, I would consider that my greatest achievement. Ultimately, I want my legacy to reflect an institution that not only delivers excellence in healthcare but also heals with compassion, leads with responsibility, and proves that business can be both profitable and purposeful.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

All should always remember that leadership is both a privilege and a responsibility. You will face environments shaped by disruption, financial uncertainty, and rapid transformation, but it is within these challenges that your character and vision will be tested.

Lead with courage, making bold yet prudent decisions that ensure long-term sustainability rather than short-term gains. Lead with compassion, understanding that people are the most valuable asset of any enterprise, and that empowering them creates the strongest foundations for growth. And lead with integrity, because trust is the ultimate currency of business, and once lost it is almost impossible to regain.

From a financial lens, I urge you to view every decision not just in terms of profit, but in terms of value creation value for stakeholders, for employees, for customers, and for society. A true leader is not remembered for quarterly numbers but for building institutions of resilience, credibility, and purpose.

My advice is simple align ambition with accountability, balance innovation with governance, and always put purpose alongside performance. If you do, you will not only lead successful organizations but also leave behind legacies that outlive you.

Mr. Nalaka Wakkumbura

Mr. Nalaka Wakkumbura is the Managing Director of Wakkumbura Industrial Technology Company (WITCO), a leading Sri Lankan enterprise recognized for innovation, ethical leadership, and sustainable growth. With over two decades of entrepreneurial and managerial experience, he has successfully diversified WITCO's portfolio across chemicals, gloves, industrial solutions, and global exports. His leadership emphasizes governance, inclusion, and resilience, underpinned by digital transformation and people empowerment. Nationally and internationally recognized, Mr. Wakkumbura continues to inspire excellence by aligning business success with societal impact, ensuring WITCO's contribution to both economic



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision centers on building an organization that is resilient, inclusive, and purpose-driven. At WITCO, I have aligned this vision with strategy by embedding sustainability, innovation, and governance into every business decision. For example, we shifted dependency from apparel to new verticals such as gloves, home & personal care, and industrial solutions, ensuring balanced growth. Technology integration through ERP, CRM, and HRIS systems enhanced efficiency and transparency, supporting both growth and governance. By cultivating a culture of collaboration and accountability, we maintain agility to respond to market volatility while remaining anchored to our long-term purpose: enabling excellence through ethical practices, sustainable products, and stakeholder trust. This vision-strategy alignment has positioned WITCO to anticipate industry shifts, mitigate risks such as forex volatility and supply chain disruption, and seize opportunities in global markets. Ultimately, our resilience comes from balancing profitability with people-centric values, making sure our growth benefits employees, customers, and the wider community.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining decision in my career was steering WITCO away from its heavy reliance on the global apparel industry, which once contributed 75% of our revenue. Post-COVID demand shocks exposed this vulnerability, and I led a decisive pivot into the glove industry and diversified product portfolios. This strategic move reduced apparel dependency to 50% while creating new revenue streams that now account for 25% of our business. Implementing a robust dollar hedging strategy further protected us from currency volatility, safeguarding financial health. The lesson here is that leadership requires courage to disrupt the status quo and foresight to identify emerging opportunities before they mature. It also reinforces the importance of aligning innovation with risk mitigation—diversification was not just growth-driven but a survival necessity. For others, the takeaway is clear: resilience stems from adaptability. Leaders must anticipate change, act decisively, and trust their teams to deliver transformation with discipline and ownership.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At WITCO, culture is not defined by slogans but by daily practice. I cultivate empowerment by delegating authority with clear accountability, ensuring decisions are made closer to the action. Regular EXCO reviews, scrum-style team huddles, and one-on-one sessions create transparency and allow issues to surface quickly. Policies such as a four-day work week, “no-question” leave, and unified medical coverage for all employees build trust and fairness. Training programs, English courses based on proficiency, and post-training peer evaluations reinforce a learning culture

while strengthening communication and leadership skills. Importantly, I champion diversity and inclusion, maintaining a 60:40 gender ratio and integrating differently abled talent through partnerships. These initiatives foster psychological safety and belonging, motivating employees to take ownership of outcomes. Recognition as one of Sri Lanka's 50 Best Workplaces in 2024 reflects the strength of this culture. My belief is simple: empowered people drive accountability, and accountable people become tomorrow's leaders.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is inevitable; leaders either react to it or anticipate it. My approach is to view disruption as an opportunity for transformation. For example, forex volatility threatened financial stability, so I introduced a netted dollar inflow-outflow system to hedge against risk. Similarly, post-COVID shifts in demand led us to diversify into gloves and eco-conscious product lines, supported by partnerships with global suppliers in Italy and Switzerland. To inspire innovation, I encourage teams to experiment within a responsible framework—failures are treated as lessons, not setbacks. Digital platforms like ERP and CRM enable data-driven decisions, while inclusive brainstorming sessions tap into diverse perspectives. I also emphasize sustainability as a driver of innovation, embedding ISO standards and ESG principles into product and process development. By aligning innovation with purpose, we stay future-ready. Leaders must communicate a clear vision, create safe spaces for creativity, and lead by example in embracing change.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, ambitious goals and ethics are inseparable. At WITCO, every strategic initiative is reviewed through a governance lens. Diversification into new markets was preceded by ethical supplier vetting and compliance audits. Our ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001 certifications prove that quality, environment, and safety are embedded in operations, not treated as afterthoughts. Financial risk mitigation through dollar hedging demonstrates responsible stewardship of resources, protecting both shareholders and employees. Diversity and inclusion practices ensure fairness in hiring, promotion, and benefits—whether through equal pay reviews, gender-balanced leadership, or unified medical coverage across grades. Ambitious revenue growth is pursued, but never at the cost of transparency or social responsibility. We also invest in community-focused CSR initiatives such as monthly almsgivings, Bodhi poojas, and volunteerism, reinforcing that our success must benefit society. The balance is maintained by aligning strategy with purpose: growth.



6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond financial results, I aspire for my enduring contribution to be building an organization that people trust, respect, and feel proud to belong to. At WITCO, this has meant embedding governance into culture, creating inclusive opportunities, and proving that profitability and purpose can coexist. The diversification strategy ensures WITCO's resilience, while our DEI practices foster an empowered workforce. Our recognition at national platforms—from the National Business Excellence Awards to Best Management Practices Company Award—validates that leadership can deliver both business outcomes and ethical impact. I also see my contribution in mentoring the next generation of leaders, equipping them with not only technical skills but values of integrity and empathy. For the industry, my goal is to demonstrate that Sri Lankan companies can be globally competitive while rooted in ethics. For the community, it is about showing that business can uplift lives, create opportunities, and contribute to national progress.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message to emerging leaders is simple: leadership is not about authority, it is about responsibility. The world you are stepping into is volatile, complex, and fast-changing—yet full of opportunity. To succeed, you must combine foresight with agility, and ambition with integrity. Never compromise on governance and ethics, because trust is the foundation of leadership. Invest in people: empower them, respect diversity, and create a culture where ideas thrive. Technology and innovation will be your enablers, but empathy will be your compass. Measure success not just in profit, but in impact—on employees, customers, and society. Learn from disruption, but never fear it. Above all, remember that leadership is a privilege. Use it to build not just stronger companies, but stronger communities and a better world. If you lead with purpose, growth and recognition will follow naturally. Leadership is not about you—it's about what you enable for others.

Mr.S.H. Channa Rodrigo

With over 25 years of marketing expertise and two decades of proven managerial leadership, I specialize in driving strategic growth, operational excellence, and high-performing teams in the construction and real estate sector. Currently serving as General Manager – Waterproofing & Insulation at Ceyoka (Pvt) Ltd, I oversee major projects and divisional performance with a focus on innovation, efficiency, and client value creation.

I hold a Master's in Marketing Management from the University of Colombo and have led landmark initiatives such as the "City of Dreams" Colombo project valued over LKR 600 million. Under my leadership, the division has achieved over 100% revenue growth, while fostering a culture of collaboration, skill development, and customer-centric excellence.

My contributions have been recognized through consecutive Best Management Practices Company Awards in two consecutive years, underscoring my commitment to industry-leading standards and sustainable business success.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision with organizational strategy by inspiring a clear long-term direction, anticipating industry trends, and investing in workforce development and supplier partnerships. This integrated approach has enabled resilience and sustainable growth, with the Waterproofing and Insulation divisions achieving over 100% revenue growth. Additionally, our strengthened market credibility, reinforced through ICTAD certification, reflects my commitment to operational excellence, stakeholder trust, and enduring industry leadership.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining decisions in my career was revitalizing the Insulation Division by forging partnerships with reliable new suppliers and investing in staff retraining. What was once a declining business unit was transformed into a remarkable 88% revenue growth within a single year. This experience reinforced my belief that decisive strategic change, coupled with people empowerment, can convert adversity into long-term success.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I nurture a culture of accountability and empowerment by introducing continuous training, job enrichment, and daily technical meetings. This approach fosters proactive problem-solving, develops multi-skilled teams, and cultivates leadership at all levels—ensuring not only operational efficiency today but also a strong pipeline of future leaders for tomorrow.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

By capitalizing on emerging opportunities and introducing innovative practices—such as flexible workforce development and knowledge-sharing platforms—I ensured continuity during labor shortages. Our divisions adopted new supplier strategies and enhanced customer service models, making us future-ready and more competitive.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I emphasize achieving ambitious revenue and market growth targets while upholding strong ethical practices, governance, and safety standards. Enhanced occupational health and safety protocols not only safeguarded employees but also earned external certifications, proving that business excellence and responsible governance go hand in hand.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business results, I aim for my legacy to be the development of people and systems that outlast my tenure. Building resilient divisions, instilling a culture of strategic leadership, and earning industry recognition contribute not only to my company but also to raising standards in Sri Lanka's construction sector.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

To the next generation, I would emphasize adaptability, continuous learning, and ethical leadership. Success lies in inspiring teams, embracing innovation, and creating value beyond profits ensuring that leadership is measured not only by results but also by the impact left on people, industries, and communities.

Mrs. Sheromi Samaradiwakara

As a founder and Director of Technomedics Int'l (Pvt) Ltd, She brings over 15 years of experience in management, with specialized expertise in administration and HR. She is the Founder Directress of LUSH Medical Aesthetics and Skin Clinique and Chairperson of Look Amazing (Pvt) Ltd. She was instrumental in establishing LUSH Medical Aesthetics as the only entity in Sri Lanka where doctors, clinicians, and beauticians collaborate with premium brands. Her leadership is defined by a commitment to people empowerment and a high degree of excellence in brand conceptualization and management.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

My leadership vision is centered on identifying and capitalizing on emerging market needs by pioneering new, distinct brand identities. I align this by embedding a customer-centric approach at every stage of our strategy. For LUSH Medical Aesthetics, my vision was to fill a market gap by offering a premium, integrated service. This was translated into our strategy by focusing on sourcing state-of-the-art equipment and building a unique team of interdisciplinary professionals. This not only ensured long-term growth by creating a new market segment but also built brand resilience by establishing a reputation for quality and expertise that competitors cannot easily replicate.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision was the conceptualization and launch of LUSH Medical Aesthetics. At the time, the market was saturated with conventional beauty salons, and introducing a medical aesthetics concept was a significant risk. The lesson here is that true excellence lies in defining a new market, not just competing in an existing one. I saw an opportunity for a high-value, medically-backed brand that would appeal to discerning clients. By committing to this vision and meticulously building the brand from the ground up, we created a new standard in the industry. It taught me that courage and clarity in brand positioning are far more valuable than simply following trends.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe in building a "family culture" where every employee feels valued and supported. My leadership style emphasizes open communication and empathy. We foster empowerment by providing our teams with the resources and autonomy to excel. For instance, in our new ventures, we give team members the space to innovate and shape their own roles, which naturally drives a high level of accountability. By providing a nurturing environment for growth, we empower our people to step up and take on leadership roles, ensuring a pipeline of talent that is deeply aligned with our organizational values.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Leaders must be proactive architects of change, not just reactive observers. To navigate disruption, I believe in constantly questioning the

status quo and listening intently to consumer needs. For example, my insight into the market for a comprehensive beauty solution led to the creation of Tanglio, which integrates multiple services under one roof. This innovative campaign and customer-centric strategy allowed us to disrupt the traditional model. Inspiring innovation is about creating a culture where new ideas are not just welcomed but actively sought out, ensuring that the organization remains agile and at the forefront of market trends.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

For me, success is incomplete without integrity. I ensure that our ambitious goals are always pursued within a framework of strong ethics and governance. When developing a unique brand like LUSH, our commitment to using only premium brands and collaborating with qualified medical professionals was non-negotiable. This not only upheld the highest standards but also became a core element of our brand's appeal and reputation management. Our women empowerment initiatives are another example of how we balance business goals with social sustainability, ensuring our growth creates a positive impact on both our employees and the wider community.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond the significant revenue growth, I hope my enduring contribution will be the legacy of a corporate culture that feels like a family. My focus on interpersonal relationships and employee development has fostered an environment where people are bonded together, creating a sense of loyalty and shared purpose. In the industry, I hope my work with LUSH Medical Aesthetics will have set a new benchmark for excellence and professionalism, elevating the entire sector. To the community, my contributions to women empowerment are a testament to my belief that business success should be a catalyst for social good.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My advice to the next generation is to focus on people first. A company's greatest asset is its team. By building a strong, cohesive culture and investing in the professional and personal growth of your people, you create a foundation for lasting success. Second, be a builder, not just a manager. Look for opportunities to create new value, pioneer new markets, and develop new brands. Finally, never compromise on your values. Your reputation is your most valuable asset, and it is built on consistency, integrity, and a genuine commitment to the people you serve.

Ms. T.H.K. Perera

As a finance professional, my main focus is analyzing feasibility, ensuring and evaluating accountability, and aligning resources with sustainable growth of the different industries in the private sector.

Further, I bring a unique ability to balance financial feasibility with strategic growth empowering the group of companies to address today's challenges while building a foundation for both tomorrow's opportunities and challenges.

I began my professional education at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, earning a Bachelor of Commerce degree specializing in Accountancy, where I built a strong academic foundation in finance and accounting. Over the years, I refined and expanded my expertise through multiple professional accounting bodies, gaining rigorous training and international exposure in financial management. Beyond accounting, I have cultivated a strong interest in business administration and management, equipping me with the ability to see the bigger picture — not only analyzing numbers but also shaping strategy, operations, and leadership. This blend of financial discipline and managerial vision enables me to contribute effectively across diverse sectors, balancing feasibility with growth, compliance with innovation, and present needs with future opportunities.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

By ensuring my leadership vision is closely tie to organizational strategy, I aim to foster long-term growth and resilience in an increasingly competitive environment. I focus on several key areas. First, I emphasize stronger financial discipline, ensuring that resources are managed efficiently and aligned with strategic priorities. This is reinforced by implementing sound investment plans that balance short-term returns with long-term value creation.

Equally important is driving continuous change management, where I foster a culture that embraces innovation and adaptability, ensuring the organization can pivot effectively in response to evolving market conditions. This requires maintaining active stakeholder engagement, building trust, and aligning diverse interests toward common goals.

My approach also includes being proactive in addressing change and challenges, rather than reacting to them, so the organization can anticipate risks and seize opportunities ahead of competitors. Collectively, these practices contribute to increased long-term sustainability, strengthening the organization's resilience and positioning it for consistent growth in a highly competitive environment.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

My leadership decision is to diversify our business into other sectors, such as healthcare and hospitality, as part of our long-term investment plan. Furthermore, instead of directly managing these ventures, we will empower professional management teams and provide them ownership opportunities to ensure sustainable growth and accountability.

We firmly believed that investment should not be placed in a single basket. During the pandemic, this principle guided our decision to diversify the company's operations across multiple areas, which helped mitigate risk and create new opportunities. At the same time, the top management recognized the importance of employee empowerment. We introduced a culture of ownership by entrusting business units to capable employees, giving them both responsibility and decision-making authority. This not only motivated our teams but also unlocked hidden potential within the organization. As a result, those units operated with greater agility, accountability, and innovation, achieving strong performance despite the external challenges. This experience reinforced the importance of diversification and shared leadership in driving resilience and long-term growth.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

Creating and sustaining a culture that empowers future leaders begins with a leadership approach that goes beyond simply managing employees, it is about empowering them. I believe in giving individuals mental freedom and flexibility in decision-making at their level, which builds confidence and trust. By offering ownership and accountability, to them they feel directly connected to outcomes and are motivated to perform at their best.

Recognition plays a vital role, so I ensure that contributions are consistently acknowledged and appreciated, reinforcing positive behaviors and encouraging continuous improvement. At the same time, it is required to create opportunities for others to grow, whether through new responsibilities, mentoring, or leadership pathways, ensuring that the organization is always nurturing its next level of leaders.

This balanced approach of empowerment, accountability, recognition, and growth opportunities creates a sustainable culture where people are motivated to succeed today while also preparing themselves and also the organization for tomorrow's leadership challenges.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

In my view, the best way to navigate disruption is to view change not as a threat but as an opportunity. In a diverse group like Vision Care group spanning Eye care and Hearing care, hospitals, hotels, and restaurants chain each sector faces unique challenges, but the common factor is the need to adapt quickly and smartly to technology-driven change.

We must be willing to adopt new technologies, especially in areas like data analytics and Artificial Intelligence, to improve decision-making, enhance customer experience, and drive efficiency. For example, AI can support personalized customer care in eye care and hearing care, predictive patient services in hospitals, smart cost management in hospitality, and demand forecasting in restaurants.

Further it is important, leaders need to think beyond the current level, break traditional boundaries, and encourage teams to innovate rather than just maintain the current situation. By fostering a culture of openness to change, we can inspire creativity across all our businesses and keep the organization future-ready.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Balancing ambitious goals with strong ethics, governance, and sustainability starts with ensuring that growth never comes at the cost of compliance or integrity. In our group, we place high importance on adhering to accounting standards, finance regulations, and tax obligations, which are not only legal requirements but also a vital contribution to the country's income. We deal with a wide range of taxes across our businesses and remain fully compliant with Sri Lanka Customs, Central Bank rules, and other governing authorities. This discipline builds trust with stakeholders and ensures long-term financial stability.

Beyond compliance, we actively pursue a "green theme" across our operations. We are moving towards a paperless environment, adopting digital payments, and investing in solar projects to reduce energy waste. Many of our companies are ISO certified, which demonstrates our commitment to quality, safety, and sustainability standards.

Equally important are our people and community. We believe in providing fair wages, safe working conditions, a healthy workplace, and insurance schemes for employees, ensuring their wellbeing while inspiring high engagement and innovation. At the same time, through CSR initiatives and donations, the Vision Care group contributes to society and extends our responsibility beyond business.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Looking beyond business results, I help to develop people and strengthen the community. One of them is training and development for the employees through the Vision Care Academy, third-party programs, or professional forums. We encourage continuous learning by offering tax and finance updates, supporting staff in their professional development, and creating leadership opportunities within the group. It makes not just building a workforce, but future leaders.

Another part of my legacy is ensuring our group's economic contribution. With 25 companies within the group, we pay a significant amount as taxes to the government, which directly supports the country's development. At the same time, we provide job opportunities, including for the younger generation just after their A/L examinations, helping them start their careers and grow with us.

Equally, it is important to give our commitment to the community and society. Through CSR initiatives, we organize an annual island-wide art competition, support tree planting campaigns, organize beach cleaning projects, provide aid during natural disasters and conduct clean drinking water projects for needy people. We also invest in healthcare from building hospitals such as in Mount Lavinia and Kurunegala that uplift regional infrastructure, to offering free cataract surgeries through Mount Lotus Hospital, free spectacles, and eye care partnerships from Vision Care. We extend our wellness programs to employees and their families, and to the wider community through medical checkup programs.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message to the next generation is: never stop learning. Be a lifelong learner and commit to continuous professional growth, because the world is changing faster than ever, and only those who keep adapting will sustain.

At the same time, one of the most important point in leadership is taking care of people. Prioritise mental health and wellbeing of the employee and the teams. Because sustainable success is only possible when people are healthy and motivated.

On the business side, we must always look at the bigger picture. If we have foreign currency going outward, we should also create opportunities for foreign exchange income, ensuring our businesses strengthen the national economy. And in everything we do, we must be transparent with employees and society, because trust is the foundation of good leadership.

Finally, leadership is never a solo act. Teamwork is essential, and leaders must inspire their people to believe in themselves and the organization. My advice is to always think: "Yes, we can" with that mindset, no challenge is too big, and every disruption can be turned into opportunity.



Prof. Lal G. Chandrasena

Prof. Lal G. Chandrasena is a Clinical Biochemist with over 38 years experience in academia, hospital administration, and laboratory sciences. B.Sc. (Hons) and Ph.D. from the University of Liverpool, Post-doctoral Fellow, Colorado State University, Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry, University of Kelaniya. Executive Director/General Manager of Nawaloka Hospitals PLC since 2003, and holds directorships across several Nawaloka entities including education, laboratories, and international ventures. Fellow of several esteemed professional institutions, including American Association for Clinical Chemistry, the Royal Society of Chemistry, the National Academy of Sciences Sri Lanka, Fellow of the College of Chemical Pathologists of Sri Lanka, Fellow-CPM. Honored with the National Honour 'Vidya Jyothi' (2017), Council member of the Private Health Services Regulatory Council, Ministry of Health.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

As Director/General Manager of Nawaloka Hospitals PLC, my leadership vision is technology-enabled, patient-centric, and values-driven, which directly aligns with our organizational strategy for long-term growth and resilience. This alignment was tested and validated during the past two years, when Nawaloka moved from significant losses to achieving a Group profit of LKR 56 million in 2025. This turnaround reflects both resilience and disciplined execution.

We embedded innovation at the core of our strategy, introducing South Asia's first AI-powered radiology unit, expanding telemedicine and mobile laboratories, and digitizing patient records to enhance accuracy, speed, and accessibility. In parallel, we drove a data-driven financial recovery, with predictive dashboards, rigorous cost controls, and liquidity discipline restoring profitability and enabling reinvestment in growth.

Strong governance and oversight from the Board and Risk Management Committee ensured that execution remained ethical, transparent, and adaptive. As a result, patient satisfaction rose to 80% recommendation levels, staff empowerment initiatives secured recognition as a Great Place to Work in 2024, and shareholder value more than doubled within a year.

For me, aligning vision with strategy means ensuring Nawaloka not only withstands disruption but actively shapes the future—turning challenges into opportunities while delivering trusted, world-class healthcare to every patient

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career was choosing to transform challenges into opportunities during the post-pandemic recovery. While many organizations focused merely on survival, we took the bold step of reimagining healthcare delivery through digital transformation.

At a time when Sri Lanka urgently needed large-scale laboratory investigations and short-term residential facilities, we pioneered nationwide solutions. This included establishing facilities at Immigration and Emigration points, converting four major Colombo hotels into emergency care centers, and delivering island-wide residential care aligned with global and local health guidelines. Managing human resources, logistics, and patient care simultaneously under immense

pressure was a turning point—both for the organization and for me as a leader.

Beyond emergency response, we invested in telemedicine, electronic medical records, AI-assisted diagnostics, and integrated financial systems—not as tools for prestige, but as a patient-centered model of care. This high-risk decision became the cornerstone of our resilience and growth.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

A truly empowered culture is built on trust, respect, and opportunity. At Nawaloka, we believe that every individual—whether a young recruit or a senior professional—possesses untapped potential. Our role as leaders is to unlock that potential by providing autonomy to act and clarity in accountability.

We have embedded this philosophy through leadership development programs, structured mentoring, and cross-functional exposure. It is our policy to engage staff to different tiers of management to be ready to take up future responsibilities.

In essence, we foster an environment where individuals grow, teams thrive, and leadership is continuously renewed—ensuring that Nawaloka Hospitals remains resilient, innovative, and future-ready.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Disruption is no longer an occasional challenge—it has become the new reality. True leadership lies not in resisting disruption, but in transforming it into opportunity.

In healthcare, the pace of change is rapid, driven by breakthroughs in medical technology, diagnostics, and artificial intelligence. These forces, combined with economic volatility, have tested our ability to adapt. At Nawaloka Hospitals, we have consistently been pioneers in adopting cutting-edge technology for over four decades. A recent example is our Rs. 1.3 billion investment in a fully-fledged AI-powered Radiology Centre, undertaken even as we emerged from economic crisis. This decision reflects both resilience and foresight, proving that innovation is possible even amid uncertainty.

At Nawaloka Hospitals, this mindset has allowed us to use disruption to redefine healthcare delivery in Sri Lanka



5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

The patient is the center of activities in whatever we engage in as a healthcare institution and thus patients' rights and responsibilities plays a crucial role. Therefore, ethics, governance, and sustainability keep us grounded and trusted. As a publicly listed company on the Colombo Stock Exchange since 2004, we are bound by stringent PLC standards, which reinforce these values across all aspects of our operations.

We strive to ensure patient safety and that care remains uncompromised. Governance provides the framework for transparency, fairness, and accountability, strengthening the confidence of patients, employees, regulators, and investors alike. To this end, we maintain a strong committee structure, including the Audit, Nomination, Related Party Transactions, Risk Management, and Remuneration Committees, ensuring compliance, oversight, and accountability at every level.

Equally, we understand that strategy and sustainability coupled with Innovation is the way forward. We are committed to the on-going green healthcare practices through energy-efficient infrastructure, responsible waste management, and initiatives that reduce environmental footprint.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Business results are important, but they are invariably subject to change. Figures fade, markets shift, and achievements are soon surpassed. What endures is the legacy of people, institutions, and values. My greatest hope is to instill a healthcare culture where compassion and excellence are embraced as key values.

At Nawaloka hospital we not only care, we do also contribute to the future by way of research and development and continuing medical education for professionals. The establishment of Nawaloka Hospital Research and Education Foundation established in the year 2017 is a testimony to this.

For me, the enduring contribution is threefold. First, to empower professionals who carry forward higher standards of care and leadership, ensuring that our people remain the true strength of the institution. Second, to build resilient systems that outlive individuals, institutions that can adapt, innovate, and thrive for decades to come. Third, to instill trust in healthcare, where patients see hospitals not merely as businesses, but as partners of healing, dignity, and hope.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

I would say, lead with conscience, courage, and clarity of purpose. The future will be marked by relentless disruption and complexity. Authority alone will not suffice, leaders must inspire trust, enable innovation, and safeguard values.

As a leader one must be a professional and be confident to make decisions and have the humility to keep learning. It is important to build good relations with all levels of staff within the organization peers across industries, and stakeholders in society. Be humble in your achievements and resilient in difficult times.

A leader must also embody discipline and professionalism, setting the standard in conduct and presentation. Respect is earned not through position alone but also through respect for others. Leadership is not about personal success but about elevating others, sustaining values, and leaving a legacy of trust and impact.

During my tenure for the last 22 years as Executive Director, Chairman and the Directors have been a source of inspiration, guidance and strength which is essential to nurture a good leader and I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude for their support over the years.

Mr. Ray Abeywardena

Ray Abeywardena is a career capital markets professional with over three decades of experience across stockbroking and investment banking in Sri Lanka. His career began as a Stockbroker and in 2009, he transitioned into Investment Banking, a move that positioned him at the forefront of the industry's evolution. Today, he serves as the Managing Director and Group CEO of HNB Investment Bank where he leads strategy, governance and performance across the group's capital markets operations.

His leadership has been defined by a commitment to client centric investment solutions, regulatory integrity and fostering long term value creation for stakeholders. Prior to his current role he served as Managing Director and CEO of DFCC Stockbrokers from 2001 to 2008 steering the company through critical market cycles and contributing to the modernization of Sri Lanka's equity markets.

He is the Chairman of the Central Depository Systems and also serves as a Director at the Colombo Stock Exchange, CSE Clear (Pvt) Ltd, Lanka Ventures PLC and LVL Energy Fund PLC playing an active role in shaping the strategic direction of Sri Lanka's capital markets. He is also a past Chairman of the Colombo Stock Exchange.

His educational credentials include an MBA from the University of Wales, a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK), while also being a Certified Management Accountant (Australia). This combination supports a leadership approach rooted in strategic thinking, analytical insight and long term stakeholder value.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I have always believed that strategy must be guided by purpose and discipline. At HNB Investment Bank, I align my vision by ensuring we focus on client centricity, governance and forward looking solutions. In 2024 this meant strengthening our advisory platform, integrating ESG into our investment narratives and deepening institutional partnerships. Anticipating evolving client needs and market shifts is central to this approach, enabling the design of solutions before demand becomes explicit. By aligning our goals with both market realities and stakeholder needs, I aim to ensure the organization remains resilient while building a platform for sustainable growth in the future.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

One of the most defining decisions in my career was moving from stockbroking to investment banking in 2009. After spending over two decades in stockbroking, it meant stepping out of a well-established comfort zone and embracing a completely new space. It was a pivotal change that gave me the opportunity to contribute more meaningfully to Sri Lanka's capital markets. The lesson I take from it is that leaders must be willing to embrace change, even when it involves risk or discomfort. Growth often comes when we step outside of what is familiar and adapt ourselves to new opportunities.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

I believe culture starts with clarity and trust. At HNB Investment Bank, I make it a point to communicate openly and set clear expectations through structured KPIs while also giving teams the space to take ownership of their work. Equally important is the ability to empathise with people and understand their perspectives, especially in a demanding industry. I focus heavily on mentoring, cross functional exposure and leadership development because I want our professionals to see a long term future in this industry. Empowerment is important, but so is accountability. When people feel trusted, supported and understood, they naturally rise to the challenge and grow as leaders.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

For me, disruption is not something to resist, it is something to use as a catalyst. At HNB Investment Bank, we responded to shifting market dynamics by developing structured finance solutions, hybrid fundraising models and

embracing digital technology across all operations. This included adopting advanced IT systems, AI driven analytics and automation tools to enhance client delivery, improve efficiency and strengthen decision making. I encourage my teams to approach challenges with creativity and discipline, because innovation does not happen in isolation. The best way to stay future ready is to keep adapting, keep learning and keep aligning innovation with the real needs of clients and markets.

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I have always seen ambition and ethics as two sides of the same coin. In investment banking, trust is everything. Governance, transparency and integrity guide every decision we make. We have consistently been at the forefront of raising funds and providing investment solutions that support sustainable growth. For me, ambitious goals must always be pursued within the framework of responsible finance, because that is what ensures long term value for clients and communities alike.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond transactions and results, my focus is on strengthening the capital markets ecosystem of Sri Lanka through professionalism, ethics, governance and empathy as core principles. Building a culture where teamwork, collaboration and integrity are integral to every decision is central to this approach. Mentoring the next generation of investment bankers, supporting inclusive financial access and embedding sustainability into mainstream finance are key priorities. By fostering strong teams and encouraging open communication, the organization can deliver long term value for clients, stakeholders and the broader community while shaping a responsible and resilient industry.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

My message to the next generation is simple: a leader is only as strong as the team they build. Lead with integrity, stay adaptable, and approach challenges with empathy. The environment ahead will be full of disruption, but it will also be full of opportunity. Invest in your people, make bold yet thoughtful decisions, and always balance performance with responsibility. Leadership is not defined by recognition or position, it is measured by trust. Earn that trust, nurture your team, and your impact will ripple far beyond business results.

Mr. Hasith Prematillake

Mr. Hasith Prematillake has served as Managing Director of Hayleys Fentons Limited and its subsidiaries since 2018, bringing over 15 years of senior leadership experience across multiple industries. Under his guidance, the company has become a market leader in Sri Lanka's renewable energy and and sustainable engineering sectors. He has driven landmark projects through renewable energy systems, integrated facility management and innovative MEP solutions, building a culture of operational excellence and sector-wide collaboration. He holds an MBA (Merit) from the University of Colombo, a BSc Engineering (Hons) from the University of Moratuwa, is a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and serves as a Council Member of the Chamber of Construction Industry Sri Lanka.





1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

I align my leadership vision with organisational strategy by translating bold, long-term goals into actionable initiatives across all business areas. At Hayleys Fentons, this means driving Sri Lanka's clean energy and engineering transformation while fostering collaboration rather than competition. We embed this vision across our 12 key sectors: Renewable Energy, Mobility Solutions, ICT Systems, Electrical & Lighting, Fire Safety, Air Conditioning & Ventilation, Plumbing & Gas, Security & Communication, Audio-Visual Integration, UPS & Battery Backups, Facilities Management, and Architectural 3D Visualisation.

By synchronising our strategy with national priorities, we achieved over 300 MW of installed solar capacity, with over 7500 customers, captured a 25% market share, and catalysed sector-wide growth. This approach ensures resilience, drives innovation, and positions Hayleys Fentons as a leader both in the industry and in the sphere of sustainable national development.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

The most defining leadership decision in my career came in 2022, when I identified a critical opportunity in Sri Lanka's renewable energy sector. Rising energy costs, chronic power shortages, and a national sustainability push created unprecedented demand. To capitalise on this, I expanded our renewable energy team, recruiting specialised sales professionals to grow market reach and operational experts to deliver projects efficiently and to the highest standards. We also strengthened processes to handle higher volumes without compromising quality.

I personally engaged with new recruits to ensure alignment with our vision of leading Sri Lanka's clean energy transition. The results were tangible: over 135 commercial projects completed, 300 MW installed capacity with over 7500 customers, 25% market share, 141% revenue growth, and a 290% increase in profit before tax in FY 2023/24.

The key takeaway is that effective leadership hinges on foresight, decisive action, and deliberate investment in people. When talent, vision, and processes are fully aligned, leaders can transform emerging opportunities into measurable outcomes, showing that bold, disciplined decisions generate lasting and meaningful impact.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

At Hayleys Fentons, we believe our growth is powered by our people. In FY 2023/24 alone, we invested over Rs. 13 million in training and development, including scholarships for postgraduate studies in Renewable and Sustainable Energy. We expanded technical learning for employees and third-party contractors, launched a structured internship programme, and created training modules for solar installers, raising industry standards across the value chain.

For the first time, we implemented Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) awareness and training for employees and service providers, while integrating DEI into standard operating procedures. These initiatives foster accountability, empower teams, and nurture future leaders, creating a more equitable, respectful, and high-performing workplace. As a result, the Company was recognised as 'A Great Place to Work'.

Moreover, our Fentons Learning Centre ensures year-round training, reinforcing a culture of continuous development and long-term value creation.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

Leaders can navigate disruption and inspire innovation by anticipating industry trends, embracing emerging technologies and turning global advancements into practical local solutions. At Hayleys Fentons, I have focused innovation on these principles, rebranding our ICT arm, establishing six new business pillars, expanding hybrid solar offerings and piloting AI-powered facility monitoring systems.

With the support of a dedicated R&D function, we encouraged creativity that delivered Sri Lanka's first agrivoltaics project and introduced advanced BIM and VR-based design reviews. These initiatives enabled the launch of 36 new products, the securing of major contracts, and an 85% growth in revenue.

The broader lesson is that innovation requires more than ideas, it demands structured experimentation, investment in talent, and a culture that rewards collaboration and calculated risk-taking. By fostering this environment, leaders can ensure their organisations remain agile, resilient, and prepared for future disruptions while driving sustainable growth

5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

Balancing ambitious goals with ethics and sustainability means ensuring growth never comes at the cost of integrity. At Hayleys Fentons, every decision is guided by strong governance, compliance and sustainability standards, because success without integrity is hollow.

Post-pandemic, I anticipated macro shifts, including increased demand for recurring revenue, digitalisation, and sustainability, and repositioned our divisions accordingly. FIT was restructured to capture ICT growth, while Facilities Management became the first in Sri Lanka to achieve ISO 41001:2018, aligning with global standards. By leveraging AI, hybrid energy, and flexible financing, we expanded reach and resilience, delivering 141% solar revenue growth, 97% equipment trading growth, and a 27% increase in Group profitability, all while maintaining the highest ethical and sustainability standards.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Beyond business results, I hope my enduring contribution will be creating a culture where social impact, sustainability, and inclusivity are integral to everything we do. I have long embedded CSR into our organisation, ensuring active employee participation. This year, we sponsored 20 cataract surgeries, organised blood donation and medical camps benefiting over 1,145 individuals, donated solar systems to vulnerable communities, and established solar-powered computer labs in rural schools. In total, we invested over Rs. 4 million, contributed 372 volunteer hours, and positively impacted nearly 10,000 lives. My aim is for these initiatives to inspire lasting engagement and demonstrate that business success and social responsibility can go hand in hand.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

Leadership is a decorated, thorny crown, heavy with responsibility, yet brimming with possibility. Step into it with purpose, courage, and unwavering integrity. Embrace bold ideas, turn challenges into opportunities and invest relentlessly in your people. Never compromise on ethics or sustainability and always make decisions that leave a positive mark on your organisation, your community and society at large. Carry the crown with grace and your legacy will outlive you, transforming lives and shaping the future.

Mr. Kumudu Abayasiri

Kumudu Abayasiri is an optimist and business strategist, and a proud graduate of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, holding both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Business Administration. A product of Sri Lanka's free education system, he brings over 18 years of experience in the maritime and logistics sector.

Kumudu's professional journey from Administration Assistant to CEO stands as a testament to his commitment to transformative growth, strategic innovation, and people-centered leadership. He holds memberships with CPM (SL), CILT (UK), CIM (UK), and ISMM (SL).

In recognition of his exceptional leadership, he was named Best Business Transformation Director (2022) by CEO Magazine. Throughout his career, Kumudu has contributed to over 16 national awards, driving operational excellence and promoting sustainable business practices.

Today, as the Director/ Chief Executive Officer of Ocean Maritime Ceylon, he leads a dynamic team serving clients across 25+ countries, guided by his unwavering belief in sustainability, ethical leadership, and the power of human connection to shape a better future.



1 How do you align your leadership vision with organizational strategy to ensure long-term growth and resilience in today's competitive environment?

As a leader, I believe leadership is not defined by titles or positions, but by the ability to inspire others with a greater purpose and align them toward a shared vision. True leadership is about cultivating a culture where individuals feel empowered to contribute with passion, resilience, and a sense of ownership. My role is to ignite the potential in people—helping them recognize their value, guiding them to achieve their personal goals, and ensuring those goals align with the collective purpose of the organization.

To align my leadership vision with organizational strategy, I focus on three key principles: clarity, empowerment, and resilience. I provide clarity by consistently communicating the organization's purpose and demonstrating how each individual's contribution directly supports our strategic objectives. I empower teams by fostering innovation, encouraging collaboration, and creating an environment where people find meaning in their work rather than viewing it as a set of tasks. Finally, I build resilience by nurturing a forward-thinking mindset—one that embraces change, adapts to challenges, and remains focused on sustainable, long-term growth.

By uniting people around a shared purpose, empowering them to lead from within, and ensuring that daily actions reflect strategic priorities, I believe leadership becomes the driving force that enables organizations to grow stronger, stay agile, and thrive in today's highly competitive environment.

2 What has been the most defining leadership decision in your career, and what lessons can others learn from it?

Over the last two decades, I have taken on various roles that shaped not only my professional journey but also my growth as a leader. Working closely with people at all levels—from grassroots operations to executive decision-making—helped me build confidence and develop a deep appreciation for the power of inclusive leadership. These experiences laid the foundation for one of the most defining decisions of my career.

The most challenging and transformative period came during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis in Sri Lanka. That era tested every aspect of leadership—resilience, trust, and responsibility. Alongside fellow maritime professionals, I faced the unprecedented task of ensuring continuity of critical operations while navigating immense uncertainty. The defining decision was to put people at the heart of our strategy. It was not just about sustaining business—it was about answering a humanitarian call.

I take great pride in leading efforts to support stranded seafarers, many of whom had been confined to vessels for more than ten months. Facilitating their safe return home required courage, compassion, and collective resolve. It demanded risk-taking, building trust with diverse stakeholders, and leading high-performing teams bound by a shared sense of purpose.

The greatest lesson I carry forward is that leadership is most powerful when rooted in empathy and service. In moments of crisis, titles and structures fade away—what matters is the ability to inspire trust, act

decisively, and unite people around a cause greater than themselves. That experience reinforced my belief that resilience, compassion, and shared purpose are the true foundations of lasting leadership.

3 How do you create and sustain a culture that empowers people, drives accountability, and nurtures future leaders within your organization?

One of the most meaningful parts of my leadership journey has been creating a culture where people feel trusted, valued, and empowered to succeed. When individuals feel seen and supported, they rise above their defined roles, take ownership, and actively contribute to collective success. This spirit of collaboration builds an unshakable foundation that enables teams to overcome challenges and achieve outcomes that once seemed impossible.

To sustain such a culture, I focus on three principles: empowerment, accountability, and development. Empowerment means giving people the freedom to innovate and the confidence that their ideas matter. Accountability is cultivated by setting clear expectations, recognizing achievements, and ensuring responsibilities are shared with fairness and transparency. Development comes from mentoring future leaders, encouraging continuous learning, and creating opportunities for individuals to step up and lead.

Above all, my leadership is rooted in purpose and resilience. It gives me immense pride to know that the collective efforts of my teams directly serve my mother nation, contributing to Sri Lanka's growth through the maritime sector. For me, leadership is not just about achieving results—it is about nurturing courage, instilling a never-give-up mindset, and inspiring people to find deeper meaning in what they do. A leader's true role is to ignite potential, guide individuals toward realizing both their personal goals and our shared purpose, and ensure that every challenge becomes an opportunity for growth.

4 In your view, how can leaders best navigate disruption and inspire innovation to keep organizations future-ready?

I believe leaders navigate disruption best by fostering resilience, inspiring innovation, and keeping people connected to a shared purpose. Disruption—whether from global crises, economic uncertainty, or industry change—tests not just strategy but the mindset of both leaders and teams. My approach has always been to lead with clarity, empower individuals to take ownership, and create a culture where collaboration and innovation thrive.

What sustains organizations in such times is not only operational agility but also the human spirit. By building trust, encouraging bold ideas, and nurturing future leaders, we can transform challenges into opportunities. For me, the most important lesson is the power of a never-give-up mindset—a belief that with courage, compassion, and unity, teams can overcome adversity and emerge stronger.

Leaders who embody this mindset not only guide their organizations through disruption but also inspire innovation that keeps them future-ready.





5 How do you balance achieving ambitious goals with upholding the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability?

I believe that balancing ambitious goals with the highest standards of ethics, governance, and sustainability begins with understanding the true purpose of the business. When leaders are clear about why they do what they do, every decision naturally aligns with integrity and long-term impact.

In the maritime sector, I have always emphasized honesty, transparency, and respect for the process as non-negotiables. For me, that means being upfront with clients and stakeholders—never giving false information or making promises that cannot be delivered. Even in difficult situations, I have found that open communication builds deeper trust and stronger professional relationships.

Ambitious goals are important, but they must never come at the cost of ethics or sustainability. Trust is the foundation of every successful partnership, and maintaining it requires consistency in words, actions, and accountability. By holding ourselves to these principles, we not only achieve results but also create long-term value for our clients, our industry, and our nation.

Ultimately, I believe true success is measured not just by growth, but by the legacy of integrity and responsibility we leave behind.

6 Looking beyond business results, what do you hope will be your enduring contribution to your organization, industry, or community?

Looking beyond business results, my greatest aspiration is to leave an enduring contribution that strengthens both my organization and the maritime industry, while uplifting my country and community. With a lifelong passion for the shipping industry, I have always been driven by a deep sense of responsibility to contribute meaningfully to Sri Lanka.

With over 90% of global trade moving by sea, maritime transport is not only the most cost-effective means of trade but also a vital driver of economic growth. Sri Lanka's strategic position in the Indian Ocean makes it one of the world's most valuable maritime hubs, and I see this as both an

opportunity and a duty. My vision has been to attract foreign income, establish long-term global partnerships, and ensure that our work in this sector directly contributes to strengthening the national economy.

Beyond financial results, I take pride in knowing that our efforts have generated export revenue, created direct and indirect business opportunities, and provided livelihoods for many. For me, true success lies in building resilience, fostering sustainable growth, and inspiring future leaders in the industry.

If there is one enduring contribution I hope to make, it is to leave behind a legacy of integrity, resilience, and purpose—demonstrating that business can be a force for national progress and long-term value creation for society.

7 What advice or message would you share with the next generation of business and corporate leaders as they step into leadership roles in the coming years?

As a leader, I believe that leadership is not defined by titles or positions, nor by worrying about one's seat at the table. True leadership is about inspiring others with a greater purpose and empowering them to lead with passion and resilience. When individuals connect with the deeper purpose of their work, they approach challenges with dedication and creativity. I encourage aspiring leaders to ask themselves: Why did I choose this path? What is my bigger purpose? Understanding this transforms work from a task into a meaningful contribution.

Looking ahead, embracing digital transformation is essential. Technology—from automation to data analytics—is reshaping the maritime industry and every sector. Continuous learning, adaptability, and a commitment to innovation will prepare the next generation not just to navigate change but to lead it.

Above all, I believe every leader should guide their team to become leaders themselves—individuals who inspire, act with integrity, embrace challenges, and uphold a never-give-up mindset. Leadership is not just about achieving results; it is about cultivating purpose, resilience, and a culture that empowers others to succeed and create lasting impact.

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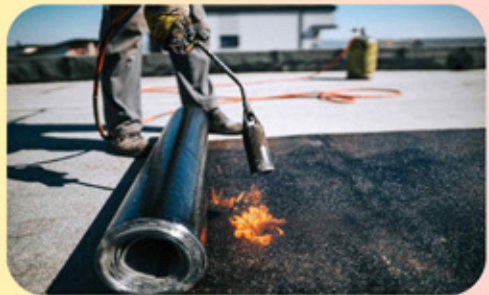
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MLE AWARDS NIGHT HIGHLIGHTS







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AWARD WINNERS**



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OVERALL WINNER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CATEGORY WINNERS



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

WINNERS





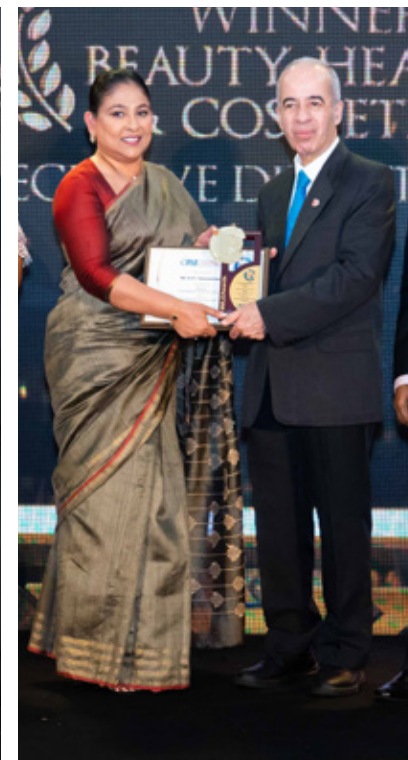
LEADERSHIP
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WINNERS



AWARD WINNERS













CPM SRI LANKA MARKS RESOUNDING SUCCESS WITH INAUGURAL MLE AWARDS 2025

HONOURING LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE

The **inaugural Management Leadership Excellence Awards 2025 (MLE Awards)**, organised by the Institute of Chartered Professional Managers of Sri Lanka (CPM Sri Lanka), was a resounding success that made a defining breakthrough in the nation's professional landscape.

The prestigious Awards Night, held recently at the **Cinnamon Grand Colombo**, brought together more than **400 C-suite executives** from both the public and private sectors, along with distinguished guests from diverse industries, to witness a historic celebration of exemplary leadership.

Adding further prestige to the evening, **Prof. Dr. Abdol Ali Khatibi**, Senior Vice President for Postgraduate Studies at the Management and Science University, Malaysia, graced the event as **Chief Guest**. His thought-provoking address and distinguished presence infused the ceremony with inspiration and global perspective.

The **MLE Awards 2025** were launched with the noble vision of recognising **trailblazing leaders who have redefined excellence in their industries**. The inaugural ceremony lived up to its promise, presenting more than **120 awards** to senior corporate executives following a rigorous evaluation process based on detailed leadership competency reports submitted by applicants.

The breadth and diversity of the awards were truly remarkable. Leaders were honoured across industries including **finance, banking, insurance, healthcare, manufacturing, technology, hospitality, agriculture, plantations, and public administration**. By celebrating excellence across such a wide spectrum, the MLE Awards reinforced CPM Sri Lanka's commitment to recognising leaders who are shaping the future of business and society.

The evening reflected not just celebration but also dignity and purpose, as honorees were recognised for their **visionary leadership, bold innovation, strategic growth, commitment to community service, and ability to inspire transformation**. It was a reminder that true leadership transcends boardrooms, inspiring positive changes in workplaces and society at large.

From its inception, the **MLE Awards** were designed to be more than a ceremony. They were envisioned as a platform **to benchmark leadership standards in Sri Lanka**, based on seven leadership competencies introduced by CPM Sri Lanka. The judging process, chaired by **Dr. Samantha Rathnayake** alongside a distinguished panel of CPM Fellows, ensured that every award was anchored in **credibility, transparency, and inclusivity**.

The event also recognised two distinguished Fellows of CPM Sri Lanka with **Lifetime Eminent Leadership Awards: Mrs. Kushani Rohanadeera**, Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, and **Mr. Ali Asghar Akbarally**, Managing Director of Akbar Brothers Group of Companies. Both leaders were honoured for their **outstanding leadership, vision, and contributions of national significance**.

The Awards Night featured the presentation of **Overall Gold, Silver, and Bronze Awards** to applicants from the **Executive Director and Corporate Management levels** who achieved the highest scores in the rigorous judging process.

In the Executive Director Level, Mr. Susil Chandra Weerasekera, Group Director, Capital Maharaja Group and Mr. Sujith Dammika Bandara Samaradiwakara, Chairman, Technomedics International (Pvt) Ltd and JF & I Packaging (Pvt) Ltd were secured jointly the Overall Gold Winner title and Mr. Rohan Peiris Goonetilleke, Managing Director / CEO, Hayleys Fabric PLC secured the Overall Silver title followed by Mr. Nilantha Jayanetti, Chief Executive Officer, Sarvodaya Development Finance PLC secured the Overall Bronze Title.

In the Corporate Management Level, Mr. K. Sanjeewa Bandaranayake, Chief Executive Officer, People's Leasing and Finance PLC was secured the Overall Gold Winner title and Mr. Ms. Jeevani Kariyawasam, Chief Executive Officer, Peoples Insurance PLC, and Mr. Kushan Indika Samararatne, Chief Executive Officer, Colombo Coffee Company (Pvt) Ltd jointly secured the Overall Silver title followed by Mr. Sampath Weerakoon, Assistant General Manager - Human Resources and Administration, Omega Line Ltd secured the Overall Bronze Title.

In addition, **Outstanding Leadership Competency Awards** were conferred on seven distinguished leaders in recognition of their **visionary and innovative leadership qualities**, evaluated against the seven competencies defined by the MLE Awards 2025.

Mr. Dasantha Fonseka, Chairman, Vision Care Group for Leadership Competency in Demonstrating Visionary Leadership, Mr. Susil Chandra Weerasekera, Group Director, Capital Maharaja Group for Leadership Competency in Showcasing Community Service Orientation and/or Corporate Social Responsibility, Mr. Rohan Peiris Goonetilleke, Managing Director/CEO, Hayleys Fabric PLC for Leadership Competency in Enabling Diversification and Growth Strategy, Mr. Naleen Edirisinghe, Director/CEO, Pan Asia Banking Corporation PLC for Leadership Competency in Inspiring Strategic Leadership and Trend Capitalization, Mr. Sujith Dammika Bandara Samaradiwakara, Chairman, Technomedics International (Pvt) Ltd and JF & I Packaging (Pvt) Ltd for Leadership Competency in Engaging in Brand Building and Achieving Marketing/Business Excellence, Mr. Sandun Hapugoda, Country Manager, Sri Lanka and Maldives, Mastercard for Leadership Competency in Driving Innovation and Creativity, and Mr. Nilantha Jayanetti, Chief Executive Officer, Sarvodaya Development Finance

PLC for Leadership Competency in Exhibiting Exemplary Management Skills were recognized under the Outstanding Leadership Competency Awards.

Furthermore, a series of **sectoral and special awards** were presented, reflecting the respective professions and contributions of the applicants.

The ceremony was further enriched with the launch of the **special edition of the Chartered Manager Journal**, featuring best management practice stories from winners of the **Best Management Practices Company Awards (BMPC) 2025**. The occasion also unveiled the **5th edition of BMPC Awards 2026**, one of Sri Lanka's most prestigious corporate events.

Behind the scenes, the resounding success of the inaugural MLE Awards was the result of **meticulous planning and unwavering dedication**. The **Governing Council of CPM Sri Lanka** provided strategic vision and direction, ensuring that the awards reflected CPM's core values of **professionalism, ethics, and integrity**. The tireless efforts of the **CPM Secretariat team** further ensured seamless execution — from coordinating nominations and guiding participants to managing logistics and event flow.

The launch of the **Management Leadership Excellence Awards** represents more than the recognition of individual achievement. It marks the beginning of a larger movement to create **role models in leadership**, promote **ethical and visionary management**, and raise the bar for the corporate community in Sri Lanka. By celebrating today's leaders, the awards also serve to **inspire the next generation** to pursue excellence and transformation in their industries.

The **inaugural MLE Awards 2025** have laid a strong foundation for what is set to become one of the **most anticipated and respected events in Sri Lanka's corporate calendar**. With its successful debut, CPM Sri Lanka has not only celebrated leadership excellence but also reaffirmed its role as a **thought leader and standard bearer in professional management**.





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