

“Unequivocally, as with any organisation, it is the workforce that determines its destiny.”

Dato' Izzaddin Idris

Executive Director/Deputy Group CEO,
Axiata, 2020 - Present
Served as Board Member of Axiata since 2016

It has been just over three years since I was appointed to the Axiata Board in November 2016 whilst at the helm of an infrastructure and services group. Outside in, I was always impressed with the Board's vision and governance, Axiata's numerous achievements, the leadership of Tan Sri Jamaludin Ibrahim and his "merry team". And, given my finance background, I can't help but marvel at the continuing investments despite the constantly challenging landscape!

Admittedly, the Board meeting the day after my appointment was daunting, as it was a revelation to the mobile telecommunications business. The "perfect storm", as described by the then Chairman Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar, that Axiata confronted was not for the faint-hearted. Tough decisions ensued, especially around Axiata's investment in India, resulting in a significant impact on profitability in subsequent years.

I am indeed privileged to be able to draw from my fellow Directors their immense knowledge and wisdom in navigating the past challenges. Undoubtedly Tan Sri Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid, who eloquently stepped in as Chairman, provides the calm stewardship for the Board to continue charting Axiata's future while balancing the needs and interests of all stakeholders.

Over the years Axiata and its subsidiaries have been bestowed numerous accolades and awards, both in Malaysia as well as the respective markets. Whilst mentioning those awards here would be self-serving, what struck me as unique is the employees' relentless pursuit of living the values, be it in sustainability, governance, performance or customer satisfaction.

An inimitable trait of Tan Sri Jamaludin is his calm appearance despite facing the most adverse and demanding situations. Even with a confluence of issues from every key stakeholder – staff, regulators, partners, investors – together with challenging business/financials, his composed demeanour remains unruffled. There is always a solution! Perhaps due to this quality and brand Axiata the organisation has been able to attract some of the best talent in the industry.

The "contrarian finance phenomenon" is the constant reality of an ever-changing capital-intensive industry in order to retain and improve service level and quality, as well as satisfy dynamic customer sophistication and be at the forefront of technology. And yet cashflow and profitability are stable, at best. While the culture of Operational Excellence is a journey by itself, Axiata has a ready-made platform so that an effective execution programme can yield quick results, I am certain.

Unequivocally, as with any organisation, it is the workforce that determines its destiny. Team Axiata has not ceased to amaze me with their continuous, almost incessantly high level of energy, zest, camaraderie, creativity and innovation to adapt the businesses and compete effectively while managing all stakeholders in the various markets.

It is this key differentiator that will future-proof the organisation.

