BUSINESS FRONTIER

The Leading Voice of Business Excellence

July - September 2026

DR. PUSHPENDRA PRATAP SINGH
Managing Director and CEO
Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

HE BUILT THE ROAD HE WALKED

MEET DR. SINGH, THE MAN BEHIND LOGITRUST GLOBAL SOLUTIONS PVT. LTD.

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From the

EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the July-September 2026 edition of Business Frontier, an issue dedicated to the people, perspectives and ideas shaping the way business is being built and led today.

Leadership rarely follows a straight line. It is shaped through experience, difficult choices, changing markets and, often, the willingness to create opportunities where none existed before. Across this edition, we bring together leaders from diverse industries and geographies, alongside expert opinions, thought-provoking articles and features that explore the realities of building, transforming and leading in an increasingly complex business world.

Our cover story, “He Built The Road He Walked,” captures this spirit through the journey of Dr. Pushpendra Pratap Singh, Managing Director and CEO of Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd. With no industry legacy or established name to lean on, Dr. Singh spent more than twenty-seven years building his reputation from the ground up. His story is one of persistence, earned trust and the conviction that honest effort ultimately creates its own opportunities, a philosophy that eventually became the foundation on which he built Logitrust Global Solutions.

This edition also holds special significance as it is being released at the Business Frontier Leadership Conclave & Awards 2026, taking place on September 4, 2026, at Taj Dubai, Business Bay. Bringing together leaders, entrepreneurs and changemakers from around the world, the Conclave extends the conversations within these pages into a space for dialogue, recognition and meaningful connections.

We hope this edition leaves you with new perspectives, valuable ideas and, above all, stories worth remembering.

Until then,

Happy Reading!

Riya Malhotra
Senior Editor
Business Frontier

TOKENIZED RWAs SURGE TO US$34 BILLION IN H1 2026

Tokenized real-world assets (RWAs) emerged as one of the strongest growth segments in on-chain finance during the first half of 2026, even as broader crypto markets faced declining protocol revenues, lower transaction fees, and ongoing security concerns. According to Binance Research's Half-Year 2026: On-Chain Markets report, the value of tokenized RWAs increased from approximately US$22 billion in January to US$34 billion by mid-July, representing growth of more than 50% in just six months.

The report identified tokenized stocks and private equity as the fastest-growing RWA categories, expanding 177% and 164% year-to-date, respectively. Growth was driven by improving regulatory clarity and the expansion of platforms such as bStocks, xStocks, and Ondo Global Markets, which are helping bring traditional financial assets onto blockchain-based infrastructure.

Binance Research projects that the tokenized RWA market could reach US$661 billion under a base-case scenario and as much as US$1.6 trillion in a bullish outlook. However, future growth will depend on the development of stronger secondary-market liquidity and more efficient collateral mobility. On-chain tokenized equities on the network increased from US$34 million to US$652 million during the first half of the year, while monthly tokenized stock trading volume exceeded US$4.5 billion in July.

Elsewhere, prediction markets recorded significant momentum, with monthly notional volume rising from US$27.7 billion in January to US$51.6 billion in June, largely driven by World Cup-related activity. At the same time, total crypto losses fell to US$972 million, despite a record increase in the number of hacks and exploits.

THE $100 BILLION CLOUD: WHAT MICROSOFT'S Q4 REVEALS ABOUT THE AI ECONOMY

Microsoft's latest quarterly results highlight how artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a core driver of business growth rather than an experimental technology. For the quarter ended June 30, 2026, Microsoft reported US$90 billion in revenue, exceeding analyst expectations. Azure and other cloud services grew 43% year-on-year, while Azure surpassed US$100 billion in annual revenue for the first time. The company also invested US$41 billion in capital expenditure during the quarter to expand its AI infrastructure.

The results point to several broader trends shaping the global AI economy. First, cloud platforms are increasingly serving as the foundation for enterprise AI adoption, enabling organisations to deploy generative AI applications and automate business processes at scale. Second, demand for cloud computing remains strong despite economic uncertainty, suggesting that AI-related technology investments continue to be a strategic priority for businesses worldwide. Third, Microsoft's substantial infrastructure spending highlights the enormous resources required to support the next generation of AI services, including data centres, advanced computing systems, and specialised hardware. The quarter also suggests that AI investments are beginning to generate measurable returns. Enterprise demand for AI-powered productivity, collaboration, and business applications continues to grow, indicating that organisations are moving beyond pilot projects toward large-scale deployment. Perhaps the clearest takeaway is that AI is reshaping corporate investment priorities. Companies are increasingly viewing AI infrastructure as a long-term strategic asset rather than a short-term technology trend.

For business leaders, Microsoft's latest performance reinforces a simple message: AI is no longer optional. It is becoming a fundamental capability that will influence competitiveness, growth, and innovation across industries.

BUSINESS FRONTIER

10,000 AND COUNTING: HOW DIFC BECAME THE UNDISPUTED FINANCIAL CAPITAL

Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) has crossed a significant milestone, surpassing 10,000 active registered companies for the first time in its history. The achievement reinforces Dubai's growing stature as a leading global financial centre and a gateway connecting markets across the Middle East, Africa and South Asia (MEASA).

At the end of H1 2026, DIFC recorded 10,018 active registered companies, representing 30% year-on-year growth after adding 2,318 new companies over the previous 12 months.

Growth has been broad-based across banking, insurance, wealth management, fintech and private capital. Regulated financial services firms rose to 1,134, while family-related entities and foundations grew to 1,408 and 1,409, respectively, highlighting Dubai's increasing appeal as a wealth management and succession-planning destination.

Innovation remains a key driver of expansion. DIFC's Innovation Hub added 361 new companies during the first half of the year, taking the total number of AI, fintech and innovation firms to 1,933, a 39% increase year-on-year.

The milestone supports Dubai's wider D33 economic agenda and reflects growing international confidence in the emirate's regulatory framework, connectivity and business environment. As global institutions continue to seek access to high-growth markets, DIFC is increasingly positioning itself as one of the world's most influential financial ecosystems.

Indicator	H1 2026 Performance
Active registered companies	10,018
New active companies added in 12 months	2,318
Organic growth in active companies	30%
Regulated financial services firms	1,134
Banks and capital markets firms	327
Insurance and reinsurance entities	165
Wealth and asset management firms	592
AI, fintech and innovation companies	1,933
New Innovation Hub companies in H1 2026	361
Family-related entities	1,408
Foundations	1,409

AMAZON ENDS WALMART'S 12-YEAR REIGN A TOP THE 2026 FORTUNE 500

Amazon has become the largest U.S. company by revenue for the first time, ending Walmart's 12-year run at the top of the Fortune 500 rankings. The 2026 list highlights the growing influence of technology and healthcare companies, alongside the continued strength of retail and energy.
Amazon reported revenue of US$716.9 billion, narrowly surpassing Walmart's US$713.2 billion. While retail remains central to its business, Amazon's growth has been fuelled by cloud computing, advertising, logistics and digital services, reflecting the expanding influence of technology-led business models.

Technology companies continued to strengthen their presence, with Apple and Alphabet ranking fourth and fifth respectively. The results underline how digital ecosystems, artificial intelligence and cloud infrastructure are becoming major drivers of global corporate growth.

Collectively, the rankings reflect a changing global economy where technology and healthcare are increasingly shaping growth, investment and corporate influence.

Rank	Company	Revenue (US$ Million)	Sector
1	Amazon	716,924	E-commerce & Cloud Computing
2	Walmart	713,163	Retail
3	UnitedHealth Group	447,567	Healthcare
4	Apple	416,161	Technology
5	Alphabet	402,836	Technology
6	CVS Health	402,067	Healthcare
7	Berkshire Hathaway	371,444	Diversified Investments
8	McKesson	359,051	Healthcare Distribution
9	ExxonMobil Holdings	332,238	Energy
10	Cencora	321,332.8	Pharmaceutical Distribution

Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

He Built The Road He Walked

Meet Dr. Singh, The Man Behind Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

He had no industry name behind him, no legacy to lean on, and no map to follow. Over twenty-seven years, **Dr. Pushpendra Pratap Singh, Managing Director and CEO of Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.** earned the trust of India's supply chains, and then built his own company on that hard-won ground.

> *Success that stays with one person isn't success. It's just a number. Real success is how many people rise with you.*

For most of his life, **Dr. Pushpendra Pratap Singh** had no map to follow and no name to open doors. What he had instead was a conviction that effort, given honestly, never comes back empty.

The Room He Started In

Born in Uttar Pradesh, India, he was the second youngest in his family, raised in a home where discipline and integrity weren't lessons to be recited but habits to be lived. There was no logistics empire waiting for him, no mentor's number saved in a diary, no head start of any kind: just an ordinary school, an ordinary town, and none of the advantages that tend to sit behind the people who go on to lead an industry.

His start wasn't even smooth. He failed his 10th class. In an era and a setting where that could quietly end a boy's ambitions, it might have been the end of the story. Instead, it became the beginning of one. He went back the next year and topped, and today, tellingly, he doesn't bury that stumble. He offers it up freely, as an anecdote, almost a point of pride: proof of the very thing he has spent his life insisting on, that a failure is only ever a rough draft of what comes next. "I failed in class 10," he says, without a flicker of embarrassment. "The next year, I topped. That taught me everything I needed to know about effort, it always pays you back, just not always on your schedule."

The industry he would one day help reshape did not know his name, and had no reason to. His entry into it was almost accidental. A passing conversation among friends about the shipping business turned into a decision, and in 1998 he joined Schaefco International, one of the leading freight forwarding names out of the USA, as a young member of its sales team. He took to the work at once, and outgrew the role just as quickly. "I didn't inherit this industry," he says. "I had to earn my place in it."

> *I failed in class 10. The next year, I topped. That taught me everything I needed to know about effort, it always pays you back.*

The Long Climb

What followed was not a straight line but a steady, deliberate climb. At WW Shipping he spent eight formative years, rising from senior executive to Area Sales Manager, travelling across India and overseas, walking the ports himself to understand how goods actually move before he ever tried to move them faster. At Agility Logistics he built out air and ocean freight across Delhi-NCR. He moved to JAS Forwarding as a sales manager and, within a year, was promoted to Regional Manager handling the entire North India P&L. Then came Hanjin Logistics as National Manager of Strategic Sales, followed by senior commercial leadership roles at EUSU Logistics and Asia Shipping, where he joined as Country Head – Commercial and, within a year, was promoted to Country Head, becoming part of the company's top management.

At every stop, the pattern repeated: he was handed something and left it measurably stronger. But ask him about the milestones and he waves them off, for him they were never the goal, only the by-product of building systems that held and teams that trusted one another.

Along the way he also earned what no promotion could hand him: an MBA from AIMA-CME, technical training at NIIT, and later two honorary doctorates: one in International Business and one in Shipping & Logistics, recognition of a career learned largely in the field rather than only in a classroom.

A Voice the Industry Trusts

That field-earned wisdom is now in demand well beyond his own desk. In almost any given month he is on the

> *I started with nothing but the belief that honest effort is never wasted. Twenty-seven years later, I still believe exactly that*

move, domestically and internationally, invited as chief guest, speaker, and panelist at industry forums and institutions including IIM, Amity, and Manav Rachna University. When he was invited to speak at TEDx, he chose the simplest message he had, the one that had carried him all the way: efforts never fail. "Don't wait for success to find you," he told the room. "Go and earn it. And when you do good along the way, good has a way of finding its way back to you."

The recognition has kept pace with the reach. He has been honoured with the Bharat Shree Award, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Bharat Gaurav Shri Samman Parishad, the India Responsible Leaders Award by India CSR, the National Atal Award as Business Mentor of the Year, and has been named Best Social Entrepreneur of the Year, among a long list of others. Colleagues say he accepts each of them the same way he accepts everything, quietly, and then gets back to work.

The Way He Leads

If you want to understand him, watch how he runs a room. He doesn't carry himself like a boss. He listens first: genuinely, and he treats the driver and the director as equals. Over the years he has quietly lifted many of the people around him into bigger roles than they imagined for themselves, mentoring them through the hard stretches and then stepping back to let them take the credit.

That instinct comes straight from where he began. Having climbed without a hand to hold, he refuses to let the people beside him climb alone. "Growth means nothing to me if the people who helped build it get left behind," he says. "Everyone who works with me should get to taste the same fruit."

At a Glance

Company: Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

Role: Managing Director & CEO

Headquarters: Delhi, India

Network: 12 cities - Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Pune, Jaipur, Gandhidham, Chennai, Jodhpur, Jamshedpur, Ludhiana, Moradabad

Services: Air, ocean & road freight · warehousing · customs clearance · international courier · project solutions management

Vision: A seamless logistics ecosystem blending global efficiency with Indian adaptability

Experience: 27+ years in shipping & logistics

Recognition: Bharat Shree Award · Lifetime Achievement Award · India Responsible Leaders Award · Best Social Entrepreneur of the Year · Countless more

Social impact: 100,000+ lives touched · Serves as an Advisor at several NGOs

> *Never give up if you believe in something*

His Own Ground, at Last

Two years ago, that work finally took the shape he had been imagining for decades. He launched Logitrust Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd. as its Managing Director and CEO, his own company, on his own terms. In a short span it has grown to a footprint across twelve cities in India - Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Jamshedpur, Jaipur, and more, offering air, ocean, and road freight alongside warehousing, customs clearance, international courier, and project solutions management.

Almost two years in, Logitrust Global Solutions is less a finished company than a promise being kept: the physical proof that the belief he started with in 1998 was right all along. You can see the rest of that story taking shape at www.logitrustglobal.com

What Success Actually Means to Him

His sense of responsibility reaches far past his office walls, and it always has. For fifteen years, and, characteristically, without announcing much of it, Dr. Singh has given back. Kindness, for him, isn't a campaign; it's a reflex. It shows up in how he speaks to his driver, in how he stops for a stranger on the street, in the help he extends before anyone thinks to ask. Much of it he never mentions at all.

The scale of it, when you add it up, is remarkable. He has sponsored education for more than 25,000 underprivileged children, supported over 1,000 people through mental health struggles, and, by his organisations' count, touched more than 100,000 lives. He empowers farmers, senior citizens, and traditional craftspeople; he feeds and educates children; and he has organised more than fifty blood donation drives. His environmental work: tree-plantation drives and water conservation efforts, flows from the same belief that a business owes something back to the world it operates in. Children, in particular, hold a permanent place in his giving.

For all of it: the milestones, the shelf of awards, the magazine covers, he insists the story is only just beginning. Logitrust Global Solutions is almost two years old. He is, by his own reckoning, still hungry, still working as hard as he did in 1998, and still certain the best is ahead, not for himself, but for every person who chooses to build it beside him. He measures the road ahead exactly the way he measured the one behind: not by how high he climbs, but by how many people he can carry up with him.

HOW GREAT TEAMS DRIVE GREAT OPERATIONS

As manufacturing becomes more digital and interconnected, **Bishnu Pritam B, Director of Operations at Alfa Flow Control Components**, explains why operational excellence begins with people, resilient supply chains, and a culture of continuous improvement.

For **Bishnu Pritam B**, operational excellence is driven as much by people as it is by processes. From warehouse operations and supply chain management to manufacturing leadership, his career has reinforced the importance of adaptability, collaboration, and continuous improvement. In this conversation, he shares his perspectives on resilient supply chains, operational excellence, and why investing in people remains the foundation of sustainable business success.

Your career spans engineering, supply chain, and manufacturing. What experiences have shaped your leadership philosophy?

My career has taken me from mechanical engineering to supply chain, warehouse operations, and manufacturing. These experiences have taught me that successful organisations are built by people, not just processes. During my time at Flipkart, especially during the Big Billion Days, I learned the importance of teamwork, quick decision-making, and staying calm under pressure. In manufacturing, I realised that leadership is about being present, listening to your team, and solving problems together as a team.

How do you build a culture where operational excellence becomes an everyday habit?

In my view, operational excellence is more about mindset. Every employee should understand how their work contributes to quality, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. I always encourage open communication because the best ideas often come from the people working closest to the process. I also believe leaders should be visible, approachable, and willing to lead by example. Over time, continuous improvement becomes part of the organisation's culture rather than a separate initiative. That is how efficiency and quality become everyday habits instead of occasional goals.

As global supply chains continue to evolve, where do you see the biggest opportunities for manufacturers?

The biggest opportunity for manufacturers today is building supply chains that are both resilient and adaptable. Recent disruptions, such as the Red Sea shipping crisis, have shown how quickly global supply chains can be affected by geopolitical events. This has reinforced the need for stronger supplier relationships, proper planning, and greater flexibility. Digital tools are making it easier. At the same time, technology alone is not enough. Skilled people who can adapt, solve problems, and respond quickly remain a company's greatest strength.

How can supply chains become drivers of business growth rather than cost centres?

I have witnessed how better communication between teams leads to faster decisions and smoother operations. Technology provides valuable data, but collaboration across departments is what turns that information into meaningful action. A strong supply chain improves reliability, faster response times, and builds customer trust. When organisations focus on delivering consistent quality and meeting customer expectations, the supply chain becomes a key contributor to business growth rather than just an operational function.

Which technologies will have the greatest impact on manufacturing over the next decade?

I believe AI, automation, and data analytics will reshape manufacturing over the next decade by helping businesses make smarter and faster decisions. Predictive analytics can improve demand forecasting, optimize inventory, and identify potential risks before they become major issues..

At AFCC, we are seeing how greater digital visibility and data-driven decision-making improve operational efficiency, strengthen process control, and support continuous improvement. I also see Industry 4.0 technologies, such as connected factories and real-time monitoring, playing a key role in reducing downtime and improving productivity.

How do you develop future leaders while fostering collaboration and continuous learning?

Future leaders are developed through experience, responsibility, and continuous learning. Giving people opportunities to solve problems and make decisions helps them build confidence and grow naturally. At AFCC, I encourage collaboration between production, quality, procurement, and planning because the best solutions often come when different teams work together. Cross-functional learning gives employees a broader understanding of the business, while open communication, regular feedback, and mentoring create an environment where people feel comfortable sharing ideas and learning from mistakes. When employees trust their leaders and support one another, collaboration becomes stronger, making the organisation more adaptable and better prepared for future challenges.

As manufacturing becomes increasingly data-driven, what strategic priorities will define the future of the industry?

To remain globally competitive, manufacturers need to focus on technology, resilience, and people. Digital transformation should improve decision-making and operational efficiency, while stronger supplier networks and better planning help businesses manage uncertainty. Sustainability should also be a key priority by reducing waste, improving energy efficiency, and using resources more responsibly. Equally important is investing in employee development because technology is most effective when supported by skilled people. Sustainable growth comes from consistently delivering value to customers while building a strong foundation for the future.

Beyond operational success, what legacy do you hope to build through your leadership?

Beyond business results, I hope to be remembered as someone who helped people grow and created a culture where learning, trust, and teamwork were valued. If the people I work with become better professionals, stronger leaders, and continue to grow long after we have worked together, I would consider that my greatest achievement.

For young professionals, my advice is simple: stay curious, be willing to learn from the ground up, and never stop improving yourself. Titles may open doors, but character, consistency, and the willingness to keep learning are what build a lasting career.

"Successful organisations are built by people, not just processes"

LEADING WITH DIGNITY, GROWING WITH PURPOSE

For **Prof. Fatima Zaman, CEO, Serenity UK Care**, leadership begins with human dignity. Drawing on decades of experience in mental health and social care, she has built Serenity around person-centred support, resilience, and recovery. A strong believer of compassionate leadership, she talks about the future of care services.

> *The biggest lever for raising standards isn't more regulation, it's better-equipped and more resilient frontline staff*

For **Prof. Fatima Zaman**, leadership is not measured by titles or organisational growth alone, but by the lives improved through compassionate and meaningful care. As CEO of Serenity UK Care, she has spent decades working with vulnerable individuals facing complex mental health challenges, shaping a philosophy rooted in empathy, dignity, and resilience. Zaman shares her perspective on leadership, innovation in social care, organisational growth, and the responsibility that comes with supporting people at their most vulnerable.

What experiences have shaped your leadership philosophy?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in resilience and human dignity, leading with empathy first, and strategy second. I believe the strongest leaders are the ones who create genuine psychological safety for their teams, because people only do their best work when they feel safe enough to be honest. Watching people rebuild their lives after a crisis taught me that real strength isn't about appearing invincible, it's about being honest about struggle and building forward from it. I carry that same principle into how I lead my organisation.

"Leadership rooted in genuine care for people isn't a soft add-on to good business, it is the business"

So what opportunity do you think the care sector is still overlooking?

We are still underestimating the business value of genuinely person-centred, trauma-informed practice. Too many organisations treat this as a compliance requirement rather than a core driver of quality, staff retention, and long-term sustainability. Leaders who invest properly in staff training, wellbeing, and relational care models will outperform those chasing efficiency through rigid, institutional processes because better outcomes for the people we support ultimately mean a stronger, more resilient organisation.

What inspired you to establish Serenity UK Care?

Early in my career, I saw first-hand how many services, often with good intentions, ended up organised around routines, risk-aversion, and control, rather than around the actual person in front of them. I remember thinking that if I ever built something of my own, it had to start from the opposite direction: from the person's dignity, their recovery, and their right to be genuinely heard, and build the systems and processes around that, rather than the other way round.

That decision was harder in almost every practical sense. It meant building our own frameworks, like the model I later developed drawing on principles of moral treatment and behavioural resilience, instead of simply adopting whatever was already in common use across the sector. It taught me that leadership often means being willing to do things differently, even when it's harder, slower, or less conventional, because the right way and the easy way are not always the same thing.

What priorities will define your next phase of growth?

We are seeing increasing numbers of individuals referred to us with co-occurring mental illness and substance misuse, autism, or personality disorder diagnoses, whose needs are often too complex for generic placements, and too under-resourced within mainstream mental health services. Building services specifically designed around this level of complexity with the right staffing ratios, clinical oversight, and trauma-informed training is where I believe the greatest unmet need in our sector lies, and it's where we intend to focus much of our growth. Alongside this, we are continuing to expand our supported living services across London. Finally, I'm deeply committed to sharing what we've learned more widely, through training and education. I've delivered CPD-accredited training for care staff on frameworks I've developed myself, grounded in moral treatment, dignity, and behavioural resilience, because I believe the biggest lever for raising standards across the whole sector isn't more regulation, it's better-equipped, more confident, and more resilient frontline staff.

What message would you like readers to take away?

Only that leadership isn't about titles or platforms, it's about the responsibility we carry for the people who trust us with their care, their futures, and sometimes their lives. When you work in this sector, you very quickly learn that the decisions you make on any given day aren't abstract. They shape whether someone feels safe enough to open up about the voices they're hearing, whether a young person in crisis feels believed rather than managed, or whether someone rebuilding their life after years of institutional care finally gets to make a choice for themselves again.

That responsibility has kept me grounded through every stage of growth from the early days of building Serenity UK Care from the ground up, through to speaking at platforms like this one, or being invited to contribute academically at Oxford. None of that changes the fundamental job: showing up for people at their most vulnerable, and building organisations, teams, and systems worthy of the trust they place in us.

Everything else I've built, the company, the training I deliver, the book, the public speaking, has grown out of that single commitment. If there's one thing I hope readers take away, it's that leadership rooted in genuine care for people isn't a soft add-on to good business. In our sector, it is the business. Get that right, and everything else, growth, reputation, impact, follows naturally.

LEADING BEYOND PROCESSES: THE HUMAN SIDE OF GROWTH

Javeed Ashraf Khan, Co-Founder & Chief Growth and People Officer, TidyHire, shares why empowering people, challenging outdated HR practices and aligning talent strategies with business outcomes are essential for building resilient, high-performing organisations.

From global corporations to fast-growing startups, **Javeed Ashraf Khan** has spent more than two decades building teams, scaling talent functions and shaping people strategies across diverse markets. Having held leadership roles at IBM, Mastercard, D360 and KPMG before co-founding TidyHire, he brings a practical perspective on what drives organisational success. In this conversation, he reflects on leadership lessons, the evolving role of HR and why great operations begin with trusting people, questioning established processes and creating an environment where individuals can perform at their best.

How has your leadership philosophy evolved over time?

Early on I thought being useful meant being in the room; every escalation, every decision, every difficult conversation. Those years taught me that's not leadership, it's a bottleneck wearing a nicer name. Today I give people the decision and stay out of the follow-up not because I'm hands-off, but because I've seen what happens when nothing moves without me.

What is the biggest HR challenge organisations face today?

We source the way we sourced 20 years ago, we run the first-round interview the way it ran 20 years ago, we measure engagement with the same pulse survey. Meanwhile every other function has rebuilt itself around new tools and better evidence. A function that looks unchanged gets treated as a support cost rather than a driver of the balance sheet. Stop asking to be included and start rebuilding the process itself. Influence follows visible reinvention.

What pivotal moment shaped your leadership approach?

For years I measured my team against myself. If I could close that call, why couldn't they? If I could find that answer, why couldn't they? The flaw took me too long to see: I was asking people to be a version of me rather than the best version of themselves. That was the shift.

How do you encourage continuous learning and adaptability?

Anyone can challenge a call if they've done the work, and the better-reasoned case wins regardless of who makes it. The second condition is room. Nobody adapts while drowning, so I don't police how people spend their hours; a team member who's dropping her daughter at school owes me no apology, only her best when she's here. And we hold ourselves to the same standard we sell: every TidyHire hire goes through our own AI first round.

> *"Anyone can challenge a call, and the better-reasoned case wins*

What advice would you give future HR leaders?

Understand the business: how your organisation makes money, and where your work shows up in that. And get technical enough to follow the logic. Then ask the harder question. Most leaders ask how to fit AI into the process they already have. The better question is what they'd design if the process didn't exist yet. That question doesn't need permission, a budget, or a transformation programme. Pick one step you inherited. Ask what it actually measures. If you can't answer, you've found where to start on Monday morning.

MORE THAN JUST CONCRETE

Jose Rizal, Founder & President, PT Jorindo Agung, reflects on leadership, resilient infrastructure, and why construction companies must evolve from contractors into long-term solution providers.

For **Jose Rizal**, leadership is measured not by the projects completed but by the trust built over time. Having spent more than three decades leading PT Jorindo Agung, he has guided the company through the evolution of Indonesia's marine construction industry while championing safety, innovation, and sustainable growth. Rizal discusses the leadership values that have shaped his journey, the future of infrastructure development, and the responsibilities of building for generations to come.

What leadership principles have guided your journey over the past three decades?

Several leadership principles have remained constant throughout my journey. First is clarity of direction. People won't follow you if they don't know where you're going. Second is leading by example and maintaining integrity. Leaders must be willing to do things first before asking others to do the same. Trust cannot be bought, and once broken, it is difficult to rebuild. Third is empowerment. Companies must enable employees and partners to grow together by giving them trust and responsibility. Fourth is the courage to make decisions. Business is full of uncertainty, and if you wait for certainty, someone else will seize the opportunity. Finally, every business must create value for its stakeholders. No company survives by focusing only on its own interests.

Where do you see the biggest opportunities in Indonesia's infrastructure sector?

Three decades of experience have taught me that simply being a construction contractor is no longer enough. Construction companies must evolve into solution providers that deliver value throughout an asset's lifecycle. That means going beyond physical construction to provide long-term performance through integrated Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Operation & Maintenance (EPC + O&M) solutions. Clients increasingly want a single partner responsible from design and procurement through construction and long-term operations.

Another major opportunity lies in green and climate-resilient construction. Energy-efficient, low-carbon, flood-resistant, and earthquake-resilient infrastructure will play an increasingly important role in creating long-term value for communities and the economy.

"Construction companies must evolve from contractors into long-term solution providers"

What sets Jorindo Agung apart in complex marine infrastructure projects?

Maritime infrastructure is inherently high-risk. A single mistake can cost lives, damage valuable assets, and harm a company's reputation. That is why safety and reputation must be designed into every project rather than addressed after problems arise.

We follow a three-layer approach. The first is risk-based engineering and planning, incorporating Hazard Identification (HAZID) and Hazard Operability (HAZOP) studies to eliminate risks before construction begins. The second is disciplined execution. Marine operations require strict procedures, clear communication, and uncompromising safety standards. The third is community engagement. Every project must earn the trust of local communities by ensuring they understand its purpose and long-term benefits.

Which innovations do you think will shape the future of infrastructure development?

Several technologies are already transforming construction. Modular and precast construction allows more work to be completed in factories, improving quality, reducing waste, and enhancing safety. Building Information Modelling (BIM) enables teams to simulate projects digitally before construction begins, minimising costly errors. Drone technology is improving surveys, inspections, and progress monitoring while reducing risks for workers. Artificial Intelligence is also becoming a valuable decision-support tool by helping engineers compare solutions and learn from similar projects around the world. Technology should strengthen planning and decision-making while improving efficiency, quality, and safety.

How do you build a culture of quality, accountability, and safety?

Every project proposal we prepare includes detailed risk mitigation and Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) planning. Hazard identification and contingency planning are embedded from the earliest stages, with risk management also reflected in project budgets. Because we operate extensively at sea, insurance forms another critical layer of protection.

Collaboration is equally important. We regularly work alongside technical experts and academic institutions, including on projects such as coral reef restoration in Raja Ampat following the Caledonian Sky incident. Bringing together practical experience and specialist knowledge strengthens both project outcomes and environmental responsibility.

What business decision taught you the most about resilience?

Running a business for decades is impossible without experiencing both success and failure. There have been moments when all our efforts produced little result because of internal and external challenges. What determines whether a business survives is resilience and persistence. I have always believed in one principle: keep moving, don't stop. No matter the circumstances, if you continue moving forward, sooner or later results will come. Long-term leadership is built not by avoiding setbacks, but by refusing to be defined by them.

How do you preserve Jorindo's values while preparing future leaders?

I see it as maintaining one flame while lighting another. If we hold too tightly to old ways, they can become outdated. But if everything is handed over without passing on the company's values, its identity can be lost. The key is to distinguish between core values and execution. Core values should remain constant because they are the company's compass and foundation. The way those values are applied, however, must evolve with changing technologies, markets, and customer expectations. Future leaders should not replace those values but reinterpret them for a new generation.

What legacy do you hope Jorindo Agung will leave?

We are moving towards more impactful development by pioneering green energy-based projects that will contribute to Indonesia's sustainable future. Beyond the infrastructure we build, I hope our legacy will be defined by responsible leadership, innovation, and a commitment to creating long-term value for society. If our work helps strengthen Indonesia's infrastructure while inspiring future generations to build with integrity, resilience, and purpose, that will be our greatest achievement.

Strategic Partnerships for Smarter Facilities

With over four decades in the UAE, Berkeley Services has built a reputation for operational excellence, innovation, and trusted client partnerships. **Karl-Heinz Otto Mair, CEO of Berkeley Services and (CEO International) for Klüh Multiservices,** shares how the company is leveraging technology and sustainability to shape the future of integrated facilities management.

For **Karl-Heinz Otto Mair, CEO of Berkeley Services and CEO International of Klüh Multiservices**, the future of facilities management lies in creating smarter, more efficient, and more sustainable environments. Drawing on Berkeley's deep-rooted presence in the UAE and Klüh's international expertise, he outlines the strategic priorities that will shape the next phase of growth for facilities management in the region.

How has Berkeley established and sustained its leadership position in the region?

Berkeley has established and sustained its leadership position in the region by consistently combining operational excellence, innovation and a deep understanding of the evolving needs of the built environment. With over four decades of experience in the UAE, Berkeley has built long-standing client relationships by delivering reliable, integrated facilities management solutions across diverse sectors. Our focus has evolved beyond service delivery to becoming a strategic partner for our clients—helping them improve efficiency, enhance asset performance and create safer, more sustainable workplaces. We continue to invest in technology, people and sustainable practices, while embracing solutions such as smart facilities management, data-driven operations and ESG initiatives. Most importantly, our leadership is built on our people and our commitment to continuously improve. By combining local expertise with global best practices through the Klüh Multiservices network, Berkeley remains focused on delivering measurable value and shaping the future of facilities management in the region.

How do you leverage this multinational presence to drive innovation locally?

Being part of a multinational legacy organisation gives Berkeley access to more than 115 years of international

> *Innovation, sustainability and strategic partnerships are not separate ambitions; they are fundamental to how we create long-term value*

expertise across Germany, the United Arab Emirates, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey & China. This multinational network enables us to exchange best practices, adopt emerging technologies and implement proven operational models that are tailored to local requirements.

In the UAE, we combine this global knowledge with regional insight to introduce AI-enabled solutions, smart CAFM systems, IoT-based monitoring and predictive maintenance strategies.

What is managing and maintaining operational excellence across diverse functions like?

Operational excellence is achieved through a disciplined approach that combines experienced people, standardised processes and intelligent technology. Across our integrated portfolio, we leverage digital platforms, real-time analytics and AI-driven innovations to enhance performance and improve decision-making. Our recent EcoVadis Silver Medal achievement, a globally recognised sustainability rating, reflects the progress we have made in strengthening our environmental, social and governance performance while continuously raising operational standards.

What are the key growth areas and priorities now for Berkeley in the region?

We will continue investing in AI, automation, smart building technologies and predictive analytics to deliver greater efficiency and enhanced client experiences. Equally important is accelerating our sustainability journey by supporting clients in achieving their net-zero goals through innovative, resource-efficient solutions. As we believe, innovation, sustainability and strategic partnerships are not separate ambitions; they are fundamental to how we create long-term value. With the backing of our global organisation and our strong UAE legacy, Berkeley is well positioned for its next phase of growth.

THE UAE IS BUILDING AN AI ECONOMY ON HUMAN FOUNDATIONS

Mohammed AlKhotani, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Middle East, Salesforce, explores why the UAE's people-first approach to artificial intelligence could become its greatest competitive advantage in the global AI economy.

Artificial intelligence is often viewed through the lens of cutting-edge chips, powerful computing infrastructure and large language models. While these technologies dominate the conversation, they tell only part of the story. The UAE has taken a markedly different approach; one that recognises people, not technology, as the true catalyst of AI-driven progress.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid has articulated this vision with clarity, setting the ambition for the UAE to become the world's most prepared nation for artificial intelligence. Achieving that goal requires far more than investment in infrastructure. It demands investment in teachers, coders, researchers and students; the people who will ultimately shape how AI is applied. The UAE understands what many markets are still debating: technology creates value only when people direct its purpose.

People Before Platforms

The UAE National AI Strategy 2031 reflects this philosophy. While its target of generating AED 335 billion in AI-driven economic value by 2030, equivalent to 13.6 per cent of GDP, often captures headlines, the strategy's defining strength lies elsewhere. It positions talent as the prerequisite for progress and technology as the enabler, rather than the other way around.

That same thinking is embedded in the UAE Centennial 2071 vision. Two of its four pillars focus directly on human development through excellent education and a diversified knowledge economy, placing them alongside technological advancement rather than beneath it. The sequencing is deliberate. It reflects a national belief that artificial intelligence should amplify human potential instead of replacing it.

The UAE has backed this philosophy with decisive action. In 2017, it became the first country to appoint a Minister for Artificial Intelligence, with Omar Sultan Al Olama

> *Artificial intelligence should amplify human potential instead of replacing it*

taking on the role even before the launch of the National AI Strategy. That decision signalled that AI readiness would be treated not as a future aspiration but as a governance priority.

Building the Workforce of the Future

Large-scale initiatives have further strengthened this foundation. The One Million Arab Coders programme has attracted participants from 80 countries, while the Dubai AI Campus welcomed more than 120 companies within its first six months. More recently, the UAE became the first country in the Middle East to mandate AI education across every school grade, embedding artificial intelligence into the national curriculum from the 2025 academic year. These are not isolated initiatives; they are structural investments in the country's future workforce.

Today, more than 80 per cent of employees in the UAE regularly use AI at work, suggesting the technology is already becoming a practical productivity tool across industries.

These investments reinforce an important lesson. Successful AI strategies are built around people. Digital labour and agentic AI will increasingly handle repetitive tasks, allowing individuals to focus on strategy, creativity and stronger customer relationships. Unlocking that potential, however, requires sustained investment in skills, leadership and workforce development. The UAE has demonstrated that discipline at a national level.

As Sheikh Saif bin Zayed observed, the country does not wait for the future, it creates it. That future will ultimately be shaped not by algorithms alone, but by the people who design, govern and apply them. The UAE has placed human capital at the centre of its AI journey, and that may prove to be its greatest competitive advantage.

The views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Business Frontier.

Beyond Technology, It's About Experience

After more than 27 years in the events and audiovisual industry, **Rajesh W. Pereira, CEO of Matrix AV & Entertainment**, has witnessed the evolution of event technology firsthand, and built a business that combines technical expertise with creativity, reliability, and execution excellence.

For **Rajesh W. Pereira, CEO of Matrix AV & Entertainment**, technology is only one part of the equation. While Matrix AVE has built its reputation through technical expertise and production capabilities, Pereira believes the real differentiator lies in people, trust, and execution. Under his leadership, the company has delivered more than 6,000 events across the UAE and the region, evolving from an AV provider into a full-service event and production partner. He reflects on leadership, industry transformation, operational excellence, and the trends shaping the future of event experiences.

What is your long-term vision for Matrix AVE?

My long-term vision for Matrix AVE is to continue evolving from being known as an AV company into being recognised as a complete event agency and production partner, one that clients trust not simply for equipment, but for solutions, creativity, and execution.

Over the last 27 years, I have watched our industry transform dramatically. Technology that was considered cutting-edge five years ago can become standard very quickly. For me, staying relevant is not about buying every new piece of equipment that enters the market. It is about understanding which technologies genuinely improve the audience experience and investing intelligently.

How has your leadership philosophy shaped the company culture?

My leadership philosophy has always been quite simple: give people responsibility, give them the tools to succeed, and then trust them to deliver.

In our industry, leadership cannot happen only from behind a desk. Events are unpredictable. Equipment can fail, schedules change, artists arrive late, weather turns, and clients make last-minute requests. In those situations, you quickly discover whether you have created employees who wait for instructions or professionals who can think and make decisions.

"Technology may evolve, but clients will always value trust"

What milestones have defined Matrix's journey?

When I look back, I don't think of Matrix's journey as one big milestone. It has been hundreds of smaller milestones that gradually changed who we are. We started with a much smaller operation and grew into an organisation capable of delivering complex productions. Economic downturns, intense competition, COVID, and rapid changes in event technology all forced us to rethink how we operated. Each challenge taught us to become leaner, faster, and more adaptable. Today, after more than 6,000 events, that reputation is one of our greatest assets.

How does Matrix AVE remain a preferred partner in a competitive market?

Our strategy has never been to become the cheapest company in the market. There will always be someone prepared to quote lower. Instead, we compete on confidence. When a client appoints Matrix AVE, they are not simply renting LED screens, sound systems, lighting, or staging. They are trusting us with an event that may represent months of planning, significant investment, and sometimes their own professional reputation.

A major advantage is the depth of our in-house capabilities. Having substantial production inventory, technical expertise, design capabilities, and experienced project teams gives us greater control over quality, timelines, and last-minute changes.

How do you balance innovation with client-focused delivery?

I have always reminded our team that technology is the tool, not the experience. A client rarely comes to us because they want a particular processor, lighting fixture, or LED specification. They come because they want their audience to feel something, to be impressed, engaged, informed, or entertained.

We continuously invest in areas such as high-resolution LED, professional audio, intelligent lighting, communication systems, show control, and other event technologies. But every investment is evaluated against a practical question: Will this make our productions better, more reliable, or more creative for our clients? The real strength of Matrix AVE is therefore the combination of technology and people.

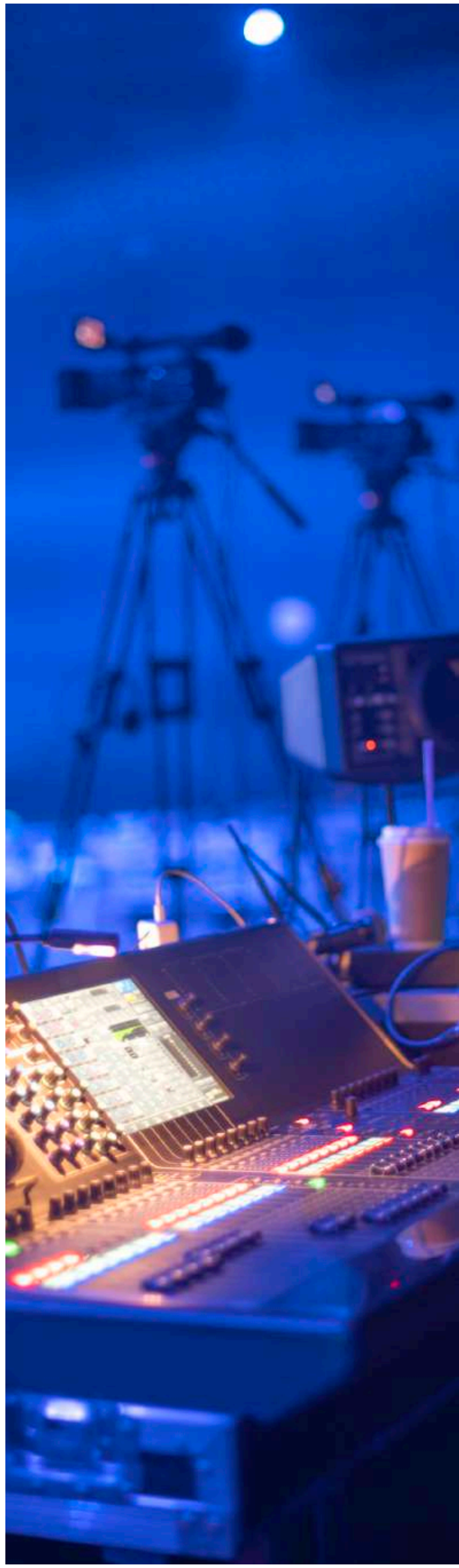
What trends do you think will shape the future of the AV industry?

The next phase will be driven by the convergence of AV, digital content, automation, AI, and immersive experiences. LED technology will continue becoming more sophisticated, while immersive environments, interactive content, real-time visualisation, and increasingly intelligent show-control systems will change what audiences expect from live events.

Clients increasingly want fewer suppliers and stronger partners. They want organisations that can understand the complete event rather than operate only within one technical discipline. That creates a significant opportunity for Matrix AVE because it aligns with the direction in which we have already been developing.

What legacy do you hope to build through your leadership?

I would like Matrix AVE to be remembered as a company that consistently delivered when it mattered most. Technology will continue evolving, but trust, execution, and relationships remain timeless. If clients, partners, and employees look back and say we helped create exceptional experiences while maintaining integrity and professionalism, that would be a legacy worth building.



Building Confidence, Not Just Communities

As Dubai's real estate market continues to evolve, **Deepak Batra, Founder & CEO of AUM Development**, believes the next competitive advantage for developers will not be scale or speed alone, but trust.

For **Deepak Batra, Founder & CEO of AUM Development**, real estate is about more than constructing buildings. It is about creating confidence. Having evolved from an investor-led business into a fully integrated developer, AUM Development has built its reputation around a disciplined approach to quality, execution, and financial prudence. In this conversation with Business Frontier, Batra discusses leadership, execution, sustainability, market opportunities, and the strategic priorities shaping AUM Development's future growth.

What philosophy drives AUM Development's approach to real estate?

Our core philosophy is captured in a single idea: energy in every creation. AUM symbolises the origin of creation, and we treat every development as the point where energy takes form. We see ourselves as an affordable luxury developer, and that identity guides everything we do, delivering homes and workspaces that feel genuinely premium yet remain attainable. This philosophy has shaped our entire trajectory. We deliberately grew from an investor-led business into a full-cycle developer so we could control quality, timelines, and outcomes ourselves. It is also why we build on a 100% equity-funded model rather than chasing volume with borrowed capital. That discipline keeps our pipeline focused on well-located, design-led projects that perform, not on speculation.

What decisions have been most critical to delivering quality and execution certainty?

Three decisions matter most. First, vertical integration: because we oversee every phase in-house, we maintain a complete view across design, construction, and delivery, which protects both timelines and quality.

> *The biggest untapped opportunity in real estate today is trust*

Second, the equity-funded structure removes the financial pressures that force many developers to trade quality for speed; we never make that trade, because our capital is committed from the outset rather than dependent on sales velocity. Third, location discipline. We choose communities that genuinely support how people want to live, prioritising connectivity and long-term end-user value over short-term hype.

How are sustainability and smart design shaping your developments?

Sustainability and intelligent design are becoming embedded across our portfolio rather than added as features. Our commercial developments illustrate this clearly. Vertex Pointe in Arjan is built around wellness and efficiency, with balconies on every office, landscaped greens, water features, a top-floor gym, and parking at 2.5 times standard capacity to reduce congestion. High Space integrates a vertical garden extending to the roof, dedicated wellness and yoga spaces, prayer rooms, and a high-resolution LED façade that gives the building a distinct identity while managing its presence in the streetscape. Our residential projects follow the same thinking: Ryze offers floor-to-ceiling windows and smart storage solutions, while Veda's low-rise design maximises natural light and tranquillity. For us, smart building is ultimately about longevity, creating assets that use resources responsibly and remain valuable for decades, thereby providing a whole ecosystem of affordable luxury.

What opportunity are developers in the region still overlooking?

The biggest untapped opportunity is trust as a product. The region is rich in supply, but buyers increasingly value certainty of delivery as much as design or price. Many developers still treat timelines and transparency as operational details rather than as core parts of what they are selling.

There is also real, under-served demand for affordable luxury, well-designed homes that do not force buyers to choose between quality and value. Developers who capitalise on reliability and genuine value, not just aesthetics, will own the next cycle.

How would you describe your leadership philosophy?

I believe teams perform best when decisions are transparent, expectations are unambiguous, and everyone understands how their work contributes to the final asset. Closeness comes from shared standards, not hierarchy. Because we are vertically integrated, our people work side by side across investment, design, and delivery, and that proximity builds genuine trust. I hold quality as non-negotiable and I hold myself to the same discipline I ask of the team, which is what earns credibility. Our growth has been built on trust and consistency, internally first, and that is what allows us to make confident, execution-certain decisions under pressure.

What will define AUM Development's next phase of growth?

Our next phase is defined by scale and diversification. We have moved from a Dubai investment base into full-cycle, multi-project development, and the coming years are about delivering on that pipeline. Our active projects, Veda in Jumeirah Village Circle, Ryze in Dubai International City, and our two commercial developments, Vertex Pointe and High Space in Arjan, are scheduled for handover between 2027 and 2028, spanning both residential and commercial segments. Beyond these, we are actively exploring new projects and upcoming segments across the UAE, always guided by the same positioning that defines us. What will define this phase is not just scale but consistency at scale, holding durable quality and transparent execution constant as our volume grows. Throughout, the model stays the same: equity-funded, design-led, and delivered on time. That is how we intend to build with confidence and invest with clarity as we grow.

BUILDING THE FUTURE ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Business Frontier speaks with **Nandini Garg, Director, Rajdarbar Ventures**, about balancing legacy with innovation, evaluating growth markets, managing real estate investments and shaping the company's long-term development strategy.

For **Nandini Garg, Director, Rajdarbar Ventures**, real estate is a business of understanding markets, anticipating change and making decisions with a long-term perspective. As the next generation of a family business with a legacy spanning around six decades, Garg combines institutional knowledge with contemporary approaches to strategy, investment and development. Her experience across markets, along with her involvement in industry and policy forums, gives her a multidimensional view of the sector and its evolving opportunities.

Rajdarbar Ventures has a long family legacy. How do you balance established practices with new ideas?

I trained under my father when I joined the business, and he made sure I understood why we had been doing things in a particular way. That foundation became extremely important as I took on greater responsibilities. At the same time, my MBA, exposure to other businesses and interactions with peers gave me access to new ways of looking at the business. I could understand both perspectives and bring those ideas back to the board for discussion.

In a family business, you have to build consensus. Sometimes they change my opinion and sometimes I change theirs. There is no fixed position that represents either the traditional or the new way. The objective is to find the approach that works best for the business.

What drives your approach to identifying new real estate markets?

In real estate, location is extremely important, but it has to be understood in the context of the project. We begin by studying the catchment. Who are the people who would potentially come to the area today and five years from now? What are their spending capacities? Would they want to live there or commute to work? Demographics become very important.

We then study the applicable bylaws, how regulations may evolve and the broader macroeconomic environment. We look at connectivity, infrastructure, whether people are moving towards metropolitan or Tier-II markets, and how the market itself is developing. Capital flows and absorption rates are equally important. A market may have considerable wealth, but if transactions are limited, its actual spending potential can be very different. We also assess competition, the brands entering the market and what our positioning would be. Ultimately, the process moves from the very micro to the very macro.

What is the right approach when external factors change the original investment outlook?

Real estate investment can broadly work in two ways. One is a pure real estate investment, while the other can be more speculative. In a speculative investment, if the original thesis changes, you have to reassess the asset and understand whether it makes sense to continue holding it or exit based on the appreciation achieved. In a development-led investment, the objective is different. You acquire land, create value through development and generate your return primarily from that development.

Infrastructure can enhance the opportunity, but the underlying project should make sense independently. If a major infrastructure project is delayed, the financial side becomes very important. You have to assess your debt cost, debt servicing requirements and holding capacity. You may decide to release inventory, reduce financing costs and retain the asset until the underlying infrastructure is delivered. The decision ultimately depends on the financial strength of the project and the company's ability to hold it.

How important is policy engagement to the real estate sector?

It is extremely important because real estate is closely connected with infrastructure, regulations and urban planning. I have been involved in public policy advocacy in Delhi for the last several years. Since 2019, I have consistently worked with the CII real estate committee in Delhi in different leadership capacities, and I have also been associated with NAREDCO Delhi. Through industry bodies, you engage with government officials, policymakers and other stakeholders and bring the industry's perspective into these conversations.

What opportunities do you see across Tier-II and Tier-III markets in India?

India is developing at multiple levels. While metropolitan cities continue to evolve, Tier-II and Tier-III markets are also creating significant opportunities. Connectivity will remain a major driver. As roads, highways and other infrastructure improve, the relationship between established cities and emerging markets changes. There is also a natural progression in how markets develop. Larger cities often become trendsetters, and emerging cities gradually adopt and adapt those trends to their own requirements. For developers, the opportunity lies in understanding each market on its own terms rather than applying one standard model everywhere.

> *"Understanding policy is integral to understanding the real estate market*

As a next-generation leader, what will remain central to your approach to the business?

For me, it comes down to combining experience with an openness to new ideas. The strength of a family business is the knowledge and relationships built over decades. The responsibility of the next generation is to build on that foundation while remaining open to new markets, new technologies, new approaches and changing consumer expectations. Ultimately, every decision has to contribute towards creating a sustainable and valuable business. That requires listening to different perspectives, understanding the market deeply and being willing to evolve as the opportunity changes. That balance between legacy and progress is what I believe will continue to shape the next chapter for Rajdarbar Ventures.

ENGINEERING CONFIDENCE THROUGH AI

As enterprises accelerate digital transformation, **Rohith Alagarsamy, Founder & Chief Technology Officer, Testition Technologies LLP**, believes Quality Engineering is evolving from a testing function into a strategic driver of business resilience, innovation, and customer trust.

> *Organisations that combine innovation with purpose, trust, and responsibility will be the ones that create lasting value*

For **Rohith Alagarsamy**, innovation is only valuable when it solves meaningful business problems. Having worked across multiple phases of enterprise technology evolution, from traditional software delivery models to AI-driven Quality Engineering, he has seen how digital transformation succeeds when innovation is supported by strong execution, continuous learning, and customer focus. In this conversation with Business Frontier, the Founder and CTO of Testition Technologies shares his perspectives on AI-led Quality Engineering, enterprise resilience, leadership, and the future of digital assurance.

Your career has evolved alongside technology. What experiences shaped your leadership philosophy?

Over the course of my career, I have worked across different stages of technology evolution. The experience that shaped me most was seeing how technology initiatives succeed or fail based not on tools, but on people, culture, and execution excellence.

I learned early that innovation is most valuable when it solves real business problems and creates measurable outcomes. Working with global enterprises taught me the importance of balancing speed with quality, and ambition with accountability. My leadership philosophy is built on empowering teams, encouraging experimentation, and creating an environment where questioning the status quo is welcomed.

Where do you see the biggest opportunities for AI-led Quality Engineering?

The greatest opportunity lies in moving beyond defect detection toward enabling better business decision-making. Traditionally, quality was viewed as a testing activity. Today, AI allows Quality Engineering to provide predictive intelligence across the software lifecycle.

By analysing patterns across requirements, code, test results, and customer behaviour, AI can identify risks before they affect business operations. This helps organisations reduce delays, improve resilience, and optimise technology investments. Ultimately, Quality Engineering is becoming a strategic business enabler that supports innovation, risk management, and customer satisfaction.

How is Quality Engineering becoming a strategic business capability?

Quality Engineering is no longer a final verification step before release; it is becoming an essential component of business strategy. In today's digital economy, organisations cannot afford quality issues that affect trust, revenue, or brand reputation. Quality Engineering now plays a critical role in accelerating delivery by identifying risks earlier and integrating quality practices throughout the development lifecycle.

Most importantly, Quality Engineering directly influences customer experience. As AI and automation mature, it will increasingly help organisations innovate faster while maintaining reliability and security.

How does Testition balance AI innovation with customer trust?

"Innovation is most valuable when it solves real business problems"

At Testition, we have built our culture around three pillars: innovation, engineering excellence, and customer trust. While innovation drives our vision, trust remains the foundation of every customer relationship.

We encourage our teams to explore emerging AI technologies, but every innovation must solve a real customer challenge and deliver measurable value. Engineering excellence is maintained through rigorous standards, continuous learning, and a strong focus on outcomes. Customer trust comes from transparency, consistency, and delivering solutions that are reliable, secure, and scalable.

Which innovations will shape enterprise competitiveness over the next decade?

I believe the most transformative innovations will be autonomous software delivery, predictive Quality Engineering, intelligent observability, and AI-powered decision support. AI-driven autonomous testing and self-healing automation will reduce manual effort while increasing speed and accuracy. Predictive analytics will shift organisations from reactive problem-solving to proactive risk management, while intelligent observability platforms will improve operational resilience.

I am also particularly excited about AI copilots that support engineering teams across development, testing, and production environments. However, technology alone will not determine success. The real differentiator will be how organisations combine AI capabilities with skilled people, strong governance, and a culture of innovation.

How do you nurture future leaders and a culture of innovation?

I believe future leaders are developed through experience, responsibility, and continuous learning. At Testition, we encourage individuals to think beyond their immediate roles and understand the broader business impact of their work. We create opportunities for team members to lead initiatives, solve complex challenges, and make meaningful decisions. Curiosity is encouraged through experimentation and knowledge sharing, while ownership comes from empowering people to take accountability for outcomes.

My goal is to create an environment where learning is continuous and leadership is measured by the ability to inspire, collaborate, and create meaningful impact.

What are Testition Technologies' priorities for its next phase of growth?

Our next phase of growth is centred on becoming a leading AI-first Quality Engineering and digital assurance partner for enterprises worldwide. We are investing in AI-powered platforms, intelligent automation frameworks, and predictive quality solutions that help organisations improve speed, efficiency, and resilience. A key priority is expanding our capabilities beyond traditional testing into broader quality intelligence and digital assurance services.

What legacy do you hope to build as a technology leader?

Beyond business growth, I want my legacy to be defined by the people, ideas, and positive impact I helped create. I hope to contribute to a future where Quality Engineering is recognised as a strategic driver of innovation and where technology is used responsibly to improve lives, organisations, and communities.

For entrepreneurs and engineering professionals navigating the AI era, my advice is simple: stay curious, remain adaptable, and focus relentlessly on solving meaningful problems. Organisations that combine innovation with purpose, trust, and responsibility will be the ones that create lasting value.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF TRANSFORMATION

After nearly two decades in multinational environments and now as **Founder and Principal Consultant of IGNITIA HR, Salma Hassan** believes sustainable business success comes from aligning people, leadership, and strategy. She shares why trust, clarity, and capability building remain at the heart of meaningful organisational transformation.

For **Salma Hassan, Founder and Principal Consultant of IGNITIA HR**, transformation is not about implementing the latest trend or technology; it is about helping organisations create the conditions where both people and business performance can thrive. Drawing on extensive experience across diverse teams, cultures, and markets, Hassan has built her leadership philosophy around the belief that strong business results and positive employee experiences are mutually reinforcing. Through IGNITIA HR, she partners with organisations to strengthen leadership, improve organisational effectiveness, and build lasting capabilities. In this conversation with Business Frontier, she discusses leadership, technology, growth, and why sustainable success is ultimately rooted in clarity, trust, and consistency.

How would you describe your leadership philosophy, and what has shaped it most significantly over the course of your career?

My leadership philosophy is built around creating a win-win between people and the business. I have never believed that taking care of people and delivering strong business results are competing priorities. In fact, I believe taking care of people is one of the ways you deliver those results. Throughout my career, across different teams, cultures, and markets, I have repeatedly seen that when people feel valued, trusted, supported, and fairly treated, they take greater ownership and become more invested in the success of the organization. That creates the conditions for stronger and more sustainable performance.

I believe in high standards and accountability, but equally in empathy, fairness, and trust. The strongest organizations are those where people can thrive and, because they do, the business thrives with them.

Looking at the business landscape today, what is the one opportunity you believe leaders in your sector are not yet fully capitalizing on?

I believe the biggest opportunity is not simply adopting AI and new technology, but using them to remove complexity, improve decisions, and free people to focus on the work where human judgment, creativity, and relationships add the most value. Too often, organizations start with the tool rather than the problem. The better starting point is understanding what the business and its people genuinely need, then using technology to simplify work, strengthen insight, and improve the employee experience.

I do not see technology as a replacement for human judgment, but as something that should strengthen it. The organizations that will benefit most are those that combine technology with clear priorities, strong people practices, and thoughtful leadership, using it to make the business stronger while making work better for people.

What has been the most defining decision you have made for your organization, and what did it teach you?

The most defining decision I made for IGNITIA was choosing depth over speed. When I moved from nearly 20 years in a multinational organization into entrepreneurship, I had to become very clear about what I wanted the business to stand for and how I wanted it to grow. I consciously chose not to pursue every opportunity or scale for its own sake. Instead, I focused on building trust, delivering meaningful value, and creating long-term relationships grounded in quality and integrity.

That decision taught me that sustainable growth requires clarity not only about what you pursue, but also about what you are willing to say no to. Growth becomes stronger when it is intentional. For me, success is not about becoming bigger faster, but about building something credible, valuable, and built to last.

“Sustainable growth requires clarity about what you pursue and what you decline”

What key priorities or strategic shifts will define your organization's next phase of growth?

The next phase of IGNITIA's growth will focus on building deeper, longer-term partnerships with organizations that are ready for meaningful transformation. I want to continue expanding our work toward more integrated transformation, connecting business priorities with organization effectiveness, leadership capability, people systems, and technology. The strongest results come when these elements reinforce one another rather than being addressed separately.

Another key priority is capability transfer. I want every engagement to leave the organization stronger and more self-sufficient, with leaders and teams able to sustain the change long after our direct involvement ends. For me, the next phase is about becoming an even deeper transformation partner, helping organizations not only design change, but also build the capability and confidence to sustain it themselves.

One thought or lesson that you would like to leave our readers with?

One lesson I increasingly believe in is that sustainable success rarely comes from doing more. It comes from being clearer about what truly matters and doing those things consistently well. Organizations can become so focused on growth, transformation, and the next initiative that they underestimate the power of the fundamentals: clear priorities, capable people, simple systems, trusted leadership, and values that remain visible when decisions become difficult.

The same is true for individual leaders. Careers and reputations are built gradually through the choices we make consistently, especially when circumstances are challenging.

In the end, leadership is remembered not only through the results we deliver, but through the standards we set, the people we develop, and the way people felt working with us.

BUILDING TRUST BEYOND THE TRANSACTION

Samuel Chelliah, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®, Chelliah's International Real Estate, shares how an integrated approach spanning property advisory, financing and management can help buyers make more confident ownership decisions while building lasting wealth.

> *I advise clients the way I would want someone to advise my own family*

Having worked across Canada, the United States, Qatar and the UAE, **Samuel Chelliah aka #SamYourMan** has spent nearly two decades in real estate and community management. His experience on the property management side of the industry has shaped a leadership philosophy rooted in accountability, transparency and long-term client relationships. Sam talks about why advisory-led real estate services, professional standards and community-focused wealth creation will define the industry's future.

What has shaped your leadership philosophy?

My philosophy is simple: tell people the truth, even when it costs me the deal. When you manage a building, you answer for the promises made years earlier, from service charges to maintenance and overall ownership experience. That teaches you to think beyond the sale and focus on long-term trust. I advise clients the way I would want someone to advise my own family.

What has been your most defining business decision?

Building the business around the buyer rather than around available inventory. It taught me that the greatest risk is not running out of money but losing conviction in what you are building. In this industry, you can continue closing deals you no longer believe in, but clients eventually notice. Today, I measure success by both financial performance and confidence in the advice I provide.

What opportunity is the industry overlooking?

The biggest opportunity is serving clients across the entire ownership journey. Buyers often deal with separate professionals for property selection, financing and post-handover management, leaving nobody accountable for the complete picture.

I work across all three areas. When I recommend a property, I already understand the financing options and the long-term ownership costs. Those conversations belong together. In markets such as the United States, this integrated approach is standard. In our region, it remains a significant opportunity.

What will drive your next phase of growth?

Three priorities. First, bringing real estate, mortgage and property management services together under one roof. Second, creating documented service standards so clients clearly understand what they can expect. Third, continuing professional development through globally recognised industry qualifications to help raise advisory standards across the market.

What message would you like to leave with readers?

As the son of Tamil immigrants who grew up in Saudi Arabia and later lived in Canada, I understand what it means to build a future in a country that is not your own. I want to help bridge the gap for global Tamil families looking to invest in the region by providing trusted guidance in a language and cultural context they understand. Property ownership is not just about individual wealth; it is about creating long-term opportunity and legacy for future generations.

Tech & Transparency for Smarter Communities

Samuel Lehain, CEO & Founder of Logic Utilities District Cooling Services, discusses how technology, transparent billing and customer-focused utility management are helping create smarter, more efficient and sustainable communities across the UAE.

Samuel Lehain
CEO & Founder, Logic Utilities

> *"Smart utility management is about transforming accurate data into transparency, efficiency and better decisions for everyone in the community.*

As utility management becomes increasingly data-driven, developers and community managers need solutions that combine accuracy, transparency, compliance and efficiency. **Samuel Lehain** shares how Logic Utilities District Cooling Services is transforming utility management through smart technology and an end-to-end service approach.

What does Logic Utilities specialise in?

Logic Utilities is a UAE utility management company specializing in district cooling metering, billing and customer service solutions. As an RSB-licensed Billing Service Provider in Dubai, we support developers, property owners and community managers with end-to-end services covering BTU and water metering, AMR systems, billing, collections, account management and technical support.

How does Logic Utilities create value for communities and property stakeholders?

We combine accurate metering, transparent consumption-based billing and professional utility management to ensure customers are charged fairly for their actual usage.

For property stakeholders, our end-to-end approach improves visibility, revenue recovery and service quality while reducing the operational burden of managing utilities.

What role does technology play in improving utility efficiency?

Technology allows us to turn consumption data into actionable insights. Through smart metering, AMR systems and performance monitoring, we can identify abnormal consumption, faulty meters, leaks and inefficiencies early.

This helps reduce energy waste and operating costs while giving property managers greater visibility and encouraging customers to manage their consumption more responsibly.

How do you help clients reduce costs and support sustainability goals?

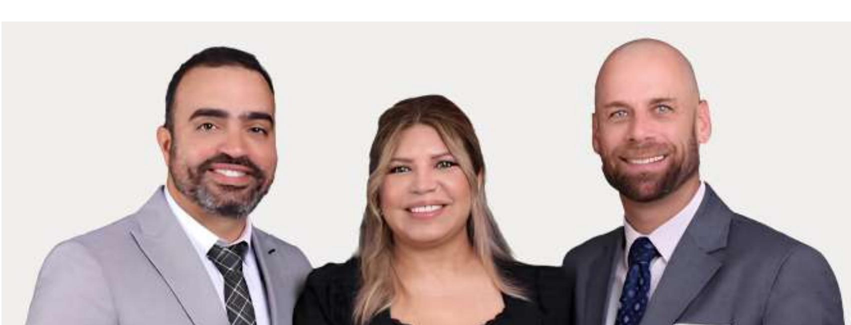
Accurate metering and proactive monitoring help identify excessive consumption, inefficiencies and potential revenue leakage. At the same time, consumption-based billing encourages customers to become more conscious of their usage.

By combining accurate data with preventive maintenance and transparent reporting, we help clients improve financial efficiency while supporting more sustainable communities.

How does your team's expertise strengthen service delivery?

Our strength is the combination of technical, operational, regulatory and customer-service expertise within one team.

This integrated approach allows us to respond quickly, continuously improve our processes and deliver reliable utility management from metering and compliance through to billing, collections and customer support.



(From L-R) Mahmoud Hamza, Nouha Kedous, Georg Frank

GRABIT ACCESSORIES: THE MAKING OF A CONSUMER BRAND

Shariq Khan, CEO, Globelink International, shares how GRABIT Accessories is transforming from a distribution business into a consumer-focused technology brand built on quality, innovation and long-term value.

> "A vision may come from one person, but execution always comes from the team"

After spending more than three decades in the consumer electronics industry across Africa, the Middle East and beyond, **Shariq Khan** has built a career around understanding markets, channels and consumer behaviour. In conversation with Business Frontier, he discusses the journey behind GRABIT Accessories, the opportunities he identified in the market and the leadership principles that continue to guide his growth strategy.

What inspired the launch of GRABIT Accessories, and what gap did you see in the market?

We have been trading consumer electronics and Apple products for many years, but trading alone does not create lasting value. We wanted to build something of our own. The inspiration came when we studied the success of smartphone accessory brands in markets such as India and realised there was room for a brand that focused equally on quality, affordability and user experience. We saw a gap in the market where many products prioritised marketing over product quality. Our objective was to create accessories that people genuinely wanted to use, products that delivered strong performance without the premium price tag.

What makes GRABIT stand out in a crowded Tech accessories market?

Our focus has always been on quality, design and functionality. We do not want to be just another accessories brand. Every product is selected and developed with the customer experience in mind. Today, GRABIT offers more than 300 SKUs across categories including chargers, power banks, earphones, speakers, smartwatches and mobile accessories. We have built a strong retail presence across the UAE and continue to expand rapidly. The goal is simple: provide consumers with products that look good, feel good and perform reliably.

How do you decide which products become part of the GRABIT portfolio?

Every product goes through a detailed evaluation process. I personally review many of the products before they are introduced to the market. We work closely with leading manufacturers and factories worldwide to identify products that offer genuine value. We do not launch products in a hurry. We spend time understanding market demand, testing quality and ensuring the product meets our standards before it reaches consumers.

What are consumers looking for today, and how is GRABIT meeting those needs?

Consumers want dependable products at competitive prices. They are looking for convenience, performance and design. We started by focusing on everyday essentials such as chargers, power banks and audio devices because these are products people use daily. At the same time, we are continuously exploring new technologies, including AI-enabled and IoT-based products, to ensure we remain aligned with evolving consumer expectations.

What is your vision for GRABIT's future growth?

The Middle East remains our primary focus and strongest market. We already have an established distribution network and strong retail partnerships across the region. Beyond that, Africa represents a significant growth opportunity, while India remains a long-term strategic market. Our ambition is to become one of the leading accessories and gadgets brands across the Middle East before expanding further. You will also see increased brand collaborations, marketing initiatives and consumer engagement as we continue building awareness.

What has been the biggest leadership lesson in your journey?

One of the biggest lessons I have learned is to stay close to the business. Leaders cannot operate only from boardrooms. They need to understand what is happening on the ground. Whether it is product development, sales or customer feedback, I believe leaders must remain actively involved. Being hands-on allows you to make better decisions and stay connected with both your team and your customers.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I believe in leading by example. If I expect commitment from my team, I must demonstrate the same commitment myself. I also believe in building strong teams.

A vision may come from one person, but execution always comes from a team. Creating the right culture, empowering people and maintaining open communication are critical to achieving long-term success.

What advice would you give business leaders and entrepreneurs today?

Focus on industries and opportunities you genuinely understand. Experience matters, and understanding your market gives you a significant advantage. At the same time, surround yourself with the right people.

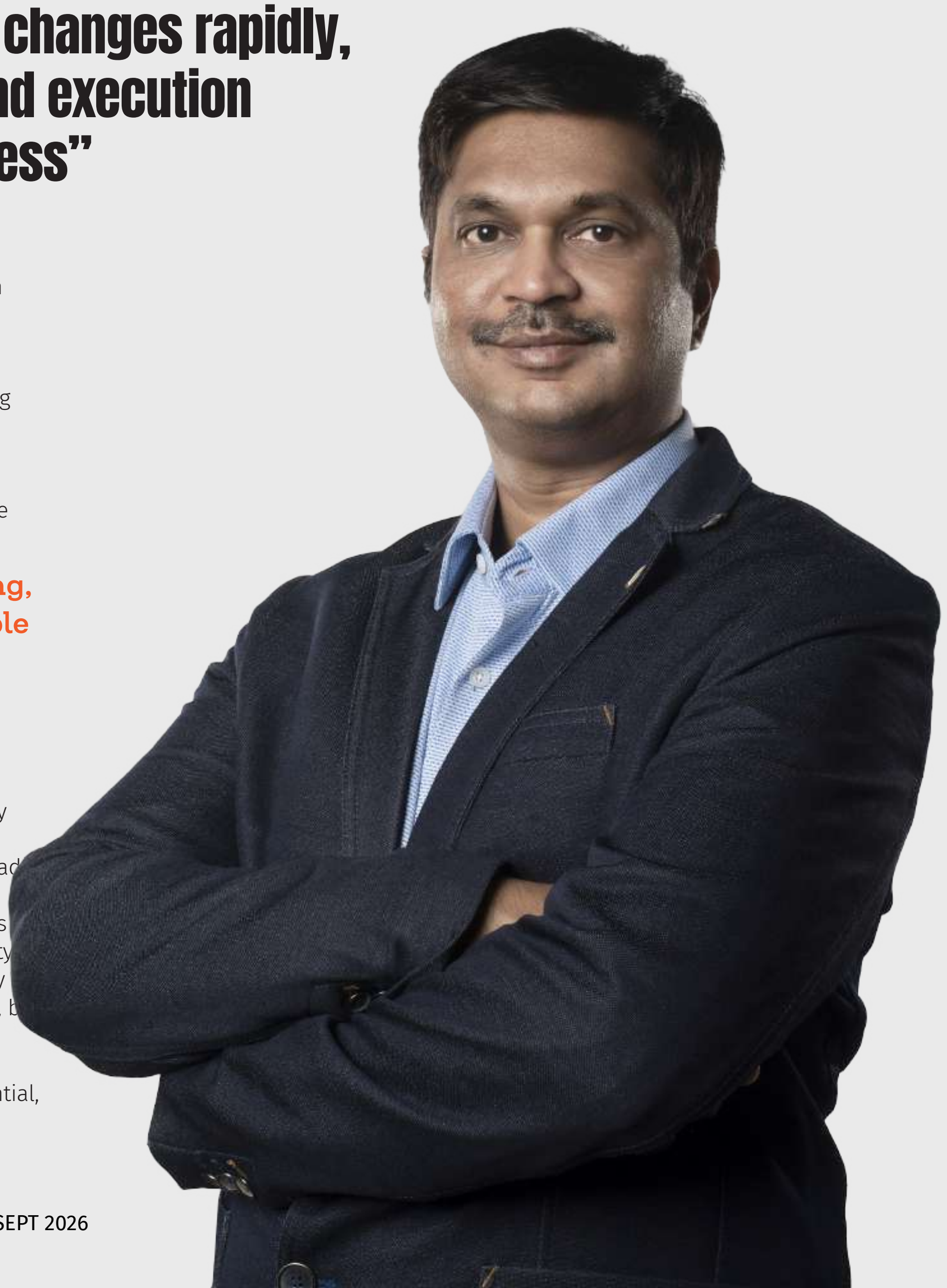
No vision can succeed without a capable team behind it. Stay involved, stay connected to your customers and never lose sight of the value you are creating. In the end, sustainable businesses are built on consistency, quality and trust.

> *"We wanted to create a brand people genuinely wanted to carry, use and trust every day*

ENGINEERING THE FUTURE THROUGH INNOVATION AND INTEGRITY

From precision manufacturing to renewable energy and infrastructure, **Dr. Unmesh Jagtap, CEO & Director, Sonnenschein Engineering & Infra and Ino-Solar Energy**, shares how engineering excellence, innovation, and sustainable thinking are shaping India's clean energy future.

"Technology changes rapidly, but values and execution remain timeless"



For **Dr. Unmesh Jagtap**, engineering is about creating long-term value through innovation, quality, and purposeful execution. From precision manufacturing to renewable energy and infrastructure, his career reflects a commitment to engineering excellence and sustainable growth. In this conversation with Business Frontier, he discusses leadership, India's clean energy transition, and the technologies shaping the future of engineering.

Your career spans engineering, manufacturing, and renewable energy. What experiences have shaped your leadership philosophy?

My journey has been driven by a passion for engineering and a belief that technology should create meaningful value for society. After completing my Masters in the USA, I had the opportunity to work alongside some of the world's leading solar energy researchers at Solar Energy Research Center in University of Florida. That experience changed the way looked at energy, not merely as an industry, b as a catalyst for sustainable development.

Recognizing India's renewable energy potential, I diversified into solar manufacturing, EPC, energy efficiency, and infrastructure. My leadership philosophy is built on three principles: continuous innovation, uncompromising integrity, and empowering people. Technology changes rapidly, but values and execution remain timeless.

> *"Future infrastructure will intelligently manage energy, not simply generate it*

As India accelerates its clean energy transition, where do you see the biggest opportunities for businesses?

India has made remarkable progress in renewable energy, but I believe the next wave of opportunities lies beyond simply installing solar plants. Business leaders need to focus on integrated energy ecosystems where solar power, energy storage, AI-based energy management, passive cooling technologies, and smart infrastructure work together. Through our international collaborations, we have seen how combining these technologies creates significantly greater value than treating them as standalone solutions.

Another overlooked opportunity is energy efficiency. The cleanest unit of energy is the one we never consume. Technologies such as reflective cool roof coatings, energy-efficient buildings, and intelligent power optimization can dramatically reduce energy demand while complementing renewable generation. Companies investing in indigenous R&D and engineering innovation will define the future of this industry.

Engineering businesses rely on both innovation and execution. How has Sonnenschein Engineering built a culture of quality and reliability?

Quality has always been part of my professional DNA. My early experience in automotive manufacturing exposed me to Six Sigma, PPAP, APQP, ISO systems, and world-class manufacturing practices, and those disciplines continue to shape how we execute every project today.

At Sonnenschein Engineering & Infra, our culture rests on three pillars: engineering excellence, execution discipline, and innovation through collaboration. We never compromise on technical quality, while our strategic partnerships enable us to bring globally proven technologies to Indian customers, adapted to local conditions. For us, success is measured not by the number of projects completed but by the long-term performance of the systems we deliver and the trust our clients continue to place in us.

What has been the most defining business decision of your entrepreneurial journey?

Perhaps the most defining decision was choosing to diversify from conventional engineering manufacturing into renewable energy while the Indian solar industry was still emerging. Many viewed it as a risky transition, but I believed clean energy would become one of the defining industries of the future. That conviction led us to expand into solar manufacturing, EPC services, energy-efficient products, and international technology partnerships.

Which technologies do you think will have the greatest impact on engineering over the next decade?

I believe Artificial Intelligence will fundamentally transform engineering in much the same way CAD transformed design decades ago.

AI-powered project planning, predictive maintenance, digital twins, drone-based inspections, BIM, IoT-enabled monitoring, and intelligent energy management systems will improve project efficiency, reduce operational risks, and optimise lifecycle performance.

We are already exploring AI-based power optimisation technologies because we believe future infrastructure will not simply generate energy, it will intelligently manage and optimise it. However, technology should support engineering judgement, not replace it.

How do you prepare future leaders while fostering continuous learning?

Learning has been central to my own journey, and it remains central to our organisation today. We encourage our teams to continuously upgrade their technical knowledge while developing leadership, communication, and commercial understanding. Young engineers are given responsibilities early and supported by experienced mentors.

Beyond our organisation, I actively contribute as an industry mentor and technical advisor because I strongly believe industry and academia must work together to prepare the next generation of engineers. Innovation flourishes when people are trusted, encouraged to experiment, and allowed to learn from both success and failure.

What are Sonnenschein Engineering's strategic priorities for the next phase of growth?

The next phase of our growth will focus on creating integrated sustainable infrastructure rather than delivering isolated engineering solutions.

We intend to strengthen our presence in solar EPC, project development, advanced energy solutions, passive cooling technologies, and AI-enabled energy management while expanding our international technology collaborations.

We also see tremendous opportunity in helping industries achieve their decarbonisation goals through integrated solutions that combine renewable energy, energy efficiency, and digital technologies. Ultimately, our vision is to build globally competitive engineering solutions developed in India that contribute to India's aspiration of becoming a clean energy leader.

Beyond business success, what legacy do you hope to leave behind?

The legacy I aspire to leave is not simply a successful company but an organisation that contributes to society through innovation, sustainability, and ethical leadership. If people remember me as someone who helped advance renewable energy, promoted indigenous engineering innovation, mentored future entrepreneurs, and created technologies that improve lives, I would consider that my greatest achievement.

THE BIGGEST MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS OF 2026

Global M&A activity reached a record US$2.8 trillion in H1 2026, driven by a surge in mega-deals worth over US$10 billion. Although transaction volumes declined, companies are pursuing larger acquisitions to gain scale, strengthen capabilities and secure long-term growth.

The global mergers and acquisitions market is experiencing one of its strongest years on record. According to LSEG data reported by Reuters, announced M&A activity reached US$2.8 trillion during the first half of 2026, representing a 48% increase year-on-year and marking the strongest first-half performance since records began in 1980. While the number of transactions fell to a six-year low, dealmakers continued to pursue increasingly ambitious acquisitions. A total of 47 transactions valued above US$10 billion accounted for nearly half of all announced deal value during the period.

The figures point to a clear shift in corporate strategy. Rather than pursuing large numbers of smaller acquisitions, many companies are focusing on transformative deals capable of expanding market share, accelerating growth and strengthening competitive positioning.

The Numbers Behind the Mega-Deal Boom

Metric	H1 2026
Global announced M&A activity	US$2.8 trillion
Year-on-year growth	48%
Deals valued above US$10 billion	47
Share of total deal value from mega-deals	Nearly 50%
Record status	Strongest first half since 1980

Sources: Reuters; LSEG M&A Data; Reuters reporting on Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery.

The Deal Everyone Is Talking About

One of the most closely watched transactions of the year is Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery, valued at approximately US$110 billion. The transaction received clearance from UK authorities in August, removing a significant regulatory hurdle. If completed, the deal would combine some of the world's most recognisable media and entertainment assets, reflecting the growing importance of scale in an increasingly competitive content and streaming market. The proposed merger has become one of the defining examples of 2026's dealmaking environment, where companies are pursuing transformational acquisitions rather than incremental expansion.

Why Media Companies Are Getting Bigger

The media industry has become a major driver of large-scale transactions as companies seek broader content libraries, stronger streaming platforms and greater global reach.

Intense competition for audiences, rising production costs and pressure to improve profitability are encouraging businesses to pursue consolidation. The proposed US$110 billion Paramount Skydance–Warner Bros. Discovery transaction is one of the clearest examples of this trend, bringing together major film studios, television networks and streaming assets in a bid to create a stronger global media platform. For many media companies, scale is increasingly viewed as a strategic necessity rather than a competitive advantage.

Artificial Intelligence Is Influencing Deal Strategy

Artificial intelligence is emerging as an important factor in corporate acquisition strategies. Across industries, organisations are seeking access to specialised technology, skilled talent and digital capabilities that can accelerate innovation. As AI adoption expands, companies are increasingly evaluating acquisitions as a way to strengthen technology capabilities and reduce the time required to bring new solutions to market. Among the year's headline transactions is SpaceX's approximately US$60 billion acquisition of AI coding platform Cursor, a deal that highlights the growing strategic value attached to AI capabilities and software talent.

Technology Remains a Key M&A Sector

Technology continues to account for a significant share of global deal activity. Companies are investing in software platforms, digital infrastructure and emerging technologies that can support long-term growth and operational efficiency.

The sector remains one of the most active areas for strategic acquisitions as businesses adapt to rapid technological change. Many of 2026's largest transactions have been linked directly or indirectly to digital transformation, artificial intelligence and data-driven business models, reflecting technology's continued influence on corporate strategy and investment decisions.

Energy and Infrastructure Are Back in Focus

Energy and infrastructure assets have also attracted strong interest from buyers and investors. Growing demand for power, increased investment in digital infrastructure and long-term energy security considerations are contributing to renewed deal activity across the sector. As economies continue to modernise and digitise, infrastructure assets are becoming increasingly important strategic investments. One of the year's most significant energy transactions is NextEra Energy's US$66.8 billion merger with Dominion Energy, a deal that underscores growing interest in energy assets as electricity demand rises alongside AI adoption, data centre expansion and electrification initiatives.

Healthcare Continues to Generate Deal Activity

Healthcare remains an active area for mergers and acquisitions as organisations seek operational efficiencies, broader service capabilities and access to growing markets. Long-term demographic trends, increasing healthcare demand and ongoing innovation continue to support strategic investment across the sector. While healthcare has not produced

transactions on the scale of the year's largest media and energy deals, the sector continues to attract strategic acquisitions aimed at expanding capabilities, improving operational efficiency and strengthening market presence in an increasingly competitive healthcare landscape.

Why Companies Are Choosing Fewer but Bigger Deals

One of the defining characteristics of 2026's M&A market is the preference for larger transactions. For many organisations, transformational acquisitions offer a faster route to growth than organic expansion. Large-scale deals can provide immediate access to customers, markets, technologies and operational capabilities that might otherwise take years to develop internally. The result is a growing focus on transactions capable of fundamentally reshaping competitive positioning.

Cross-Border Transactions Remain Important

Many of today's largest companies operate globally, making cross-border acquisitions an important component of growth strategies.

International transactions can provide access to new markets, diversify revenue streams and strengthen global footprints. However, they also introduce additional complexity, including regulatory reviews, foreign investment approvals and compliance requirements across multiple jurisdictions.

Regulatory Scrutiny Remains a Key Risk

Despite the resurgence in dealmaking, regulatory oversight remains a significant challenge for large transactions.

Competition authorities around the world continue to closely examine mergers involving major market participants, particularly in sectors such as technology, media and infrastructure. Antitrust concerns, consumer impact assessments and national interest considerations can all influence deal timelines and outcomes.

The Paramount–Warner Bros. Discovery transaction demonstrates how regulatory review remains a central part of modern M&A activity, even as companies pursue increasingly ambitious combinations.

Looking Ahead

The first half of 2026 has demonstrated that global dealmaking is being driven by scale. Record transaction values, a surge in mega-deals and growing interest in transformational acquisitions suggest that companies are increasingly willing to make bold strategic moves to secure future growth.

The first half of 2026 has already become one of the strongest periods for global dealmaking on record. While regulatory scrutiny and economic uncertainty remain important considerations, the momentum behind large-scale transactions highlights the growing importance of scale, strategic capabilities and market positioning in an increasingly competitive business environment.

Sources: Reuters; LSEG M&A Data; Reuters reporting on Paramount Skydance's proposed acquisition of Warner Bros. Discovery.

UNDERSTAND PEOPLE BEFORE YOU BUILD CARS

The automotive industry has spent years chasing bigger screens and smarter technology. But has innovation always translated into a better experience for drivers? **Hisham El Sahn, Senior General Manager at Škoda UAE**, reflects on why meaningful innovation is about creating genuine value for customers.

The automotive industry loves to talk about the future: electrification, connectivity, autonomous driving, and digital ecosystems. But after more than three decades working with European, Japanese and American brands across the Middle East, I have learned that the future of mobility will not be defined by technology alone. It will be defined by how well we understand people. Because, despite all the noise, customers rarely buy the car with the longest specification sheet. They buy the car that makes the most sense for their lives.

For years, manufacturers have competed by adding more screens, more functions, more complexity. Innovation is essential, but somewhere along the way, the industry stopped asking a fundamental question: Does every new feature actually improve the ownership experience? Increasingly, UAE customers are answering that question for us and their message is clear.

A More Discerning UAE Customer

The UAE has become one of the most competitive automotive markets in the world. With unprecedented access to information, customers today walk into showrooms armed with research, independent reviews, and a clear understanding of what they want. They compare brands not only on price, but on long-term value, reliability, and transparency. This shift has changed the conversation.

Drivers are no longer impressed by feature overload. They are asking more practical, more mature questions: Will this vehicle be reliable after five years? Will it be comfortable for my family? Is it safe? Will it retain its value? Will ownership be simple, predictable and enjoyable?

Technology Must Earn Its Place

I have spent my career introducing new brands and new technologies to the region, and I remain a strong believer in innovation. But technology must serve a purpose. It must solve a problem, enhance safety, or make driving easier. If a feature creates confusion instead of convenience, it has failed. The best technology is often the technology you barely notice because it works intuitively, quietly, and reliably.

Škoda has never tried to win customers through unnecessary complexity. Instead, it focuses on intelligent engineering, practical design, and genuine value. The "Simply Clever" philosophy is not a slogan; it is a design discipline. It shows up in the details that matter: spacious cabins, thoughtful storage, intuitive interfaces, and safety systems that support rather than overwhelm.

The Future Will Reward Trust, Not Excess

As the industry enters another wave of transformation, electrification, digital mobility, and connected ecosystems, it is tempting to believe that the brands with the most features will win. I disagree. The winners will be the brands that understand people the best. Brands that listen. Brands that build reliability, not just excitement. Brands that create ownership experiences, not just products. Because mobility is not just about getting from one destination to another. It is about making every journey easier, safer, and more enjoyable.

And that, I believe, is what the future of mobility should truly look like.

The views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Business Frontier.

> *"The best technology is often the technology you barely notice because it works intuitively, quietly, and reliably*

WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE CITIES FOR LUXURY LIVING

Singapore remains the world's most expensive city for luxury living in 2026, followed by Zurich and Monaco, as premium lifestyle costs continue to shift across global wealth hubs.

Where does it cost the most to live exceptionally well in 2026? For the fourth consecutive year, the answer is Singapore. The latest Julius Baer Global Wealth and Lifestyle Report ranks Singapore as the world's most expensive city for high-net-worth individuals, followed by Zurich in second place and Monaco in third. Hong Kong ranks fourth, while London completes the global top five.

The ranking tracks the cost of goods and services associated with a premium lifestyle across major cities, providing a snapshot of how purchasing power and luxury consumption differ between global wealth centres.

What makes this year's ranking particularly interesting is the pace at which premium living costs have shifted. Across the index, the average cost of maintaining a high-end lifestyle increased by 10.2% in US-dollar terms, highlighting how currency movements and changing prices can reshape the relative cost of luxury between cities.

Dubai, meanwhile, ranks 14th globally. Its movement down the ranking does not necessarily signal that premium living in the emirate has become significantly less expensive. Rather, the report indicates that changes elsewhere, including stronger price increases in other cities, altered Dubai's relative position.

That distinction matters. These rankings measure cities against one another, meaning a city can move down even as its own premium lifestyle costs remain elevated or continue to change.

For globally mobile executives, entrepreneurs and investors, the findings offer more than a luxury price comparison. The cost of premium housing, travel, hospitality and lifestyle services increasingly forms part of decisions around where wealth is lived, managed and deployed.

Singapore's fourth consecutive year at the top demonstrates the consistency of its position.

Yet with Zurich and Monaco immediately behind it and costs shifting across the index; the 2026 rankings also show how quickly the geography of global luxury can evolve.

The Top Five in 2026

Rank	Country
1	Singapore
2	Zurich
3	Monaco
4	Hong Kong
5	London

WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL PASSPORTS

Singapore retains the world's strongest passport in the July 2026 Henley Passport Index, while the UAE's record-breaking rise places it joint second with Japan and South Korea.

A passport can say far more about a country than where its citizens can travel. In 2026, it is increasingly a reflection of diplomatic reach, international partnerships and global connectivity, and few countries demonstrate that shift more clearly than the UAE. The July 2026 Henley Passport Index places Singapore at the top of the global ranking, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 192 destinations. The UAE has climbed three places since January to share second position with Japan and South Korea, each offering access to 188 destinations. Sweden follows in third with 187. The UAE's rise becomes even more striking when viewed over two decades.

When the index began in 2006, Emirati passport holders had access to just 35 destinations without obtaining a visa in advance. Twenty years later, that figure has reached 188; an increase of 153 destinations, the largest improvement recorded by any passport in the index's history. The index evaluates 199 passports against 227 travel destinations, using exclusive IATA data supplemented by Henley & Partners' research. Globally, the average passport now provides access to 108 destinations without a prior visa, compared with 58 when the index launched two decades ago. For the UAE, however, the story extends beyond travel convenience. Henley & Partners attributes its record improvement to sustained diplomatic engagement and international cooperation, demonstrating how relationships between countries can translate into greater mobility for citizens.

Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, Chairman of Henley & Partners and creator of the index, describes passport strength as an expression of a country's "geopolitical capital", shaped by how other nations value it as a partner in areas such as trade, investment, security and cooperation. For the UAE, moving from 35 accessible destinations to 188 in two decades captures that evolution in a single number. Its passport has not simply moved up a ranking; it has become a measurable reflection of the country's expanding international connectivity and relationships.

The World's Top Five Passport Rankings

2026 Rank	Passport(s)	Destinations
1	Singapore	192
2	UAE, Japan, South Korea	188
3	Sweden	187
4	Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain	186
5	Austria, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Switzerland	185

Source: July 2026 Henley Passport Index