

“The camaraderie at SLT meetings was enjoyable, especially when we all donned costumes of our alter egos (mine was Wonder Woman) and threw caution to the wind at our highly energetic annual staff retreats.”

Rema Devi Nair

Regulatory Advisor to Group CEO, edotco, 2016 - Present
Head, Group Regulatory Affairs, Axiata, 2008 - 2016
Head, Regulatory Affairs, TMI, 2003 - 2008

I transitioned into Axiata Group in 2008 from my earlier role as Head, Regulatory Affairs, at TMI, a role I had held since 2003. The early years were marked by a hectic pace of market entries and new ventures; highlights were entry into Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Singapore. Simultaneously, the strategy of bringing TMI's investments closer to home also meant divestment from earlier investments in South Africa, Malawi, Guinea and Ghana.

Divestment from these markets meant that conference calls across crazy time zones with Axiata's Legal Counsel and our external legal counsel became a daily norm. It also meant that we no longer needed to travel to far-flung places with multiple stop-overs like Blantyre, Lilongwe or Conakry. All in all, there was much learning in many of these transactions.

Moving on to Axiata as Head, Group Regulatory Affairs, the adventure turned to managing risks associated with existing investments, building a pool of skills in regulatory management and institutionalising best practices. With Tan Sri Jamal at the helm, I embarked on a period of deep and intense understanding of the mobile business, both commercially and technically. The camaraderie at SLT meetings was enjoyable, especially when we all donned costumes of our alter egos (mine was Wonder Woman) and threw caution to the winds at our highly energetic annual staff retreats.

Looking back at my nine-plus years at TMI/Axiata, I can say with utmost confidence that my most compelling memories revolved around how much of my learning about navigating national institutions and policy making took place while also navigating the notorious traffic of cities. Getting to meetings through the traffic snarls of Dhaka with the late Fazlur Rahman, Colombo with Dr Hans Wijayasuriya, Jakarta with Ibu Nies Purwati or Delhi with Rajat Mukherjee, also meant having highly insightful conversations that made these trips effortless.

Amid such generosity of mind and spirit, it was not uncommon for colleagues to become lifelong friends. And that has made all the difference.

