H CONNECT INTERNATIONAL

Insider Scoop

QUARTER 3&4 - 2024



A NOTE FROM RAKHIL

Dear Team,

As we approach the end of 2024, I would like to take a moment to thank each and every one of you. Your hard work, dedication, and unwavering commitment have been the driving force behind our achievements this year.

Reflecting on 2024, it's been a challenging year. We faced a few challenges at the start, yet, through sheer determination and teamwork, we managed to grow and make significant strides in the space. This was highlighted by the external recognition which is a testament to all your contribution. This wouldn't have been possible without our Leaders stepping up and driving these important projects. 2024 highlighted the importance of staying closer to our clients than ever before. Clear communication has been a standout factor, enabling us to navigate through complexities and build stronger relationships.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are filled with optimism and excitement. We envision this year as a period where we unlock new scales of success and bring true value to our clients. Our mission is to become a true extension and partner, creating deeper connections and mutual growth, underpinned by trust and integrity.

To achieve this, it is crucial that we maintain focus on enhancing our skillset through targeted training programs and driving efficiency through advanced technology. To the Leaders spearheading this: Thank You. These initiatives will not only empower us to deliver exceptional service but also position us as leaders in our industry.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for your incredible contributions and dedication. Your efforts are truly appreciated, and I am confident that together, we will achieve remarkable success in the coming year.

Wishing you all the best for a prosperous and fulfilling 2025.

Thank you!



A Message from Deshaka

Stability, Strength, and Growth

As we come to the end of 2024, I'd like to reflect on how this year has gone by. We called it the "Year of Stability." After two successful years since we started our growth journey in 2022, I wanted to ensure we used 2024 to establish an operating model that could withstand our growth journey.

This year, in particular, has been a challenging one for me personally, as I had to make some big decisions regarding our operating model. However, I'm glad we made progress despite the obstacles. While there's still work to be done, I'm confident we're heading in the right direction.

As part of our 2024 Business Plan, I told the Board of Directors that we would focus on four strategic priorities: Customers, People, Growth, and Efficiency. I enjoy working with a clear plan. While I am ambitious and strive for more, I am also patient and committed to getting it right the first time. All of you played an important role and worked as a team to help us achieve our strategic priorities. Thank you!

I am never afraid or worried about failing, but I believe in failing fast and ensuring we meet our obligations. This is something I have consistently emphasized to my leadership throughout 2024.

"Our customers are at the heart of everything we do"

We have an excellent set of customers who have helped shape us into who we are today. They raise the bar every year, challenging us to work harder and help them achieve even greater success. We've received some amazing feedback from our customers and constructive criticism in areas where we've struggled to deliver.

I want to thank all of you who took this feedback seriously and worked together to make our customers happy. This is something we must consistently work on. As I often say, "Never rest"—it reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. We are driven to think bigger and do better for our customers. I don't want us to settle for the status quo; instead, I want us to always strive for better outcomes.
Despite slower growth in 2024, we still acquired eight new customers who believed in our capabilities and delivery. Additionally, some of our existing customers have continued to grow with us. This demonstrates the trust they have placed in us, and for that, I want to say thank you again to all of you who made a difference in the eyes of our customers.
I encourage all of us to care like crazy about our customers and work even harder to manage their expectations in the coming years.

"People are the core of our business"

HCI is all about its people. It is thanks to your dedication, loyalty, and hard work that we've been able to achieve the progress we have. Over the past year, you've had to adapt to many changes, but you faced these challenges professionally, understood the rationale behind the direction we are taking, and focused on seizing the opportunities that are opening up for HCI. You live our values daily and contribute to building a high-performing and collaborative culture. It's a testament to how deeply you care—not just within the workplace but beyond it as well. Our culture is rooted in connecting our people with our purpose and encouraging a shared commitment to making decisions guided by our values. This requires us to think and act differently, to lead and grow through change and uncertainty.

This year, we have:

- Made significant progress in upskilling and reskilling to make our people future-ready.
- Focused on a learning and development culture—learning from our mistakes, better serving our customers, and acquiring new skills to enhance customer experiences.
- Introduced a new goal setting and performance management approach.
- Launched a leadership development program - Winning DNA.
- Enhanced our compensation to stay above industry standards.
- Continued to nurture a culture where both our people and customers are at the heart of every decision.
- Developed an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of our people.
- Created an environment that attracts and retains talented, committed individuals.
- Received multiple awards recognizing leadership in Gen Z engagement and as a great workplace for women.

We are committed to creating an environment where our people can thrive through collaboration and recognition. This commitment is measured through our bi-annual Voice of HCI survey.

To provide the best possible service to our customers, both now and in the future, we must disrupt, lead, and transform the industry. We will achieve this by living our purpose and values every day and aligning with our strategic pillars.

I want to thank Rakhil and the entire Board of Directors for their significant contribution, commitment and trust that they have placed in us. I look forward to working with the Board during 2025 as we continue to grow. During the year, we have continued our focus on reviewing and improving our governance, conduct and risk management processes with customers because they are central to everything we do.

Our Future

2024 was a milestone year for HCI. In 2025, we will continue to exercise the same drive and determination we have shown in the turnaround to achieve our strategic goals.
To our people, I say thank you for your continuing dedication, achievement and service to our customers. Work hard, trust in your abilities, and surround yourself with people who are smarter than you.
To our customers, I say you are our greatest asset. We put you at the heart of everything we do – whether that's in the quality of our services we offer or the success we've had in delivering your expectations. But we know we can do a lot more for you in 2025 and beyond.
To our shareholders, I say HCI offers stability and security and peace of mind for our people and customers. We have made good progress and are resilient, but we have much further to go to unlock our full potential – and deliver consistent, reliable growth. That's an enticing prospect – and we're not there yet.
And finally, 2024 marks year #3 for me. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here. Never felt like this before in my entire career of 22 years. I'm already excited for what 2025 has in store!
This holiday season is a time to rest, recharge, and celebrate with loved ones. I wish you all a joyous Christmas, a relaxing holiday break, and a New Year filled with happiness, health, and success. Let's look forward to 2025 with renewed energy and determination to achieve even greater things!

FORWARD

WOMEN-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE AWARDS



We were recognized at the Women-Friendly Workplace Awards organized by AICPA & CIMA and Satyn Magazine for “Empowering Gen Z Females with Leadership Opportunities.”

For a company that is 60% women and 52% GenZ, this was something very close to our hearts.

It was incredibly gratifying to be recognized by and among industry giants, especially considering our relatively small company size and number of years in business.

This program was effective in showing us new and more ways in which we can create a workplace that is truly equitable.

We are proud that H Connect International is a part of this and we are committed to making even greater strides in empowering our team.

We’ve already laid the initial foundation towards the next step in our plan.

This is the first of many victories. We’ll be back next year, bigger and better.

SRI LANKA HUMAN CAPITAL SUMMIT



A team from H Connect International was invited to Temple Trees for the Sri Lanka Human Capital Summit 2024.

Alongside former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, former Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, national leaders, political heads, industry experts, educators, and business leaders came together for an interactive discussion on the theme, "Unlocking Sri Lanka's Economic Potential by Building a Future-ready Global Talent Pool."

A concept that was reiterated throughout the summit was on the need for continuous education and the importance of upskilling, reskilling, and cross-skilling to capitalize on emerging trends. Another recurring theme was how Sri Lanka can retain its top talent by giving its employees everything they need to thrive.

It all came down to the same sentiment that was reiterated by every speaker: Sri Lanka's greatest strength lies in its people. Our future depends on how we empower them.

ICTA – PRACTICAL ADVICE ON EXPANDING INTO EUROPEAN AND UAE MARKETS



Facilitated by ICTA Sri Lanka and conducted by Eddie Marsden-Jones, this session at ICTA on “Practical Advice on Expanding into European and UAE markets” had a lot of food for thought.

Our representatives from H Connect International joined Colombo’s C-Suite of technical minds to tackle the nuanced concept of expansion into international markets, how to navigate the social, cultural, and legal differences and the basic know-how of doing business across borders.

One highlight of this seminar was an introduction to the “Agile Sailboat” concept, a retrospective SWOT analysis that applies to both individuals and entire companies.

Needless to say, it was an insightful session with much to take away.

TOGETHER

STRENGTHENING TIES WITH CPA



In our second quarter, we forged a new partnership with CPA Australia by becoming a member of their Recognized Employer Program.

In the spirit of this partnership, Niklaus Wee, the Regional Manager for Emerging Markets, joined the H Connect International team for a quick catch-up session.

He reinforced the many mutual benefits of being a REP member, provided guidance for aspiring CPA members within the team, and explained the advantages a CPA qualification holds from a global industry perspective.

An educational and entertaining evening came to a close, strengthening the ties between H Connect International and CPA Australia.

CPA BREAKFAST FORUM & PRESIDENT'S COCKTAIL



CPA's presence in Sri Lanka continues to grow and we are honored to be a part of this growth as one of the first four Recognised Employer Partners (REPs) in Sri Lanka.

As a REP, we participated in the CPA Breakfast Forum organised in honour of CPA and FCPA members in Sri Lanka, followed by an interactive panel discussion on Digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence, and the Future of Business.

Later that evening, we were invited to the President's Cocktail which recognised both CPA supporters and partners, where we had insightful exchanges with Dale Pinto, the Global President and Chair of CPA Australia as well as other CPA representatives.

The future of accounting in Sri Lanka is undeniably promising and as a leader in the F&A industry – we are all on board!

ACUMATICA ALLIANCE PARTNER

Acumatica
The Cloud ERP
Alliance
Member
2024

True to our continuous commitment to refine and revolutionize our service offerings, we added another partnership to our portfolio this quarter, as an Acumatica Alliance Partner.

By joining forces with Acumatica, a world-class, award-winning ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) leader, we are now able to enhance our service offerings to our clients through:

- In-depth product knowledge: We'll have a deeper understanding of Acumatica's features and capabilities, enabling us to provide more effective solutions to our clients.
- Enhanced support: We can offer better support and troubleshooting for Acumatica-related issues.
- Access to resources: We have access to valuable resources, training, and tools to help us provide more value addition.

We intend to fully explore the benefits of this strategic alliance and combine our strengths with Acumatica's powerful solutions.

Here's to building a future of innovation, together.

FORWARD

GREAT PLACE TO WORK



An organization is only as strong as its people.

Our people have been driving our success since day one, leading to our certification as a Great Place to Work.

To celebrate this, our team was at the GPTW conference this year, themed "The Future of Work is for All."

Among the insights we gained, one major point was the transformative power of inclusive leadership built on purpose, people, culture, and DEI practices. The direct impact of employee well-being on business performance was also highlighted, which drives trust and innovation.
With the insights we gained and the small lessons we learn daily, we are committed to continuing our journey of creating a workplace like no other – a workplace where everyone feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

CMA PARTNERSHIP



Our team consists of talented individuals pursuing various accounting qualifications including CIMA, CPA, ACCA, and CMA. Over the years, we've built strong partnerships with these institutions to support our team's professional growth.

Our newest addition is the Institute of Certified Management Accountants (CMA) Sri Lanka
This partnership allows us to better support CMA students and past finalists in their career progression by offering mentorship, training programs, and opportunities for professional development. Our team will have access to CMA's resources, making the process of obtaining the CMA qualification smoother.

Additionally, we can participate in CMA events and connect with other professionals in the field, expanding networks and staying up to date with the industry.

Our belief that an investment in our people is a direct investment in the organization's future continues, and we will continue to find ways to support the team.

ICTA- EXPORT MARKET READINESS WORKSHOP



There is so much knowledge within communities which is why we actively seek out opportunities to learn from them through industry events, workshops, and seminars.

One such workshop we attended was on Expert Market Readiness, primarily focused on the Middle Eastern Market, organized by ICTA Sri Lanka and conducted by industry expert Ravi Jayasundera.

The workshop covered the Middle East's 2030 vision of economic diversification, moving from solely oil revenue to broader markets like the services industry and ICT creates scope for new, strategic ventures. We discussed how best to capitalize on this shift and provide true value to both our economy and theirs.

A key point we kept coming back to was the importance of cross-cultural understanding because, in the end, the most thriving businesses are those built on mutual trust and respect – two principles we live by at H Connect International.
We left with a better understanding of the current position of the Middle Eastern market and how to effectively enter it.

TOGETHER

BEST WORKPLACES FOR WOMEN



This quarter, H Connect International was awarded one of 15 the "Best Places to Work for Women in Sri Lanka".

This year's winners were finalized by analysing data from more than 80,000 anonymized employee responses from 150 organizations across 15 industries in Sri Lanka.

Notably, nearly all other recognized companies have held this distinction for many consecutive years, making our achievement even more significant.

In a world where gender-based inequalities continue, H Connect International is proud to stand apart with our winning culture that has made all this possible – a culture that champions a meritocratic, inclusive, and safe workplace for everyone, regardless of gender.

As we grow, we will continue to uphold our core values and achieve greater heights – together.

CGMA NOMINATIONS



One of the biggest achievements yet was being shortlisted for all four categories of Innovation, Digital Transformation, Sustainability, and Leadership at the CGMA Professional Awards Asia Pacific 2024.

We were the only corporate to be nominated for all 4 categories and on top of that, two of our leads made it to the shortlisted Top 12 for individual Leadership awards - Arshad Booso, our Senior Operations Manager (BPO), and Rukshala Bulathsinghala, Operations Manager.

Out of 1,200 nominations from businesses across the Asia Pacific region, it is truly such an honor to have received such recognition. This achievement highlights our continued impact in the industry and reinforces our position among the top leaders in the region.

While we celebrate this milestone, we are excited for the official results! No matter the outcome, we will keep pushing boundaries and striving for excellence.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL FOR BUSINESS WITH BRITAIN



Another major industry event our team attended was the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council for Business with Britain (CBB), which provided us a valuable platform to network with key industry players and explore avenues for enhancing trade between the UK and Sri Lanka. Our participation in the AGM reaffirms our commitment to continuing business in the UK and building strong connections within the business community.

We look forward to continuing our involvement with the CBB and actively participating in future events and initiatives.

By building and maintaining such connections, we are a step closer to creating a more prosperous future for businesses in both the UK and Sri Lanka.

FORWARD

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK EVENT



We attended the Economic Outlook 2024 event hosted by the Council for Business with Britain. Renowned economists, both local and international, provided insights into the current economic landscape and its impact on businesses. We gained valuable perspectives on Sri Lanka's investment potential and strategies for sustainable growth.

CAREER FAIR



Our team was at the career fair organized by CA Sri Lanka at SAB Campus.

We strongly believe in the potential of Sri Lankan talent and are, therefore, committed to finding the best fit for each role—technical expertise and interpersonal finesse to continue building high performing teams.

LAUNCH OF THE VOICE OF HCI



Any successful workplace has a team that clocks into work every day feeling seen, heard, and valued. We go above and beyond to make sure that our team feels the same.

True to this spirit, we launched the Voice of HCI (VoH), a bi-annual anonymous survey to gather feedback from the team about everything that makes up their experience at HCI. This includes job satisfaction, work-life balance, organization culture, employee well-being, and overall satisfaction.

Based on the feedback received, our People and Culture team will evaluate our current practices, identify areas for improvement, and introduce new initiatives or modify existing ones to better align with our company culture.

At the end of the day, it's all about creating a positive and productive work environment.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS



Did you know that for every person who commits suicide, there are 10 more who have attempted it, and 100 more contemplating it? The statistics surrounding suicide are alarming and breaking the stigma with education is the first step towards change.

Therefore, in honor of World Suicide Prevention Day, Dr.Vindya Wijayabandara, a licensed psychiatrist hosted an awareness session for the team. The session covered everything there is to know about the subject: Risk factors, the role of depression and addiction, and where to get help.

One main point that was reiterated throughout the session was that it's completely okay not to be okay. Help is easily available and reaching out and asking for it can make a world of difference. Every life matters and it is up to us to stay informed and help change the narrative around suicide.

TOGETHER

WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY DAY



We hosted an internal photography competition in honor of World Photography Day.

This competition brought out a different side of the team at HCI- The photographers, the art enthusiasts, and the aesthetic fans. And we were delighted to see this side!

The entries were truly amazing: Shots of the Colombo skyline at dawn, blue seascapes, rolling green hills, beloved pets, gorgeous sunsets, and so much more!

While rounds of internal and external voting led to a winner being crowned, the main purpose of this competition was always in sight – a beautiful ode to the world of photography and the different lenses through which we see the world.

DIWALI



Our Diwali this year was one for the books!

With the entire office decked in the bright colours of Diwali, paper diyas hanging off the ceiling, and our little Diwali feast - the spirit of Festival of Lights truly shined through.

The showstopper, however, was undoubtedly our Bollywood-themed ramp-walk, with the entire team dressed to impress.

But beyond the fun and festivities, it was a heartwarming reminder of our cultural diversity and the joy of sharing traditions.

HALLOWEEN



Halloween '24 was a spooky evening of fun.

A bunch of vampires, demons, possessed dolls, and countless other spooky characters sat down for a special Halloween movie screening - punctuated by the crunching of popcorn and the occasional screams of terror.

We had a frightfully fun time!

KOFFEE & KARAOKE



With World Children's day, International Coffee Day, and International Music Day all falling on the 1st of October, we decided to triple the celebrations!

We had a cheerfully chaotic karaoke session, where we sang along to all our childhood favourites, over steaming mugs of coffee.

It was a day to bring out the inner child in each of us and remember that little things can create so much joy when enjoyed together.

FORWARD

CLIENT VISITS

During the past two quarters, we've welcomed several of our clients for in-person visits.

Some of the key takeaways from these visits were:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** The clients shared valuable insights into how the business began, expanded, the current operating model, and more of their on-site processes, improving our cohesive understanding of their back-end operations.
- **Communication and Strategy:** Our clients sat down with their offshore teams to discuss their present needs and future goals. We went over timelines, deadlines, SLAs, and key points of contact. This allowed us to align our strategies to meet expectations and proactively suggest solutions that support their long-term growth.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Client visits aren't just about business; they are about building lasting connections. To strengthen the team spirit, one of our teams went on a well-deserved day out with the client, paving the way for better understanding with these in-person interactions.
- **Client Passion for Expansion:** Most of our clients expressed enthusiasm to expand their operations and pursue additional collaborative opportunities with their offshore teams. Our digital marketing pillar increased by 1 FTE and expanded its offerings to include web development, SEO, and paid advertising for one of their clients
- **Proactive Approach and Efficiency:** Our teams proactively identified opportunities for process optimization within reporting, resulting in enhanced efficiency and standardization. The client expressed support for these improvements.

These visits are always something we look forward to because they renew, strengthen, and further the enduring partnerships we've built over time.







TOGETHER

AGORA Q2 & Q3

Agora Q2 and Q3, our quarterly town hall meetings, held more significance than ever before.

The past two quarters brought new awards, prestigious nominations, multiple accreditations, industry partnerships, and novel initiatives, but most importantly, it brought winds of change – an expansion in our service offerings, a better structure to our main service pillars, and new leaders emerging from among the team.

While all this was novel, the purpose of Agora was no different from any other quarter:

Our CEO and Director shared words of congratulations for everything achieved, and words of encouragement, highlighting the areas we can grow further.

Our leads provided their quarterly update, everything that went well and everything that didn't in an honest and open discussion.

We asked the difficult questions.

We understood each team's progress.

We embraced both the ups and the downs the past quarters had brought with it.

As always, we also awarded our Value Champions- Those among our team who truly embody the five company values in everything they do.

We've come a long way, strategically rising to be the only Sri Lankan BPO that provides all the accounting functions required by Australian firms- A true composite.

And we look toward the journey ahead to make a global impact.

Here's to keeping the HCI spirit alive as we go from one successful quarter to the next.





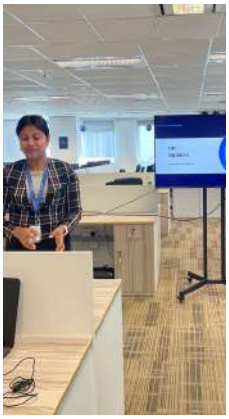














OUR Q2 VALUE CHAMPS



Rahma Rifkhan
Make Things Better



Aquib Marikar
Make Things Better



Ashane Amit
Create the Future



Binasha Piyawansha
Keep it Moving



Krishmila Minoli
Create the Future



Krtya Chandrakumar
Believe We Can



Bewasha Wijerupa
Believe We Can



Dinuki Devapura
Keep it Moving



Stronger Together



Stronger Together

OUR Q3 LEADERSHIP AWARDS



Dinithi Ranasinghe



Ahamed Suhair



Niroshan Dabare



Krishmila Minoli



Mareene Salgado



Sulochana Dilrukshi

OUR Q3 VALUE CHAMPS



Zikra Nizar
Make Things Better



Lakshmi Nilantha
Make Things Better



Naveen Athukorala
Make Things Better



Sethna Thilakarathne
Keep it Moving



Sajid Sabreen
Create the Future



Arib Razmi
Create the Future



Nusri Najeeb
Create the Future



Dilusha Gamage
Keep it Moving



Adrian Waliwita
Believe We Can



Dinuki Devapura
Believe We Can



Aasif Jazil
Believe We Can



Shakila Senarathna
Keep it Moving



Stronger Together



Stronger Together

OUR ACHIEVERS



Krishmila Minoli
Master of Business Administration



Sumaiya Nazeer
Chartered Accountancy Stage 2 with Practical Training and Presentation



Karen Perera
CIMA Passed Finalist



Rukmi Weerakoon
Master of Professional Finance (UOK)
Distinction , Batch-top



Heshan Lokuge
BSc (Hons) in Business with Financial Management , First Class Honours



Krtya Chandrakumar
BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance
First Class Honours



Aquib Marikar
Master of Business Administration (General)



Nisuri Wijesekara
Master of Professional Finance (UOK)



Emella Fernando
Master of Business Administration (Finance)



Niroshan Dabare
Master of Professional Finance (UOK)
Received ACMA, CGMA designation from CIMA



Dilki Fernando
BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance
Second Class Upper

AWARDS & ACCOLADES



12 Best Places to Work for Women in Sri Lanka



Great Place To Work Re-Certification



Empowering Gen Z Females with Leadership Opportunities



Innovation
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards



Leadership
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards



Sustainability
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards



Digital Transformation
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards



Individual Leadership - Top 12
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards



Individual Leadership - Top 12
Shortlisted at the CGMA APAC Awards

Milestone



AHAMED

"Work hard, focus, have consistency, patience and do your best. Avoid distractions, ignore negativity and you will witness the results."



RUKSHALA

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."



ANISHKA

"Doubt kills more dreams than failure ever will"



RUKMI

"A big thanks to all the amazing personalities at HCI who made my first job so memorable"



ISHANI

"My favorite memory is from my first day here. It was such a refreshing change from my previous experiences, and I knew right away this was a special place to be"



NIROSHAN

"A lot has happened since I first walked in through those doors but when I look back, it's the people around that have made it special."



CHATHURA

"Yesterday is history, Tomorrow is a mystery but today is a gift that's why it is called the present"



AQUIB

"Winning is one thing, but out of losing, I always learnt more for the future"



SAJID

"Sometimes, all it takes is saying yes to an opportunity. When it comes your way, make the most of it. "



LAKSHMI

"Honestly, most of the time, no one cares as much as you think—so don't sweat the small stuff. Be kind, work smart and hard!"

Moments



EMELLA

"Two years of teamwork, learning, creativity, and unforgettable memories—grateful for it all!"



SHAKILA

“Alone we can do so little, but together we can do so much”



ABU

“I’ve grown so much since day one at HCI. Grateful for the amazing mentorship from Arshad and Krish and the chance to work with multiple teams of amazing people.”



MAREENE

“In Marketing, no client waits for us. Being the fastest in delivering top-notch services is the only way to grow.”



NISURI

“The best part of working here has been the amazing team collaboration and the constant learning. Every day brings something new and exciting”



DAMIAN

”The learning never stops. Embrace the journey”



NATALI

“I'm not the same person I was 2 years ago. I'm far more confident, in control and content. I owe a lot of this growth to my experiences at HCI. And I'm so grateful”



KAREN

“Two years ago, I joined as an intern, and now I’m proud of how far I’ve come. These years have been filled with constant growth and fun”



BINASHA

“Getting the job done is key, but sharing laughs with colleagues makes even the busiest times lighter & worthwhile”



AFREEN

“You don’t realize how strong you are until being strong is your only choice”

Featuring Sajid

I've been on a fitness journey for as long as I can remember. As a kid, I was pretty chubby, which made me self-conscious. I avoided tight clothes and often felt uncomfortable about my appearance.

Things started to shift when I was 16. I decided to tackle my weight issue and tried to join a local gym. They turned me down because of my age, but I didn't let that stop me. I found a public gym and began training on my own. I managed to lose a good amount of weight, but with O-Levels around the corner, I had to put my fitness plans on hold.

After school, my passion for weightlifting reignited. A friend noticed my dedication and encouraged me to try local powerlifting competitions. My first event was the All-Colombo Powerlifting meet in 2019, and I was placed second. That fueled my drive, and I made it a habit to compete regularly.

Then came the pandemic, which was a tough period for everyone. With gyms closed and the isolation creeping in, I fell back into old habits. I indulged in junk food and saw my weight climb back up to 120 kg. It felt like I was back to where I started at 16—uncomfortable and insecure.





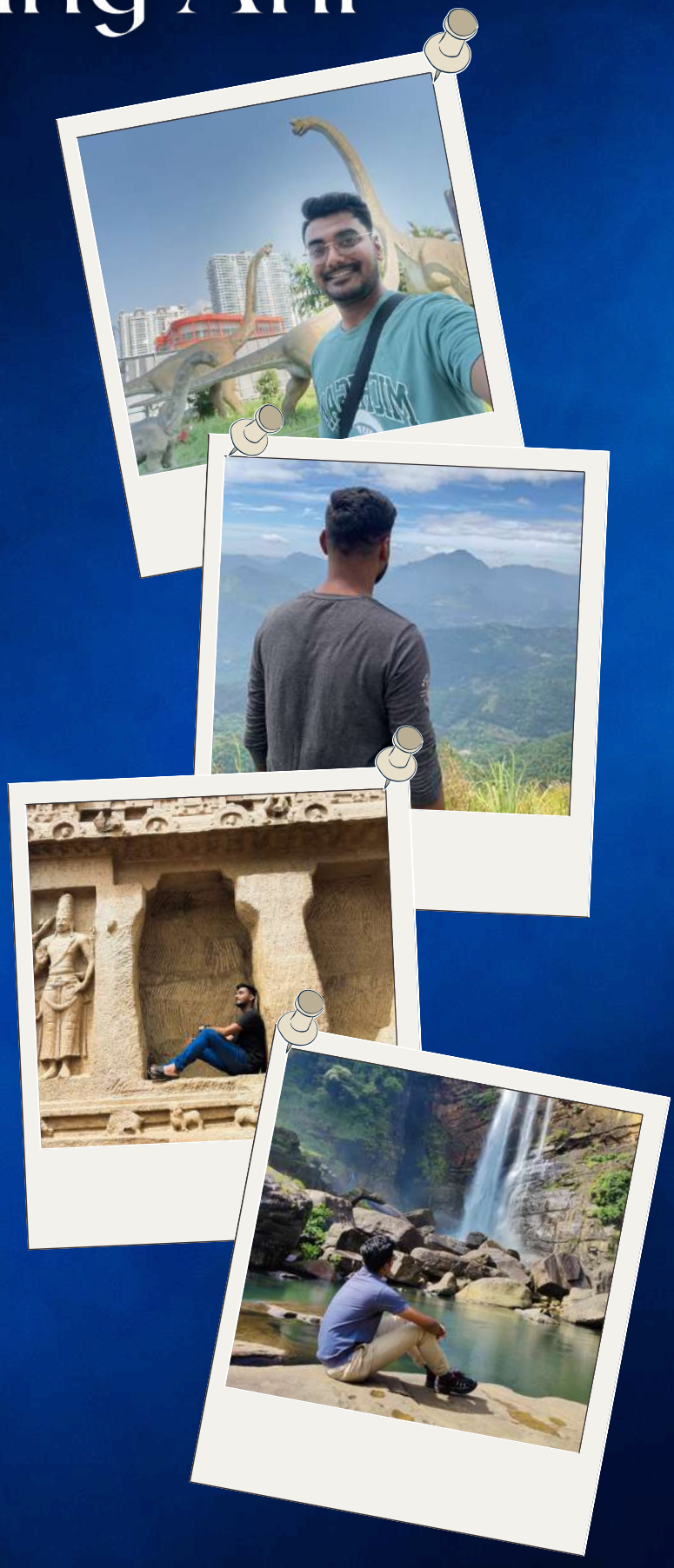
But after a life-changing event and some encouragement from friends, I decided to hit the reset button. I started training again at a public gym and got back into powerlifting competitions. In 2023, after just a month of training, I won first place at an All-Sri Lanka Municipal Council event.

A friend even sponsored me for a gym membership I had always wanted, which was a huge boost.

Fitness has done more than just improve my health; it's also been a turning point in my professional life. The discipline, consistency, and focus I've developed through training have translated directly into my work.

Fitness has been crucial in shaping who I am today. It's taught me valuable lessons in resilience, time management, and balance—qualities that have greatly helped me. I'm grateful for how fitness has impacted my life, both personally and professionally.

Featuring Ani



My solo travel journey began with my introverted nature and my strong need to live independently. I have always dreamt about exploring exotic destinations, meeting new people, testing my limits, and pushing past my comfort zone.

For a long time, planning trips with groups of friends always led to cancellations because of one reason or another, leaving me disappointed. This is what pushed me to pursue solo travel even more. Traveling alone gives me a sense of independence like no other. I don't have to rely on anyone else's schedule or preferences- it is all about me and my choices. Whether I want to spend the whole day exploring a city, simply lounging on the beach, on a hike, or on a waterfall hunt, the decision is entirely mine.

As my first step, I decided to travel alone within Sri Lanka.

In 2017, I started my journey at midnight without a plan and just went with the flow. I ended up in Haputala the next morning.
From that day onwards my solo journey continued. I have traveled to various other destinations within Sri Lanka and pushed myself further to travel abroad alone at least once a year.

One of the most important lessons it taught me was if you want something, you must just do it, even if it means doing it alone. If I hadn't gone by this philosophy, I would have missed out on all these incredible experiences.

On the social side, you get to meet new people, exchange ideas, have fun conversations and so much more.

Because of the norms of society in which we live, I used to think that going alone somewhere, whether it's to the cinema or a restaurant is a bit embarrassing. We are always chained to the perception of other people's opinions and scared of being viewed as a loner.

But in reality, doing things alone is empowering and liberating.

Mindset truly is everything.

A HCI WELCOME

WE ASKED OUR NEW HIRES TO SHARE A FEW LINES ABOUT THEM. THIS IS WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY!

- " I am Johan (aka Jo)! Foodie, music lover, and sports enthusiast! Cricket tops my list, but I also enjoy F1 and basketball" - **Johan**
- "I have a passion for Microbiology. I love spending my time amidst petri plates, culture media, and microscopes" - **Gayanuka**
- "You can call me Afu. I like beaches and mountains and I'm also a huge fan of shoes. A fun fact about me is that I speak 5 languages" - **Afra**
- "I love cycling, fishing, snorkeling, and traveling. I have a soft spot for classic cars and I also love cracking dad jokes" - **James**
- "I'm a sports enthusiast at heart, especially Cricket, and a huge fan of Virat Kohli. I travel miles to play cricket with my team back home" - **Vinushanth**
- **"**I love binge-watching series and getting lost in good books. Rainy days are my favorite, especially with good music and a cup of hot chocolate" - **Zikra**
- "I enjoy travelling, experiencing different cultures, and exploring all the different possibilities life has to offer" - **Thanushan**
- "I'm a slow reader who's recently fallen in love with Khaled Hosseini. I like my quiet time but I won't stop talking when in my comfort zone with someone" - **Sumaiya**
- "I love trading and the thrill of playing football" - **Saafeer**
- "I'm at my best when I'm just being me. It gives me so much peace" - **Daniel**
- "I enjoy every bit of life. I love to spread happiness wherever I go. Because, why not?" - **Isuru**
- "Book girl by day, cinema enthusiast by night. That's pretty much me" - **Rachel**
- "I love seeing people smile. It's beautiful when everyone smiles, and you'll often find me smiling too" - **Lakshika**
- "I travel with an open heart and collect special moments from every corner of the world" - **Yousuf**
- "I try to enjoy every bit of life and I always keep going with passion and courage" - **Okitha**
- "I'm the most innocent person you'll see around" - **Daphne**
- "Quietly warm-hearted. I'll always offer a listening ear and a helping hand" - **Lashika**
- "Digital marketer by day, dancer by heart" - **Hiroshi**



BPM'S

SUCCESS STORY



Our Senior Manager of Operations, Arshad, recently returned from a month-long consultancy mission in New York City. The primary goal of this visit was to assist a client, a prominent US apparel firm, in enhancing their operational efficiency, streamlining processes, and strengthening governance, particularly within the Finance and Accounting functions.

During his stay, Arshad conducted a thorough analysis of the client's Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Cash Management, and General Ledger processes. He spent time with the client's subject matter experts to gain a deep understanding of their operations.

Following this analysis, he prepared a comprehensive due diligence report outlining his findings and recommendations. The report covered areas for process improvement, control enhancement, and potential automation opportunities.

The project has been a significant success, with the client's leadership expressing satisfaction with the progress made and the value brought to the project.

Key Highlights include:

- 26 new recommendations have been made.
- 80% of the recommended solutions are already being actioned, which involves coordination across IT, Finance, Sales, and Analytic teams.
- A saving of USD 2.5 million has been projected annually if just 50% of the proposed solutions are implemented and this excludes efficiency gains.

Arshad also expressed a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with the work done, as it was his first time consulting for such a large client. The significance of this project is that it is not simply studying processes, providing recommendations, and actioning them, but also using years of SME-specific knowledge to bring forth new ideas and most importantly, to be able to work with people.

Despite the long hours and demanding schedule, Arshad also found time to explore the city. He enjoyed a pre-fourth of July fireworks display in Hanover, savored American steak at a historic New Jersey restaurant, and toured iconic landmarks like Times Square, the World Trade Center Memorial, Soho House, and Park Avenue. The onshore team also organized a wonderful send-off for him with farewell speeches, thank-you gifts, and cake!

Arshad and his team of 5 are committed to helping the client achieve sustainable growth and cost reduction through the successful implementation of their recommendations.

The next phases of the project involve conducting feasibility studies for recommended solutions and developing a detailed project plan for implementation. There are also plans to expand the scope of the project to include non-finance-related processes like people management and logistics.

This project showcases our expertise in providing tailored consultancy solutions to clients - across industries and geographies.

LAKSHMI'S

SUCCESS STORY



This success story focuses on how one of our team members, Lakshmi, implemented multiple process improvements within her team through innovative initiatives.

While these initiatives seem small individually, her creative problem-solving approach towards each of them compounded to a significant reduction in time and increased efficiency within her team, allowing them to take on additional client tasks.

1.Email Audits Automation

- **Challenge:** The manual process of checking audit scores and compliance required reviewing 15-20 emails daily, taking around 40 minutes.
- **Solution:** Lakshmi created an automated Excel sheet that is connected to the email folder. By using formulas, it generates accessible tables. Now, this process takes only 5 minutes per day, with a time saving of 35 minutes.

2.Vehicle Tracking Report Automation

- **Challenge:** Extracting and compiling vehicle data for daily reports took 15-20 minutes.
- **Solution:** By implementing Microsoft Scripts, Lakshmi streamlined the extraction process, ensuring accuracy and saving approximately 13 minutes each day.

3.Daily Forms Formatting

- **Challenge:** Daily downloaded forms from the system required significant time for formatting before being sent to managers and directors.
- **Solution:** Lakshmi developed Excel Automate Scripts to format each exported sheet, reducing the formatting time by 30 minutes daily.

4.Other small yet significant changes made include:

- Converting email content to Excel format using VB Macro coding
- Creation of a comprehensive email format that preemptively addressed potential client questions, which reduced the volume of queries, saving time.

Lakshmi embodies multiple core values that the company represents including continuous learning, creative problem solving, resilience, strategic long-term thinking, and a goal-oriented approach.

Within a short time, she has gained expertise on multiple fronts including VB Macro coding, Power Platforms, Advanced Excel, and Data Analytics. Lakshmi's efforts have laid a strong foundation for continued process improvements and automation within the team. Her initiatives not only enhance efficiency but also promote innovation and continuous improvement, benefiting both onshore and offshore teams.

F & A

SUCCESS STORY



H Connect International's Audit and Assurance team provides specific services to a client in Sydney.

Initially, the team only provided external audit services which focused on the execution of each individual engagement.

During the past year, they have been able to solidify relationship with the client and expand the team with regards to:

- Scope
- The number of team members
- Exploring other avenues of business

By consistently delivering on their commitments, they not only met but also surpassed the client's evolving needs, creating a challenging environment that pushed the team to learn and grow.

This growth also equipped the team to confidently operate the client's high-end financial preparation software with minimal supervision.

Additionally, the team was able to take on more responsibilities, including audit planning, conclusion, and financial preparation.

During the past year, the audit team has grown to 5 members, and they now have a dedicated audit lead for the pillar.

The new addition to the team selected through an internal job posting, Niyumi, has been a good fit for the role. With her on board, the team's working hours have been extended, merging both the Sri Lankan shift and the Australian shift, enabling them to put in more hours that are within the client's time zone.

Furthermore, the team expanded their service offerings to include in-house tax and admin services to the client's tax division, adding another team member to the pool – Aasif as a dedicated tax resource. He is currently working hard to facilitate the growing client requirements while adapting to the client's ways of working, staying true to our client-first philosophy.

It's been a successful quarter, and the Audit & Assurance team will continue to grow and expand into new areas.

Rising Trends in Auditing: Embracing Technology and Outsourcing

BY ASELA KURUPPU

As with the entire Finance and Accounting sphere, the future of auditing too is changing, reshaped by innovative solutions that enhance both the scope and efficiency of audit services.
In the past, auditors focused on detecting fraud and ensuring that agents reported the true financial situation of businesses. Over time, the role of auditors has expanded to a more comprehensive approach toward financial oversight by providing guidance on reporting and organizational controls in place.

Today, in the age of technology, auditing has much more potential.

Here are 4 audit technologies that are positioned to change the audit industry as we know it and are already growing in popularity internationally:

1. Cloud-based Auditing

Cloud-based auditing facilitates secure collaboration among global teams, enabling seamless communication and document sharing, regardless of location. 67% of accounting professionals say they prefer cloud accounting to traditional methods; due to the flexibility and scope it offers.

2. AI and Machine Learning

AI and Machine learning can automate routine tasks including data entry, significantly improving accuracy and efficiency. A staggering 78% of audit and finance professionals confirm their firms are investing in AI to maintain a competitive advantage, and this figure is projected to rise over time. By automating routine tasks, firms can free up valuable resources for strategic initiatives, increase efficiency and reduce costs, enhance output quality, and deliver greater business value through comprehensive testing, more frequent audits, and continuous monitoring.

3. Advanced Data Analytics

Advanced data analytics enables comprehensive analysis of entire transaction sets, rapid outlier detection, and risk assessment automation, leading to higher quality audits according to a report on "The power of advanced audit analytics" by Deloitte.

Additionally, these tools provide valuable insights, such as trend analysis and benchmarking, which support better decision-making.

4. Outsourcing

Outsourcing audit functions is another avenue becoming increasingly common.
Even though the outsourcing model existed for decades, outsourcing audit functions are gaining traction currently due to two main reasons: The lack of specialized talent and the increased cost of wages.

A survey by the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ) found that the vacancy fill rates were below 67 percent for the positions of Internal Auditors and External Auditors.
Simultaneously, Grant Thornton stated that "In the last few years, the cost of maintaining professional wages for anyone within the internal audit function has increased between 20 percent and 40 percent".

Outsourcing solves both these problems by offering skilled resources at a significant cost advantage. Additionally, audit firms can leverage time zone differences to optimize the use of limited resources like high-end software beyond the conventional 8 hours per day and scale their teams dynamically to meet fluctuating demands.

The reason for the popularity of this model lies in how firms can maintain control over the final outcomes while benefiting from the expertise of external providers.

The trends highlighted in this article—increased use of technology, a focus on data analytics, and a shift towards outsourcing—reflect the changing needs of both audit firms and their stakeholders.

Our Take on Australian Culture & Work Ethics

BY MAHESH KUMARA



Australia is shaped by its rich multicultural landscape, vibrant festivals, and unique social practices, making it a fascinating environment for both residents and international partners.

In our second quarter, our team flew to Australia for a week for an insider's perspective on our client's business. The entire visit was filled with new insights that gave us a window into Australian culture and work ethics.

Here are our key takeaways from the visit:

Multiculturalism: Australia is a fusion of many cultures, with over 300 ancestries represented. Multiculturalism is clear in various aspects of daily life, from cuisine to community events. For example, during our time there, a Sri Lankan food festival was happening just around the corner!

Festivals & Events: Australians celebrate numerous festivals like the Sydney Festival, Melbourne International Comedy Festival, Diwali, and Lunar New Year to honor specific cultural backgrounds and promote community engagement and understanding.

Coffee Culture: The Australian coffee culture is a significant aspect of daily life, with a preference towards high-quality brews and artisanal cafes. The café scene, particularly in cities like Melbourne and Sydney, is vibrant and serves as a social hub where people gather.

Pet Culture: Pets are cherished in Australian households, with many families considering them as part of the family. Dogs are a popular choice for pets (just like in Sri Lanka!), and parks often serve as social spaces for pet owners.

Sporting Culture: Sport is integral to Australian identity, with cricket, Australian Rules Football, and rugby being particularly popular. Major sporting events, such as the AFL Grand Final, Melbourne Cup, and the Australian Open, hold significant public interest and are considered to be a source of national pride.

Road Discipline: Road rules are quite huge in Australia. There is a strong adherence to traffic rules, stemming from a collective responsibility for safety. Australians value punctuality and efficiency, which is evident in their approach to driving and public transport.

Office Culture: Australian work culture is both relaxed and professional. The openness of the workplace means that employees are often on a first-name basis with their superiors and that everyone's opinion is valued.

Employee-Employer Culture: The relationship between employees and employers in Australia is built on mutual respect and open conversation. Employers are expected to provide a supportive environment, while employees are encouraged to express their ideas and feedback.

Australia's rich cultural diversity and laid-back work ethics truly create a unique environment for all its residents. It was amazing to have experienced it first-hand and this visit helped us better understand our clients. Looking forward to more such visits!

Breaking Barriers Through Building Wellness

BY NATALI JAYATILAKE

It's been a banner year for the H Connect International team, receiving multiple recognitions across various business units.

Notably, we were recognized twice for creating equal opportunities for and empowering female team members. Most recently, we were named one of the 15 best places to work for women in Sri Lanka among 150 organizations.

As our team accepted this honour, we reflected on our journey here. Over the past year, we have doubled our operations and introduced new clients across different industry verticals all while maintaining a culture of camaraderie and togetherness.

Here's what we've learned throughout the process:

1. A learning-oriented environment trumps a task-oriented environment:

When curiosity and experimentation are encouraged, and mistakes are seen as opportunities for growth, teams are likely to be highly engaged. They can see the big picture of the task rather than the singular task alone. They solve complex problems creatively and find safety and fulfillment in the work they do.

2. It's okay to not be okay, and it's even more okay to admit it:

Understanding that no one is okay 100% of the time is step one. Once companies normalize feelings of anxiety, sadness, or simply feeling overwhelmed by a conversation or situation, teams are more likely to discuss their feelings openly.

This way we can solve problems from a place of deep understanding and avoid resentment and conflict. The space we work in then becomes truly safe.

3. Shaking off Sri Lankan stereotypes:

It's important to create a clear distinction between socio-cultural expectations and corporate norms. In Sri Lanka, traditional views often value women as supporters of men, expecting them to be passive, soft-spoken, and modest.

However, in professional settings, these expectations don't always apply, and women should feel encouraged to express themselves freely, confidently, and assertively irrespective of these traditional norms. This will help them understand that their potential is in no way inferior to a man's.

4. Emphasis on the concept of 'Self':

To truly succeed, it's essential to build a foundation rooted in self-awareness, self-validation, self-compassion, self-confidence, and self-sufficiency.

Each quality reinforces the other, empowering you to face challenges, make decisions, and grow with a strong, resilient mindset.

And as we look back on this incredible journey, we recognize that true growth isn't just about our accolades or expansion—it's about the deep connections and empowering culture we're building every day.

The achievements of the past year are a testament to what we can accomplish when we're committed to each other's well-being, both personally and professionally.

Moving forward, we're inspired to keep evolving, learning, and challenging what's possible, ensuring that H Connect International remains a place where everyone can succeed, no matter where they are in their journey.

Here's to the future—one we'll continue building together, stronger and more resilient than ever.

GET TO KNOW

AARANNYA



MARIAM



SEARCH SAGA

SCAN THE QR OR CLICK HERE TO PLAY THE WORD SEARCH

WhatsApp 'DONE' to +94 778300794 with a picture of the completed word search

We are having a raffle draw soon to determine the winner!

what's

In 1997, an American author and business guru named Tom Peters published a seemingly unrealistic article that envisioned a future workplace where career growth would depend on a concept called "Personal Branding."

27 years later, it is very much realistic.

We now have social media influencers whose careers are built solely on personal branding, platforms like LinkedIn dedicated exclusively to personal branding, personal branding coaches, tutorials, dos and don'ts – the list goes on.

Whether you like it or not, you are currently building a personal brand.
And personal branding is here to say, so you might as well know your way around it.

What is Personal Branding?

Your personal brand is a reflection of your abilities, beliefs, and the impact you make on others.

Is this perception important? Yes.

Personal branding puts you in control of your narrative, not your employer, not your organization but you alone. Building a strong personal brand can help you to shape your professional development, network, career path, and well-being.

The History

Personal branding came in three waves.

Let's start at the beginning.

Personal branding was initially seen as a threat because 1,000 different individual brands of employees coexisting with a single organizational brand seemed to be a fool's errand. Instead, organizations focused on building personal brands for their C-Suite employees as a strategy to stand out from the competition.

Then something changed in the narrative.

Employers started to realize that investing in their people's individual brands was an indirect investment in their organization. Helping their workforce align personal values with their work meant better productivity and a more satisfied workforce.



Then came LinkedIn in 2003, a unique platform for professional interactions, letting employees build digital brands distinct from their organizational brand. This ignited the shift from the real world to virtual branding.

Almost 2 decades later, entered the pandemic with remote work, virtual teams, and Zoom meetings.

As the world settled back into a post-pandemic era, hybrid workplaces were born facilitating the third wave of personal branding. Companies began promoting their employees to build personal brands and incorporating them into their organization's external brand communications strategy.

How do you build a personal brand?

Here are 5 quick tips:

- **Build a digital presence:** Pick a platform where your target audience is and find a way to translate the real you for the virtual realm. LinkedIn is especially important because it is where your recruiters, employers, and mentors all interact.
- **Live by the three Cs:** Be **Clear** about what you have to offer, be **Consistent** with your messaging and what you stand for, and be **Constant** with interactions and engagement online.
- **More human, less AI:** Increased use of technology and virtual settings have created a lapse in the human touch. Therefore, try to be as human and authentic as possible to build meaningful connections. It will go a long way!
- **Experiment with storytelling:** Anything you want to communicate to your network, try doing in the form of a story. This could be written or visual content.
- **Celebrate others:** Be there to support and cheer on your network because great brands are never one-sided. So, like, react, and share updates by your network and they'll do the same for you. It's important to own your journey but cheer others on theirs too!

In the words of Jeff Bezos, "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room."

And it's completely up to you to make sure the narrative is accurate, unique, and compelling.

QUARTERLY IMPACT

FOR QUARTER 3

PEOPLE FOCUSED

- Our team has expanded by 14 new members
- We have completed 304 hours of training

OPERATIONS FOCUSED

- 21 Audits
- 202 Financials
- 599 Tax returns
- 278 IAS and BAS
- 51 SOAs
- 131 SMFSs

SOCIALS STATS

- 318,307 impressions
- 686,175 TikTok Views
- 3,083 new followers

OUR VALUES



STRONGER TOGETHER



KEEP IT MOVING



MAKE THINGS BETTER



CREATE THE FUTURE



BELIEVE WE CAN

OUR LEGACY

Our legacy spans over 100 years of the Hirdaramani Group - a family-owned, Billion-Dollar conglomerate. We're committed to doing the right thing today, for a better tomorrow.

OUR MISSION

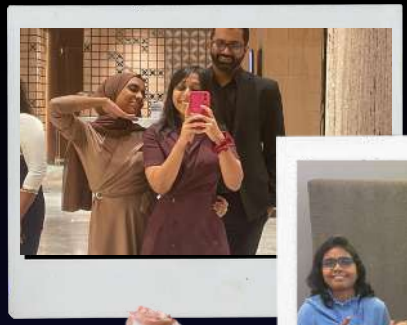
To serve as a **true extension** of our clients' enterprise following **people, process and technical excellence.**

OUR PURPOSE

To make a **meaningful impact** through **absolute value creation**, embodying our **client-first philosophy.**

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We follow a **client-first philosophy**.
We don't just work, we care.











Stronger Together













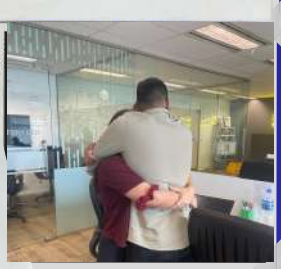










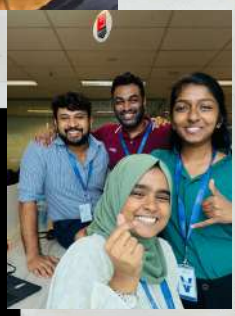













H CONNECT INTERNATIONAL