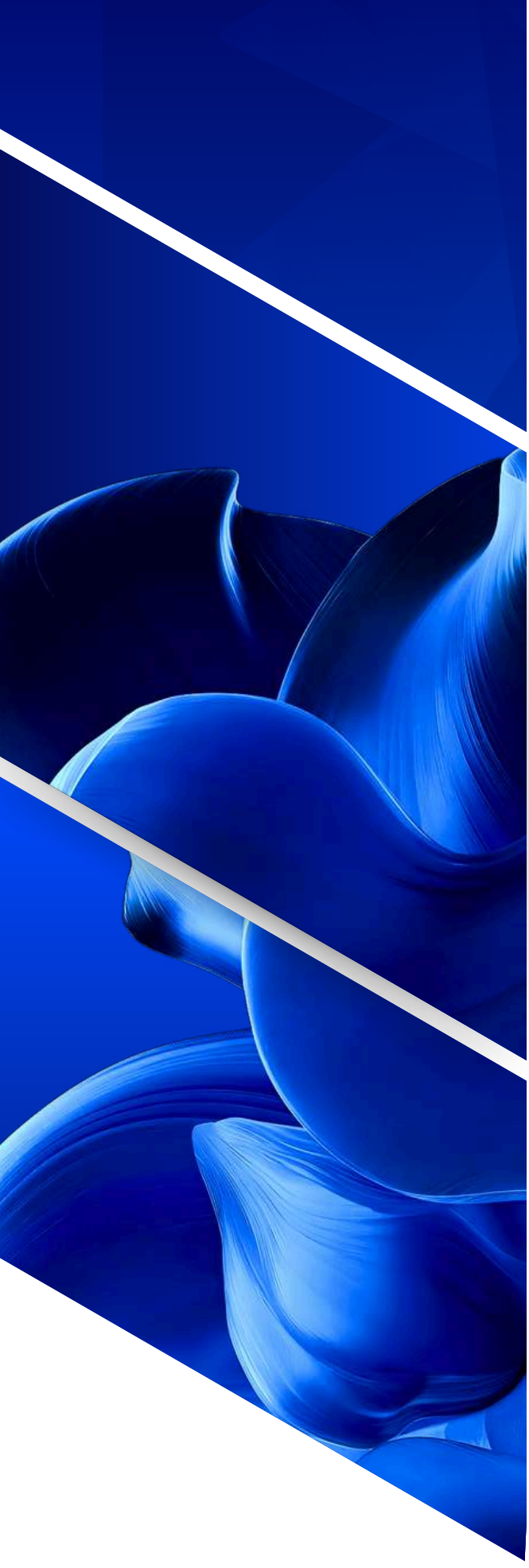


Insider Scoop

2025

H1 Newsletter

H CONNECT INTERNATIONAL



H CONNECT INTERNATIONAL

OUR LEGACY

Our legacy spans over 100+ years of the Hirdaramani Group - a family-owned, Billion-Dollar conglomerate. We are 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.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

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

OUR VALUES



STRONGER TOGETHER



KEEP IT MOVING



MAKE THINGS BETTER



CREATE THE FUTURE



BELIEVE WE CAN

A NOTE FROM RAKHIL

H CONNECT INTERNATIONAL

Dear Team,

As we reach the halfway mark of 2025, I'm proud to reflect on the incredible progress and achievements we've made together at H-Connect International. The first six months of the year have been filled with purpose, energy, and momentum, and I'd like to take a moment to celebrate some of our key milestones.

January – A Fresh Start
We began the year with our annual offsite leadership training, aligning on our vision, strategy, and goals for 2025. This set the tone for strong execution and unified direction across all teams.

February – Honest Conversations & Giving Back
We had our annual Koru Conversations: a space for open, honest dialogue to co-create our bottom-up strategy. We also organised the Threads of Love donation campaign, turning Valentine's Day into a meaningful moment of community care and giving.

March – Accelerating Equity & Recognition
In March, our Accelerate Action '25 Women's Day initiative underscored our ongoing commitment to gender equity and inclusive leadership. We were also honoured to be featured by Outsource Accelerator, recognising our continued contribution to the global outsourcing industry.

April – Operational Excellence & Cultural Connection
We made significant improvements to our finance and compliance workflows, aligning with global standards and upcoming regulatory shifts. Our vibrant Avurudu celebrations also brought us together in the spirit of tradition and unity.

May – Growth
May was all about growth. We rolled out new training modules focused on digital transformation and leadership development. Participation rates exceeded expectations, reflecting our team's enthusiasm for learning and upskilling. We also proudly onboarded our biggest client to date, a huge achievement made possible by the dedication and collaboration of everyone involved. Kudos to the entire team!

June – Strengthening Partnerships & Celebrating Values
We closed out the first half by expanding our global client portfolio and deepening strategic partnerships. Our teams demonstrated exceptional professionalism and agility, earning recognition from clients and stakeholders. We also held our Agora Townhall and proudly celebrated our Value Champions, recognising those who truly live our core values every day.

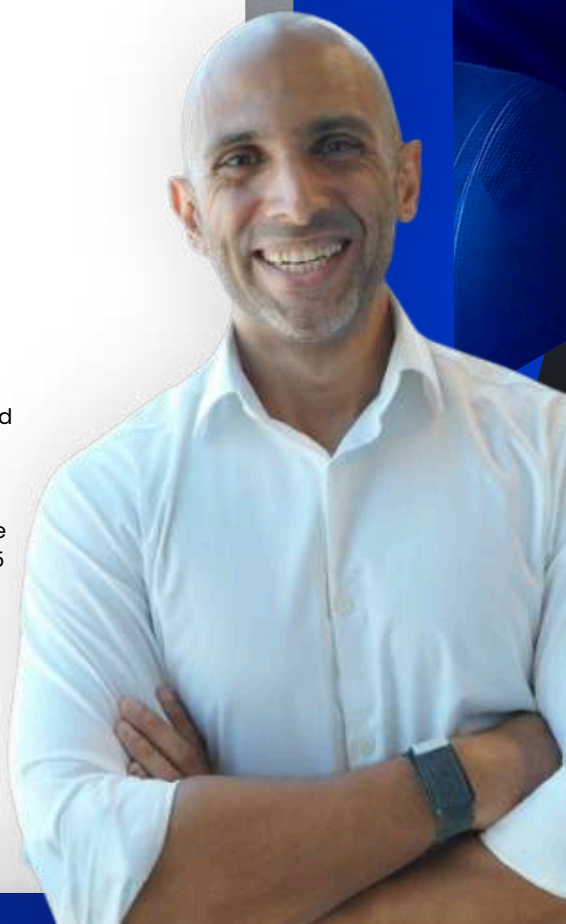
As we move into the second half of 2025, we need to keep up the momentum we've built. Scaling up our teams not just with new members, but strengthening our skills and capabilities. We are also gearing up for another location back at where it all began: the Hirdaramani Hub.

Thank you for your passion, resilience, and teamwork. Together, we're shaping a future of excellence at H-Connect International. We are excited for what the next half of 2025 brings and have already started planning for 2026.

Before signing off, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for the hard work put in this Half. We've seen that our growth typically comes in H2 and the investment in building capacity has just been phenomenal.

Thanks & Best,

Rakhil



“Let’s keep showing up, even on the hard days”

During a recent visit to CIMA to give a presentation, a quote from Nelson Mandela on the wall really caught my eye. It said, “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

And honestly, that captures the spirit of our first half of the year.
We’ve had great wins, yes. But what really stood out was the resilience and how we handled the tough days, the unexpected challenges, the last-minute hurdles and still kept going. That’s what I’m most proud of.

While I’m proud of the wins, my focus is really on how we can keep getting better. Whether it’s our people or how we serve our customers, the constant challenge and opportunity is to keep improving.

One analogy Rakhil shared at a leadership offsite over a year ago still sticks with me. He compared a company’s growth to the stages of a child. Infant, toddler, teenager and adult. It was a powerful reminder that just like people, businesses need to keep evolving. Yes, we’ve come a long way and achieved a lot, but there’s still so much more to do if we want to double in size. I often remind my leadership team that we’ve got to keep moving forward. Mistakes will happen, and that’s okay as long as we learn from them and use them to get better.

That’s the key, “to be better”. If we’re not improving, we need to ask ourselves why and then push ourselves to change that. I know I keep coming back to this message in almost every monthly message, but that’s because I truly believe it’s what will take us to the next level.

Now that we’ve reached the halfway mark of the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on how we’re tracking across the three things that matter most to us: our customers, our people, and our shareholders.

Customers: “The obsession to be faster and better”

Their expectations are rising, and they “keep raising the bar.” They want speed, simplicity, and great service. And don’t be surprised if the customer who was impressed with you last year isn’t as impressed this year by the same things. They’ll expect more, they’ll want to see you getting better. It’s our job to deliver faster, smarter solutions and create efficiency in every touchpoint (Just a quick reminder, this year, efficiency is front and center in all our performance conversations. It’s something we all need to keep top of mind as we move forward).

Customer obsession isn’t a slogan, it’s a way of thinking. It means asking ourselves at every step: Is this the best we can do for them? Can this be done quicker, easier and better?
We need to think like our customers. Walk in their shoes. Make their lives easier.

This mindset of constantly improving, removing waste and being genuinely obsessed with the customer is what will set us apart. Let’s keep pushing for it, every day.

People: Keep Learning, Unlearning, and Relearning

To our dream team, I say :

This world won’t wait. What we knew yesterday might not be enough for tomorrow. That’s why we need to keep learning, unlearning, and relearning. This was the core theme at the CIMA SHIFT 2025 event I recently attended. CIMA CEO Andrew Harding has been consistently emphasizing this point in nearly every session. And learning doesn’t just happen in courses, it happens in feedback, in failures, in everyday moments.

We’ve seen amazing examples of this mindset in action already, whether it was cross-training across teams, taking on new roles or challenging the old way of doing things.

This attitude has led us to win multiple awards, celebrate brilliant customer stories and achieve strong engagement across the board. And that’s no accident – it’s the result of a team that chooses to grow, adapt, and learn every single day.

Shareholders: Consistency Wins the Race

For our shareholders, it's about creating value that lasts, not just quick wins.

Let me share a story that I think reflects where we’re heading. For years, the British cycling team couldn’t win anything in the Olympics. But they stayed consistent. They looked at every little thing they could improve by just 1%, bike design, diet, even sleep. Eventually, all those tiny things added up, and they went on to dominate the Olympics.

That’s what we need now, to stay sharp, stay consistent and finish the year strong. Don’t lose sight of the goals we’ve set. Let’s keep showing up, even on the hard days, and trust that the effort we’re putting in will lead to great outcomes.

I want to thank each and every one of you for making this a good first half. Whether you’re working behind the scenes or on the frontlines, you’ve made an impact.

Let’s keep raising the bar for our customers, growing as a team, and delivering value with purpose. Let’s finish this year stronger than we started.

We’ve already done amazing things. But the best part is, we’re just getting started.

Love + Respect ,



UPDATES
FROM WITHIN

LEADERSHIP OFFSITE



Every year, our leadership team gathers for a perspective refresh at our annual leadership offsite training.

This year's session, coined "Accelerating Growth" after our collective theme for 2025, was an AI-inspired, gamified experience designed to enhance our leadership skills and further strengthen team dynamics.

We were honoured to have influential leaders Nikhil Hirdaramani, Dushan Soza, and Andy Andrews share their expertise.

Together, we dove into key topics like authentic leadership and the crucial role of trust in high-performing teams, participated in practical exercises on open communication, and explored the importance of well-being for both daily productivity and long-term health.

The day ended with an exciting kayak race that had everyone's competitive spirit soaring and a relaxing evening of pizza on the beach.

We left feeling inspired, connected, and equipped to lead with greater impact

THE CARE COLLECTIVE



This year, we also launched something that we've poured a lot of love and time into: The Care Collective – a committee focused on improving health and well-being within our team across all mental, physical, financial, relational, and environmental spheres.

The Care Collective's goal is to focus on well-being in the smallest of ways and in some big ways to make everyone's lives at work better, happier and more meaningful – even if it's by just a little.

We kicked the year off with a desk decor challenge because an inspiring space to work in automatically equals better work (And mood!).

With polaroids, quotes, keepsakes and art, everyone's workstations turned into a beautiful reflection of their lives and all the small things they hold dear.

We also celebrated World Health Day with a bingo card of health challenges and a showdown on Instagram stories to see who could hold the plank, do the highest number of push-ups or the most impressive wall sit.

For World Environment Day, we distributed seeds to our team and encouraged everyone to plant and nurture them. It was small but meaningful steps toward a greener, more sustainable future.

One of the Care Collective's biggest wins so far is the launch of the Care Collective book club - an hour every Thursday evening at our Happy Place, where we sit to read together and discuss our favourite books.

It's brought out all the quiet bookworms into the light and even inspired non-readers to begin, engage and grow.

We can't wait to see all the love this committee will continue to bring into our team

UPDATES
FROM WITHIN

THANK GOD IT'S MONDAY!







We launched TGIM to boost motivation and energy for our team on the first Monday of every month because when you feel inspired to work, there are absolutely no Monday morning blues.

Having Yevan David with us was the perfect launchpad for this initiative. His journey proves that the path to success, whether in sports, business, or personal development, is built on the same fundamental principles: Fail fast but learn faster.

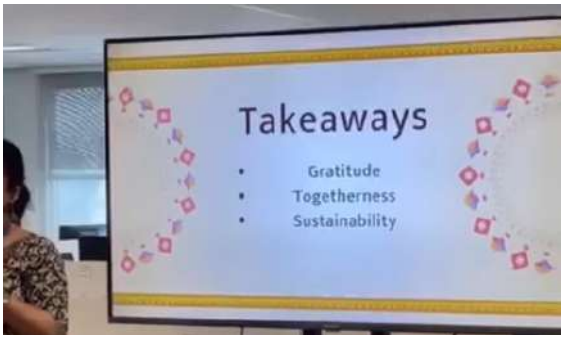
Our second session was in celebration of Women's Month in March, where we partnered with John Keells Stockbrokers to inspire and educate the team through the program "SHEinvests".

This TGIM session gave the entire team a clear understanding of how to invest smarter, debunking common fears surrounding investing, and explaining all the different options available to everyone.

One of our all-time favourite TGIM sessions was having Amandha Amarasekara who took the team through how to present yourself at your best: personal grooming, finding your right style, posture, and everything in between.

The session was both such a laugh for the team and a confidence boost for all of us to go out there and own who we are.

TGIM is a total hit! And we are excited for all the sessions to come.





THAI PONGAL

Cultural events are our favourite part of the Events Calendar.

In January, we came together to celebrate Thai Pongal, a beautiful reminder of the cultural diversity that makes us who we are.

We had a knowledge-sharing session where we explored the origins of Thai Pongal: a Tamil harvest festival rooted in South India and Sri Lanka, traditionally celebrated to give thanks to the Sun God for a bountiful harvest.

We also discussed its significance as a day of gratitude, renewal, and community, and learned about traditions like boiling the first rice of the season in milk until it overflows (symbolizing abundance), decorating with kolam (rice flour art), and offering prayers.

We ended the day with a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and strengthening the bonds that make our team so special.

UPDATES
FROM WITHIN

NEXTGEN IMPACT



If there are three words to describe our team, it's driven, dynamic, and diverse.

In line with this standard, we set out to launch NextGen Impact: an exclusive training program meant to pick out the best of the best from young GenZ talent.

This is designed as an immersive 3-month training program for fresh graduates and final-year graduates.

The trainees get to deep dive into the world of Business Process Management with one-on-one mentoring, hands-on experience with international clients, and comprehensive training workshops.

We successfully inducted our first batch of NextGen talent, and we are excited to see all the places they'll go!

BIG KORU CONVERSATIONS



Our Big KORU Conversations came back again for 2025 - a reflection of the year that has passed and a vision board for the year to come.

This bi-annual, formal-informal conversation creates a safe space for our team to propose ideas, raise concerns, and ask the difficult questions.

What works? What doesn't? What do we do about it?

We reached informed decisions, streamlined our ideas, and wrote out our team's goals for the year, word for word, on our Koru banners.

For the rest of the year, these banners will serve as constant reminders of the plans we've set in motion, guiding our teams in the right direction.

The HCI philosophy continues- Open doors and open conversations.



GIFTING SMILES 3.0

Every December, our team finds meaningful ways to give back to our communities through our annual people-driven initiative of "Gifting Smiles".

This year, we chose Apeksha Cancer Hospital, deeply moved by our visit last year. Partnering with the incredible Husma Foundation, we were able to provide essential nutritional supplements to the hospital, truly making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

"Gifting Smiles" is an initiative incredibly close to our hearts, and we're so excited to renew this tradition with "Gifting Smiles 4.0" this December!

UPDATES
FROM WITHIN

BAK MAHA ULELA '25





Our Avurudu Celebrations this year made us laugh to the bone and was yet another reminder of how much fun we have together.

We carried out all the Avurudu traditions as a team, ate Kavilli together, and played games that had us in stitches.

Everyone turned up in gorgeous lungis and ethnic sarongs and after a few mind-blowing dances and some runway-worthy catwalks, we crowned our HCI Avurudu Kumara and Kumariya.

The day ended with the entire team on the dance floor and together, we wrapped up April with the HCI spirit at an all-time high.

THREADS OF LOVE



This Valentine's Day, we wanted to celebrate and spread love, but just a little differently.

We felt like this was a good opportunity to give back a little love and warmth to the WTC support staff who do so much for us.

We spearheaded a simple collection of pre-loved clothes, and it was wonderful to see the entire team's generosity.

After a well-spent evening of categorizing all the clothes to make sure everything was well-organized, we distributed them among the support staff, earning smiles all around.

Our hearts were full of love, and we wouldn't have wanted to celebrate Valentine's in any other way!

PICKLESMASH '25



Our team has a philosophy we religiously follow: Work Hard. Play Hard. And when pickleball came up in one of our meetings, it led to a dedicated WhatsApp group and weekly Pickleball games.

We spent months of practicing and hours of commitment to the sport and to the community we were building after working hours, on a small court hidden in the heart of Colombo.

There was a quiet (and occasional loud bursts) of joy in watching individuals from different teams, different shifts and micro-cultures spending time together because they chose to, and getting pretty good at a sport they started together.

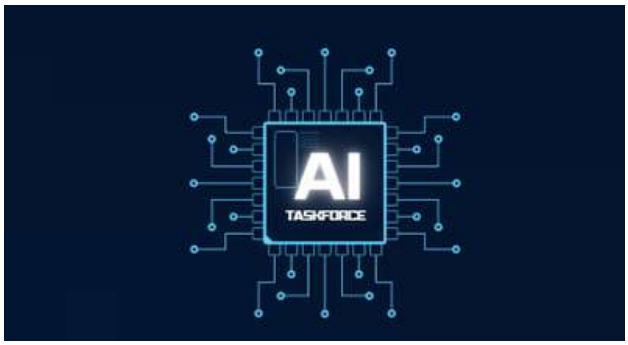
Eventually, we decided to take it up a notch and host our first-ever Pickleball tournament with six highly competitive teams: Dink Duo, Lime Pickles, Code Smashers, Blue Titans, Ace Dudes, and Dark Horses.

After a Pickleball showdown of some epic serves, hilarious commentary, AI-produced soundtracks, and a lot of trash-talking, "Dink Duo" secured the shield (and bragging rights!).

One big takeaway was that skill doesn't just show up – it's something you build through showing up, putting in the work, and sticking with it. The teams have all come a long way since our matches in January 2025, and we can't wait to watch them serve it up again next year.

UPDATES
FROM WITHIN

THE AI TASK FORCE



Tech literacy has always been a strategic priority for us, and to be front runners in this space - we launched a dedicated AI Task Force, focused on boosting productivity through AI innovation and building an AI-ready culture across our entire team.

The Task Force has already begun exploring and implementing AI solutions designed to enhance how we work and empower our teams.

A few ongoing projects include:

- **The AI Quiz:** We deliver weekly articles, followed by a competitive quiz to educate and test the team. All scores are tracked on a leaderboard and the monthly winner gets an official copilot license – both fun and value-adding!
- **Internal Chatbots:** We are developing an AI-powered chatbot to give quick, easy access to HR policies. The next step is a chatbot for Australian accounting and tax-related queries.
- **Learning Modules:** Monthly learning modules, based on Google's "AI Essentials" course, are in the works to ensure everyone has a solid foundation in AI.

We're incredibly excited about the potential of these projects, and the visible impact they are already making.

Here's to a human-driven, AI-powered future.

ACCELERATE ACTION '25



As a team that is 58% female with a leadership team that is 50% female, women empowerment is something that is already embedded into who we are, and how we work.

This year's theme for International Women's Day, "Accelerate Action," aligned perfectly with our commitment to driving meaningful change.

We were joined by Dr Indunil Piyadigama, a renowned Obstetrician and Gynaecologist who led an enlightening session on women's menstrual health awareness followed by a fun Truth or Myth session that tackled common menstrual health taboos.

This experience opened a conversation on a critical aspect of our lives, creating deeper understanding and compassion across the team.

A highlight of the day was having Subi Nanayakkara, a female empowerment advocate, ultra-marathon runner, best-selling author, and co-founder share her powerful story of strength and advocacy.

Subi's passion for helping other women was contagious – a reminder to all of us to be cheerleaders for the women around us, even in the smallest of ways.

We ended the day closer, better informed, and happier with brownies (and a small keepsake for our girls).

Here's to taking small, meaningful steps in our every day to accelerate change for our team and raise the bar for others to follow.

FORWARD TOGETHER

CIMA PARTNERSHIP RENEWAL



A team from the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants including Zahara Ansary, Kith Perera, Tharindu Wijewardana, and Aslam Hafeelullah visited us earlier this year for the official partnership renewal for 2025.

Our strong partnership with CIMA has opened doors for us on the global stage from career fairs to insightful forums with business leaders and prestigious awards among industry giants.

We're truly grateful to CIMA for the opportunities they've provided us, and we're excited to see what the future holds for our continued collaboration.

THE GREAT HR QUIZ



A team from H Connect International took on the challenge at this year's Great HR Quiz – HR Rumble, organized by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM).

Senudi, Shachithra, Vinu, and Damian did a fantastic job representing HCI in an intense competition that brought together 70+ teams from all over Sri Lanka. We love participating in these industry-wide events! They're a fantastic way for our team to stay sharp, network with other big players, and, of course, have some fun together.

After all, we are always game for a challenge.

ISO 27001 RE-CERTIFIED



Working with international clients mainly in the Finance and Accounting sphere makes data security a non-negotiable for our team. While we are GDPR and DPA compliant, we also are officially ISO 27001:2022 re-certified.

Our infrastructure, daily processes, and team are fully in compliance with all globally benchmarked security standards to ensure complete security, end-to-end.

The principles of data privacy are deeply embedded into our daily operations, and this re-certification is only the surface of it.

AICPA & CIMA CAREER FAIR



Our HR team attended the AICPA & CIMA Career Fair 2025, connecting with Sri Lanka's next generation of accounting and finance talent.

The growth of Sri Lanka's accounting industry and the number of new graduates entering the industry each year is truly impressive.

Our team remains committed to contributing to this growth by hiring top-tier talent and providing opportunities for them to grow - both personally and professionally.

For us, it's simple: Hire great people and give them the resources they need to keep thriving.

FORWARD TOGETHER

CGMA PROFESSIONAL AWARDS



The Dream team won all four categories — Innovation, Leadership, Sustainability, and Digital Transformation — at the prestigious CGMA APAC Awards 2024, surpassing global and multinational giants in the industry.

- **CGMA Digital Transformation Award - Asia Pacific 2024:** True to our future-focused and tech-enabled approach, we were also recognised as "A Trailblazer in Driving Technological Advancements."

- **CGMA Innovation Award - Asia Pacific 2024**: Celebrated for "Exceptional commitment to client success through innovation," this award speaks to our core philosophies of how we operate. We've poured thought, work, and time into innovating a culture that enables our people to perform at their best, thereby driving success for our clients and stakeholders.

- **CGMA Leadership Award - Asia Pacific 2024**: Receiving this award for "Outstanding Commitment to Excellence" was an absolute privilege because it reflects our dedication to 'people-driven impact' and proves that real leadership stems from authentic care for our work and our people.

- **CGMA Sustainability Award - Asia Pacific 2024:** Honored for our "Outstanding Commitment to Social and Environmental Responsibility." This award highlights our unique approach to CSR which is completely people-led.

But the accolades don't stop there!

We also named the **AICPA & CIMA Partner Organisation of the Year**, and our very own Arshad Booso was honoured as "**Regional Notable Influencer**," and Rukshala Bulathsinghala - CGMA, ACMA (UK) was recognized as a "**Distinguished CGMA in Sri Lanka.**"

This historic win is a direct result of the passionate work we do, and more importantly, the phenomenal team we've built that makes it all possible.

OUTSOURCE ACCELERATOR RECOGNITION

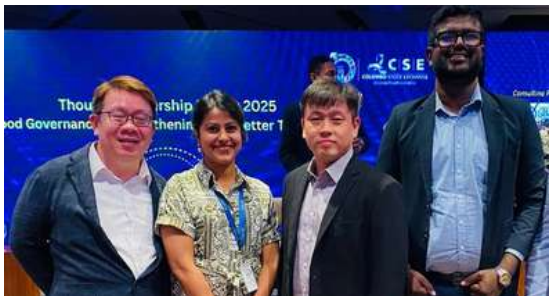
We kickstarted 2025 with some big news.

We were officially recognized by Outsource Accelerator in their Global Outsourcing Firm (BPO) Index, the first objective analysis of every outsourcing firm within the global outsourcing industry. The index is compiled through 12 months of in-depth analysis across 20+ performance metrics.

This achievement highlights the world-class standards, innovative culture, and exceptional service delivery that define us and it's a direct result of the dedication of our dream team, the vision of our leadership and the trust of our valued partners and clients.

We will continue to raise standards internationally through genuine care towards the work we do.

CPA THOUGHT LEADERSHIP FORUM



A few of our team members were at the Thought Leadership Forum 2025, organized by CPA Australia in collaboration with the Colombo Stock Exchange.

The session provided valuable insights into good corporate governance, regulations, how to strengthen them for a better future, and their practical implications for businesses.
We always leave sessions like this with valuable insights and are proud to be one of the first four CPA-Recognized Employer Partners in Sri Lanka.

With all the growth and expansion over the past few months, we are keen to use these learnings to continue to drive excellence in the finance & accounting space within our company and for our clients.

FORWARD TOGETHER

VOICE OF H CONNECT SURVEY



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.

Our bi-annual Voice of HCI (VoH) survey is designed to do just this and was rolled out yet again 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 evaluates our current practices, identifies areas for improvement, and introduces new initiatives or modifies 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.

CIMA PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION



Our team was incredibly proud to be a part of CIMA's president's reception, celebrating 60 years of AICPA & CIMA's dedication towards supporting Sri Lankan talent.

We were honoured to meet CIMA President, Simon Bittlestone in person and officially received our Gold Partnership plaque, renewing our long-standing partnership with the world's largest professional accounting body.

It was validating to see this global institution share our vision of finance as a strategic force, essential for navigating new tariffs, geopolitical re-organisation, and the AI-driven evolution of our world.

The President's words on how finance professionals will not just keep up with change, but drive it, deeply resonated with our team, inspiring our ongoing commitment to putting Sri Lanka on the global map through our work.

We are proud to be part of CIMA's network of Corporate Partners for 2025 and are excited for another year of renewed opportunities ahead.

THE GREAT HR DEBATE

For the second year running, our debate team took on the challenge at the Great HR Debate, going head-to-head with some of Sri Lanka's largest corporates.

This prestigious tournament, organized by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM), brings together seasoned professionals and brilliant minds from the nation's top companies.

Driven by pure passion and determination, our team powered through five intensive rounds, proudly emerging as one of the top 4 teams and making it all the way to the semi-finals!

What made this journey even more remarkable was that we were the youngest team competing. Over the course of six weeks, our team gained more than just debate experience.

It built our self-confidence, sharpened our public speaking skills,



and strengthened our ability to think critically and make decisions under pressure.

Throughout the competition, the entire team rallied behind our debaters, with the HCI spirit shining through every cheer and gesture of support.

We got one step closer to victory this year, and next year, we'll be back for the win.

FORWARD TOGETHER

AICPA & CIMA CXO BREAKFAST FORUM

Our leaders attended the AICPA & CIMA CXO Breakfast Forum 2025, where we gained valuable perspectives on the future of finance from CIMA President Simon Bittlestone.

Some key highlights from the session were areas that we have been championing for our team continuously:

- Tech-driven finance through AI integration, automation, and analytics, which our AI Task Force is spearheading.
- Preparing for a finance industry that is completely Gen-Z driven and eventually Gen Alpha, through initiatives like our young-talent-focused NextGen Impact training program.
- Identifying and addressing the need for 21st-century power skills – leadership, adaptability, and innovation – which we actively incorporate into our leadership and our wider team through our comprehensive training programs.

The insights gained at this session reinforced our commitment to evolving with the industry: up-skilling our team, nurturing young talent, and leveraging AI & technology to drive meaningful impact in finance.

SHE RETURNS PARTNERSHIP



We are proud to announce our partnership with SLASSCOM (Sri Lanka Association for Software and Services Companies)'s SheReturns program.

This program, initiated by the Women Technopreneurs Forum in collaboration with USAID empowers women in both tech and non-tech roles to re-enter the IT & BPM sector after a career break.

Being a company that is 58% women, we're committed to increasing female representation driving diversity throughout the workforce and setting the standard for everyone to follow.

We look forward to the positive impact this partnership will have on our team and on the industry.

CA ACCOUNTANTS WALK



In honour of International Accounting Day, our accountants joined hundreds of others in "Walk the World of Numbers" organized by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka.

Beginning from the CA Sri Lanka Head Office to Viharamahadevi Park, accountants, finance professionals, and aspiring students from industry-leading organizations across the country walked together in a show of the collective strength of Sri Lanka's accounting community. The walk ended with the planting of a "Murutha Tree" at Viharamahadevi Park, as a symbolic representation of the growth, stability, and sustainability embodied across the profession.

As a company that places Finance and Accounting at its core, we are proud to see Sri Lanka's F&A community continue to connect and thrive.

GPTW RE-CERTIFICATION



When we set out to create the brand that is H Connect International today, we had a vision of a dynamic and vibrant team with a true passion for the work they do.

Years later, this vision is very much a reality, reflected in the high scores we consistently achieve on our annual GPTW culture audits.

We are honoured to be re-certified as a Great Place to Work® for 2025-2026. Our leadership remains dedicated to creating an exceptional employee experience where our team has the resources, space, and support to grow.

The golden rule of three continues: Great people, great environment, a great place to work.

OUR IMPACT

PEOPLE FOCUSED

- Our team has expanded by 28 new members
- We have completed 826 hours of training

OPERATIONS FOCUSED

- 372 Financials
- 1,087 Tax returns
- 536 IAS and BAS
- 192 SOAs & ROAs
- 177 SMFSs
- 537 IT tickets resolved

SOCIAL STATS

- 77,000 TikTok Views
- 307,695 IG views
- 6,800 new followers

CLIENT VISITS



During the past two quarters, we hosted multiple clients from the US, UK, and Australia, who visited to check in with their teams, communicate their strategies, and review progress together.

Strengthening Relationships

Client visits are more than operational check-ins, they're an opportunity to strengthen the relationships we've built in person instead of just through a screen.

Communication & Strategy

Throughout these visits, our focus remained on open and transparent dialogue: laying out expectations, and revisiting team structure, timelines, and future strategy.

These in-person sessions allow us to align strategies, proactively suggest improvements, and design workflows that support long-term goals.

Expansion & New Client Acquisition

We were also pleased to welcome several potential new clients exploring outsourcing opportunities across various functions including digital marketing, operations, and accounting. One such visit led to us expanding into the luxury eyewear space, with three roles of Brand Manager, CRM, and Operations Manager already sourced.

With defined scopes and clear alignment, these engagements are a few of many promising new partnerships in the pipeline.

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

PASSION FOR AI

BY TWO-TIME AI QUIZ CHAMPION
FAZEEHA FOUZER

> "AI is likely to be either the best or worst thing to happen to humanity"
> – *Elon Musk*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is frequently viewed as either a revolutionary tool or a potential threat by everyone today. However, it continues to fascinate me.

The Thrill of Artificial Intelligence

The ability of AI to imitate, and occasionally even exceed, human capabilities is what most excites me about it.

From resolving practical issues to changing how we work, the notion that machines are capable of learning, adapting, and evolving opens a world of possibilities.

AI develops through experience, much like humans do; the more deeply a network is connected, the more it can learn.

The essence of deep learning, where each layer contributes depth, comprehension, and adaptability, is perfectly reflected in this.

My Digital Ally: Copilot

I've had the amazing opportunity to learn about AI firsthand as an intern, and my enthusiasm has only grown after I won the AI quiz for two months consecutively.

Winning the AI quiz gave me access to a free Copilot license and it has been so useful, especially in the context of accounting and Excel-based tasks.

With a free license, tasks like breaking down complex financial queries, generating summarized insights and even step-by-step guidance when navigating unfamiliar Excel functions are all the easier.

In a field where precision and efficiency are key, having AI as a companion has been rewarding.

Beyond Innovation

The possibilities of AI that lie ahead seem limitless.

It is a creative agent in producing music, writing stories, predicting market trends and diagnosing diseases. A remarkable fact currently being researched is AI-powered voice analysis which can potentially diagnose Alzheimer's and cognitive impairment in its initial stages. This is a glimpse of technology of just how complex and comprehensive AI has gotten.

But will it replace us?

I strongly believe that AI is not something that replaces human capability but is an extension of it. True strength is creating a space where humanity and technology grow side by side.

My interest in AI which started as mere curiosity has now grown into something I rely on, learn from and will continue to be fascinated by.

AGORA

QUARTER 1

We held our very first Agora for the year: a space for transparency, reflection, and recognition. As always, our department leads delivered honest and insightful quarterly updates, sharing milestones met, challenges faced, and key learnings from Q1.

This session marked a special first as we heard from Udesh, our newly appointed Accounting and Tax Manager.

Our CEO congratulated the team on the many wins Q1 delivered and shared an energising outlook on what lies ahead: new clients, promising business in the pipeline, our upcoming office expansion and training initiatives.

One of the most anticipated parts of Agora, the Value Champion Awards, brought with it a wave of fresh faces this quarter.

A big congratulations to all our winners! Your hard work, consistency, and the genuine care you bring to your roles truly reflect our five core company values.

We asked the tough questions.
We had open, honest conversations.
We embraced both the wins and the lessons of Q1.
And most importantly, we left inspired.

Here's to carrying the HCI spirit into the rest of the year with energy, ambition, and a whole lot to look forward to.

VALUE CHAMPIONS



Dinuki Devapura
Believe We Can



Chanuli Perera
Believe We Can



Rahma Rifkhan
Believe We Can



Sumaiya Nazeer
Make Things Better



Abdullah Ahamed
Make Things Better



Thanushan Gunasekaran
Make Things Better



Sajid Sabreen
Create the Future



Karen Perera
Create the Future

VALUE CHAMPIONS



Bewasha Wijerupa
Create the Future



Shakila Senarathna
Keep it Moving



Arib Razmi
Keep it Moving



Thashmila Ratnayake
Keep it Moving

TEAM AWARDS



Stronger Together



Stronger Together

LEADERSHIP AWARD



Krishmila Minoli

OUR ACHIEVERS



Rukmi Weerakoon

Master of Professional Finance (UOK)
Distinction , Batch-top
Gold Medalist- Best Performance



Rohitha Mudannayake

CPA Australia
Associate Membership



Dinithi Ranasinghe

Associate Member of CIMA
UK (ACMA/ CGMA)



Niroshan Dabare

CPA Australia
Associate Membership



Abdullah Ahamed

BSc (Hons) in Business Administration
Specializing in Business Management
First Class Honours ; Dean's Lister;
Merit Award



Sujani Krishnakumar

CIMA Passed Finalist



Dasuni Fernando

CIMA Passed Finalist



Rukshala Bulathsinghala

MSc in Information Management
Outstanding Academic
Performance Award

Celebrating **rukmi**



Every once in a while, someone comes along who reminds us why hard work, passion, and relentless drive truly matter. Today, we're so proud to celebrate one of our own, Rukmi, on reaching a huge milestone!

Rukmi, one of our brilliant Senior Accountants, has just been awarded the Best Performer of the Master of Professional Finance program at the Department of Finance, University of Kelaniya. On top of that, she's also a Gold Medallist, finishing with a perfect 4.0 GPA – a truly outstanding achievement!

For nearly four years now, Rukmi has been an irreplaceable part of our team, delivering top-notch work for one of our key clients in Australia.

Last year, Rukmi travelled with her team to Australia to visit the client onsite. During her visit, she played a vital role in streamlining processes, identifying efficiencies, and strengthening the relationship between the teams. Her dedication and expertise left a lasting impression — not only improving operations but also deepening the relationship with the client.

But what makes her journey even more inspiring is how she continues to push boundaries: from earning her BSc in Business Administration (Special) (where she was a Dean's Lister!) to currently pursuing the CIMA qualification (Managerial Level).

Beyond all her amazing achievements, what sets Rukmi apart is her attitude – she never settles. She's always learning, growing, and lifting the team up with her.

Rukmi, we are all so proud of you and we're rooting for you every step of the way. We can't wait to see all the amazing places your journey will take you.

Here's to you, and here's to all the milestones yet to come!



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION



H Connect International was awarded Bronze in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) category at the Pinnacle Awards by CIMA and Janashakthi Group (JXG).

It was a moment that marked our place among long-standing multinationals as leaders and torchbearers for change.



These awards are among the most respected in Sri Lanka's business and finance community, celebrating organizations that lead with integrity and courage.

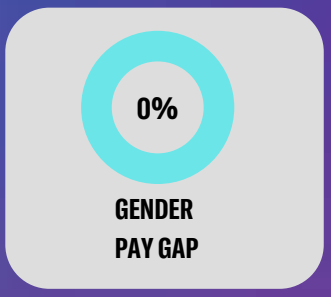
The evaluation process included written submissions, live presentations, and a multi-stage assessment independently verified by EY and judged by a panel of 7 industry experts.

To be recognized alongside legacy brands was powerful validation that we're making a real impact. Not just in what we do, but in how we do it.

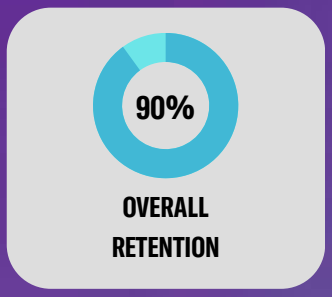
We'll keep investing in training, promoting dialogue, and building awareness to ensure DEI remains both a top-down mandate and a bottom-up movement.

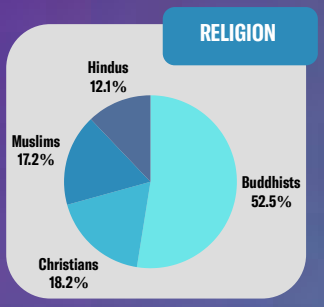
This win is a reminder that meaningful change doesn't need decades; it simply needs intent, action, and heart.

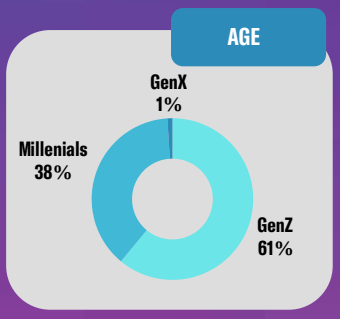
KEY DEI OUTCOMES

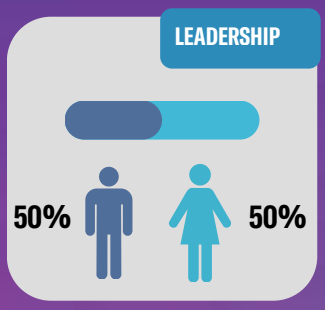


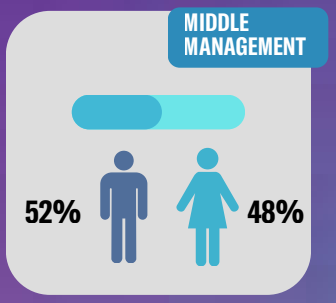


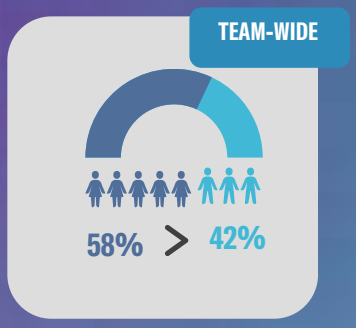












CELEBRATING DAMIAN!

We're so proud of Damian for bringing home the Business Manager of the Year (Silver) award at the CIMA-JXG Pinnacle Awards.

From leading ideation drives, hackathons, and automation projects, to mentoring teams and shaping culture at H Connect International, Damian has done it all.

He's a CPA, ACMA CGMA, and also one of the kindest, most honest souls you'll have the pleasure of meeting.

Damian, we'll always be cheering you on!





ACCOUNTING & TAX: A STRONG START TO A NEW CHAPTER

The Accounting & Tax vertical has undergone a major transformation in the last quarter. After being restructured as a standalone pillar, it has quickly grown under new leadership and a renewed focus on consolidation, governance, and growth. The team has already made significant progress in refining how the team works, trains, and grows together.

Every Thursday, the team comes together for **Knowledge Sharing Sessions,** a dedicated forum to explore tax scenarios, raise questions, and discuss the latest ATO updates. It's a space where continuous learning is encouraged. This culture of openness ensures that we move forward together, stronger and better informed.

We've also **successfully onboarded new members** through our comprehensive **12-week Graduate Training Program** to support incoming talent. It's structured into four progressive stages:

- **Stage 1:** Orientation & Behavioral Training
- **Stage 2:** Bookkeeping, Payroll, BAS
- **Stage 3:** Year-End Closing
- **Stage 4:** Tax Training

This initiative not only ensures that graduates hit the ground running, but also nurtures a consistent standard of technical and cultural excellence.

The team is also actively implementing clear workflows, governance structures, and streamlined processes to improve consistency and delivery across the board.

In an effort to streamline operations even further, the team has partnered with an external provider **to introduce a new, all-in-one system** – one that will bring together workflow tracking, time management, leave planning, efficiency metrics, and feedback loops. Scheduled to go live soon, this platform will offer role-based access and be a portal for managing work more cohesively.

It's been a busy few months on the business development front too. We've welcomed multiple client visits, continued to maintain strong relationships with existing partners, and held exploratory discussions with several potential new clients. The pipeline is active and promising. This growing interest is a strong reflection of the value we're creating and the confidence our clients have in our capabilities.

With the right people, systems, and culture in place, we're excited to see what the rest of the year brings.

BPM: A STORY OF RESILIENCE & TRANSFORMATION



At the heart of every win is a team that shows up, again and again.

Here's how our journey unfolded for our team of five over the past two quarters, shaped by challenges, strengthened by teamwork, and powered by learning and innovation.

Staffing Challenges

Internally, one of our key team members who handled major portions of accounts payable had to step away. Instead of letting it slow us down, the team chose to come together, learn the full process, and share responsibilities. The result was a seamless transition, one that had no impact on the client.

At the same time, the client's senior finance analyst responsible for overseeing accounts payable and cash management became unavailable for an extended period.

Despite limited documentation, our team, stepped up and assumed full responsibility. With quick action, long hours, and steady leadership, we assumed full responsibility for the function and kept operations moving without disruption.

This became a turning point. The way our team handled this challenge demonstrated our reliability and resilience. As a result, the client entrusted us with more:

We added **two new FTEs: a Senior Finance Analyst to lead the AP scope** and a **dedicated EDI Analyst.**

TRAILD Implementation

We also hit another major milestone: the successful implementation of TRAILD, a platform that is now actively supporting our AP operations to:

- Automate invoice capture and processing
- Streamline approval workflows
- Enable real-time payment tracking
- Improve vendor management and audit compliance
- Reduce manual effort, prevent errors, and enhance cash flow control.

Our team led the entire implementation journey. We set up the system, trained all stakeholders, documented processes, and ensured all approvers were confident in using the platform.

Driving Automation & Efficiency in AR

While AP was evolving, the Accounts Receivable team was on its own transformation journey:

- **Daphne** introduced **Power Automate workflows,** turning manual steps into smooth, automated processes.
- **Sumaiya** revamped how we use **Smartsheet**, creating live stakeholder alerts and workflows to manage complex customer account reconciliations. Smartsheet quickly became our go-to collaboration tool, improving speed, visibility, and team coordination.

One of our proudest outcomes is Aged debt reduction:
We began with **$1.5 million in aged receivables.** Through persistent follow-ups, process restructuring, and better documentation, we brought it down to just **$100,000.**

Expanding Our Role: Month-End Close & Financial Oversight

We also started playing a bigger role in the month-end close process.

- What started with our team managing **just 50%** of the process grew to **nearly 80%**.
- We closed process gaps, restructured reporting, and took on tasks previously handled by the client's finance director.
- By March 2025, we took full responsibility for the entire month-end close process, from sales tracking to expense accuracy.
- A standout contributor in this area was **Aquib**, who led large drop-shipper account reconciliations, flagged and resolved long-standing issues, and brought structure and clarity to what was once a chaotic process.

Arshad's leadership supported every initiative from staffing transitions to system upgrades. The team's resulting unwavering client-first mindset, unmatched dedication, and high standards became the foundation for this success.

The team supported one another to deliver better, stay focused, and keep showing up - no matter the challenge.

Looking back, it's not just about the milestones that define us. It's how we supported one another, how we grew together, and how we turned every challenge into a stepping stone.

Milestone Moments



ARSHAD

"Always be honest with your clients and your team. Owning up to difficulties, no matter how challenging, builds trust and prevents greater problems down the line."



SULO

“I’ve always wanted to stay with one company, build stability, and grow my career. HCI has proven to be the best place for that.”



HASINI

“I’m on a journey of evolving through challenges, embracing growth, and finding purpose in every step.”



DINITHI

“Growth begins at the edge of your comfort zone.”



HESHANI

“They say 'do what you love and you’ll never work a day in your life' So, I guess I’ve just been having a great time with all of you and calling it a job.”



DILKI

“Grateful for the growth, the challenges, the laughs, and the lessons. Cheers to great people and even better memories!”



ASELA

“Time flies. I’ve been collecting memories and connections while enjoying the ride.”



DINUKI

“Growth happens when you stop playing it safe and start embracing the unknown.”



YASURI

Talent and ideas are important, but showing up every day with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn makes the biggest difference in the long run.



HESHANI

“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!”

Milestone Moments



ADRIAN

"The obstacle is the path.
It's not something to go around, but something to walk through."



DILUSHA

"Kindness costs nothing but means everything.
So let's keep lifting each other up and working as one team."



ARIB

"It's easy to get caught up in the daily grind, but try to keep your perspective, stay grounded, grow from feedback, and focus on what really matters."



CHANULI

"Confidence grows when you stop trying to be someone else and start owning exactly who you are."



NISHADI

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."



UDESH

"Your workplace is your university. You learn on the job, every single day."



HESHAN

"Great things happen when people support each other, communicate openly, and genuinely care about the collective goal"



ANI

"Go above and beyond when needed, and offer help to colleagues. Being reliable and easy to work with goes a long way"



SACHINI

"Never underestimate the power of a good team."



KRISH

"The right attitude means everything. Showing up, stepping up and having the grit to push through every challenge makes all the difference."



"Cooking is my pause button"

- BEWASHA WIJERUPA

My day starts well before sunrise and ends long after everyone else has called it a night.

Between college lectures, work deadlines, and six hours of commuting (yes, six!), life often feels like it's stuck on fast-forward.

Most days feel like a marathon with no finish line.

On holidays, though, I slow down with coffee in hand, a cosy YouTube vlog, and the rare joy of not racing the clock. That's when I feel like I'm truly living, not just surviving.

Within all that rush in my life, cooking is my pause button.

The sound of onions sizzling and the scent of cardamom brings me back to myself and gives me so much peace.



Even though I don't have years of experience cooking, I dive into every recipe with excitement. I've tried out everything from spicy curries to sweet treats, and I can proudly say that my chocolate chip cookies are a hit at the office.

Sadly, my final year at University has reduced the time I spend cooking but the passion is still there, as bright as ever.

Cooking is just one of the things that I enjoy. I also love singing, dancing, compering at University events, and a bit of motivational speaking too.

My journey so far, with all its ups and downs, has shaped me into someone resilient and grounded.

Hardships have pushed me to work smarter and grow stronger and through all this, the biggest lesson I've learnt is that growth hides in discomfort. So, never say no to a challenge.

My personal motto is simple: "Do your best in what you're doing because you don't yet know what you're truly capable of."

Life may feel like juggling hot potatoes some days, but even when everything's up in the air, I know one thing, if my day ends with a small win, and a good meal, it's all been worth it.

NOT QUITE A READER BUT IN LOVE WITH WORDS

Sumaiya Nazeer

I thought I'd write about myself, from the curious little girl I once was, to the woman I am now, quietly in love with reading. And yet, even today, I hesitate to call myself a reader. That word feels, too settled. I prefer to say I adore words, not just the ones neatly printed on pages, but the rare ones, that capture the inexpressible with quiet grace.

My love for reading began at home. My mother, a teacher, always had a book tucked into her school bag. I'd peek in, curious about what could make her sit so still, so absorbed. I didn't understand it then. But I was watching. And learning.

Then came my sister, sneaking in massive, dramatic romance novels, probably borrowed from a hidden shelf in the public library. She always got caught. And I've always been curious.

When I finally began reading, I wasn't a disciplined bookworm. I was a lazy little goose, easily distracted. My earliest reads were Necto comic strips in the Wijeya newspaper. Then I stumbled upon a small cupboard of English books in our school library. That's where I discovered Beans Tree to the Sky and the trending Oshin.

Then literature happened. I didn't read Martin Wickramasinghe's Gamperaliya, Kaliyugaya, or Yuganthaya just because the school required it. Something in me was already leaning toward that world. It wasn't passion yet, but it was more than compliance. I was slowly falling.

I believe books find their readers, just like wands find their witches. They arrive when we most need them, when we're aching to be seen, heard, and understood, like so many in my generation do.

For me, it deepened with Becoming by Michelle Obama, the autobiographies. Then came Barack's. Then Michelle again. Eventually, a librarian asked, "Are you an Obama fan or something?" I guess I was. But it wasn't about politics but the voices that moved me.

Books gave me more than stories. They gifted me empathy, vocabulary, and perspective. They taught me to pause before judging, to notice, and to care. They made space for me to feel, even when I couldn't find the words. Some words I still don't fully understand - but somehow, I use them right. That's the power of stories absorbed, not just read.

Most of all, books showed me that even the most private feelings aren't only yours. You read a line, and it's as if someone reached into your chest and scribbled your secret across the page. That's magic. That was Khaled Hosseini for me.

So no, I don't call myself a reader. I reserve that word for those who devour book after book. Me? I simply adore language. I admire those who can express life in its entirety—the heartbreaks, the joy, the fears, the funny little habits. Books hold it all.

And if you say you hate reading, I don't believe you. You're not lazy or "not a reader." You just haven't met the right book yet. And when you do, it'll feel like it was waiting for you all along.

As the Warpaint Journal once said:
"A generation of kids growing up without reading books isn't just a generation that reads less — it's a generation slowly losing the muscle for empathy.

Because books aren't just stories. They're training grounds for imagination, for slipping into someone else's life, someone else's grief, joy, fear, or mess.

They teach you to sit with feelings that aren't yours. How do you build a world where you pause before judging, listen before reacting, understand before dismissing."

In the end, that's what reading is to me, not a habit, not a label, but a quiet, transformative kind of love.



TWO truTHS and A LiE

START A CONVO TO SEE WHICH ONE IS THE LIE!

I SNACK ON CHOCOLATE EVERY EVENING.

I'M SUCH A GOOD DRIVER THAT I HAVE TWO DRIVING LICENSES

I LOVE NUMBERS



I WAS HELD AT GUN POINT AT ONE POINT IN LIFE

ONCE, A BIKE ALMOST RAN OVER MY NECK

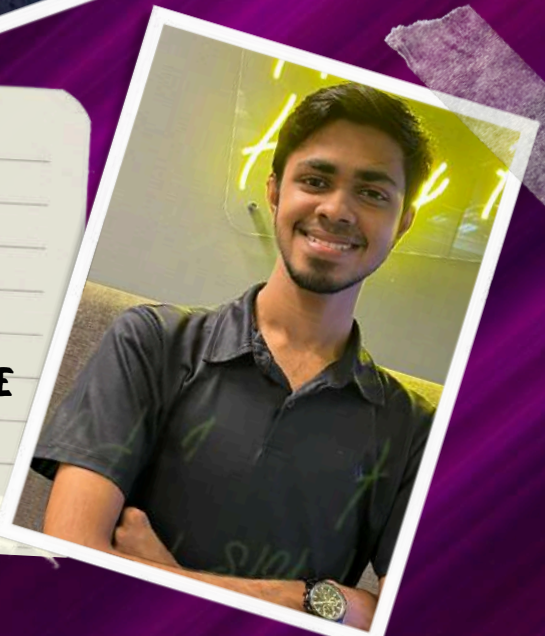
I EAT SIX MEALS A DAY



I CRASHED MY BROTHER'S BIKE 3 TIMES

I'VE ONLY BUNKED AN ENTIRE DAY OF SCHOOL ONCE

I READ A BOOK A WEEK



WELCOME

TO THE TEAM!

We saved you a seat at the cool table.
Let's learn, grown, and win together!



Learning & Development

A MESSAGE FROM DULARA

Learning happens every day.

I remember thinking back at school that I had learnt everything possible that there was to know, but with each passing year, I was exposed to experiences that taught me so much about life.

At one point, even after going through certain experiences, I refused to believe there was anything more to learn. But life had other plans, and it kept teaching me. Sometimes we overlook things we already know, assuming there's no use in learning more.

But what I've come to realize over the years is that even a small piece of knowledge can turn out to be key, it always comes into play somewhere down the line. I believe it's important to stay open to learning and growing. That's what helps us face life and opens us up to new experiences.

We all have a golden opportunity here at H Connect International to keep learning and growing.

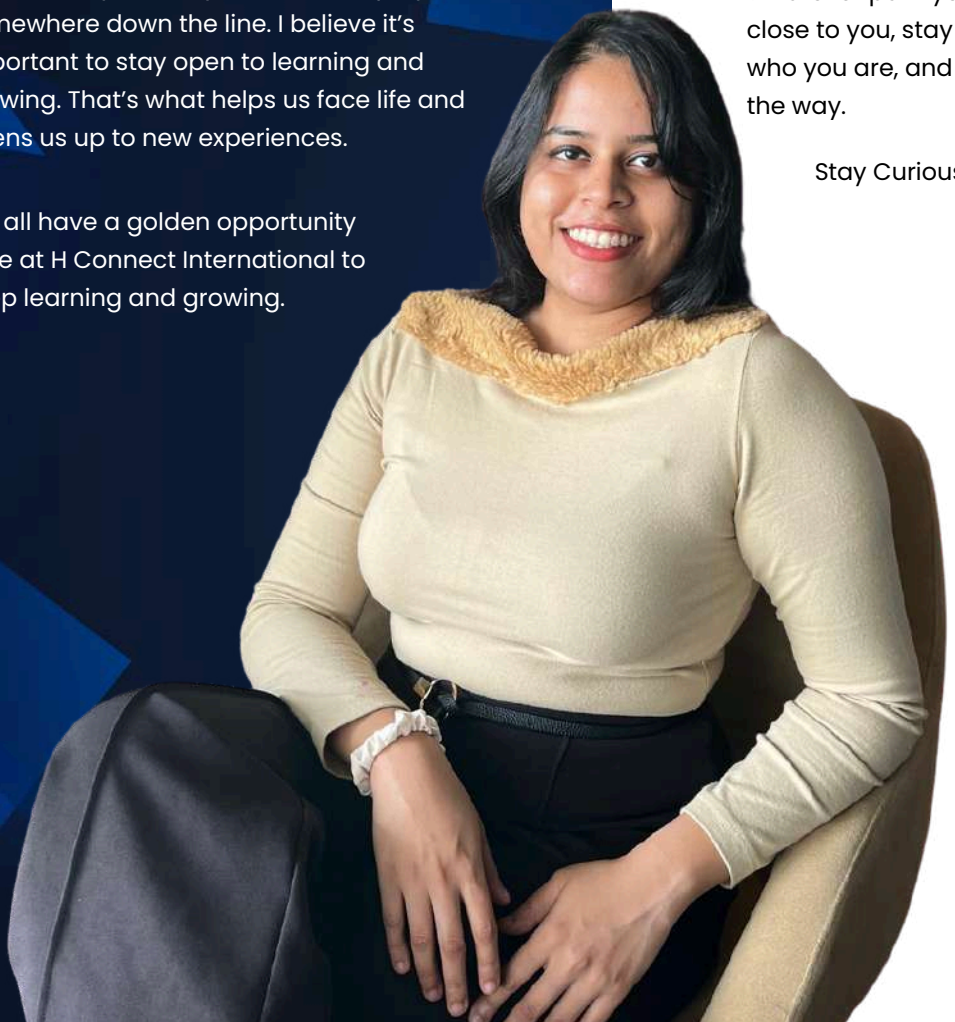
From Orators to Lunch & Learns to TGIMs, it's important that we embrace the opportunities given to us. You could also join the Care Collective book club (they'll introduce you to books that your "For You" page probably never would)!

Being a part of debates and quizzes will also give you fresh and exciting experiences, so I'd say grab those chances and enjoy them along the way. I also hope you're reading the weekly Industry News articles on Monday and updates from the AI Task Force.

So much time, thought, and effort has gone into this pillar and all these initiatives have been carefully curated for you to grow, learn and upskill.

Whatever path you choose, keep learning close to you, stay open-minded, and be true to who you are, and we will support you all along the way.

Stay Curious!



Learning & Development

LUNCH & LEARNS



Every Thursday, our team gathers for a Lunch & Learn, which is a casual, engaging session led by one member of the team. These knowledge-sharing sessions cover a wide range of topics, from public speaking and art to personal journeys, global affairs, and everything in between. It's a space to learn from each other, spark curiosity, and grow together beyond just our day jobs.

ORATORS



Our monthly Orators sessions are all about building confidence in being better communicators. Modeled after global Toastmasters, these sessions feature round robins, table topics, and icebreakers, and are driven by a dedicated Orators Committee.

We also regularly invite influential speakers and thinkers to coach our team, sharing their experiences, tips, and strategies to help us become stronger, more persuasive speakers.

E-LEARNING PASSPORT



We've launched the E-Learning Passport, a new platform powered by Power Automate, to track and manage individual training hours. This system is aligned with this year's KPIs, with all team members required to complete 40 hours of training.
For each of us, the E-Learning passport records the type of training, hours completed, dates, and proof of attendance. Learning now has a clear path and a method to track every step.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

We have a wide range of structured training programs in place to support team development at every level:

- **Behavioural training** by on various topics including conflict resolution, time management, and effective communication
- Weekly **Accounting & Tax technical training.**
- **Leadership Training Series** held monthly
- **Excel Training Series**, delivered in three progressive levels (Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced) with new batches completing each quarter
- **Information Security Training** delivered by the IT and Compliance team
- An **in-house LMS** with assigned courses to everyone on the team, both mandatory and based on individual requirements
- **AI Task Force Quizzes** – A weekly gamified quiz designed to promote AI literacy across the team. It's fun, competitive, and educational, with the monthly winner earning a free Copilot license to power up their productivity.

WHY MENTAL AWARENESS MATTERS MORE THAN WE THINK

BY ISURU PRAMODH



Have you ever asked yourself, "How am I really feeling today?" It's a simple question, but one we rarely stop to answer.

Mental awareness is the ability to notice what's going on inside us. It's not about fixing everything or always staying positive. It's about being honest with ourselves. Knowing when we're stressed, tired, overwhelmed, or even just "off" is the first step to doing something about it.

At work, we often get caught in the cycle of doing more, staying busy, and pushing through. That might look productive on the surface, but over time, it can lead to burnout, especially if we ignore the signs. Mental awareness helps us catch those moments early. It reminds us to pause, take a breath, and check in with how we're doing, not just what we're doing.

It also improves how we work with others. When we're more in tune with our own emotions, we start to notice things in people around us. An unusually quiet teammate. A tone shift in a conversation. These small things often carry big meanings, and noticing them can lead to stronger, more supportive connections.

Mental awareness is a skill, and like any skill, it gets better the more we practice. Whether it's taking five minutes to reset, journaling after a hard day, or just naming what you're feeling, these small steps build real strength.

We don't always need big solutions. Sometimes, the most powerful thing we can do is pay attention to ourselves.

Because when we understand what's going on inside, we make better choices on the outside – for ourselves, and for the people around us.

TRUST IN 2025: WHY IT MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

BY DESHAKA PERERA

A century ago, Toyota, the global automotive giant, needed a supplier who could deliver quality components reliably and consistently. Enter Toyota Boshoku, a relatively small parts manufacturer at the time. They didn't have the scale or infrastructure of larger competitors, but they had something more valuable – "Trust."

When Toyota first partnered with them, there were no massive contracts or pages of legal documents. Just a handshake and a simple promise: "We'll deliver what you need, when you need it, with no compromise on quality."

Over the decades, that handshake turned into one of the most successful long-term supplier relationships in the automotive world. Toyota Boshoku grew alongside Toyota, becoming a global player with operations in more than 20 countries. What made it work? Not just efficiency or price, but mutual trust. Toyota trusted them to deliver. Boshoku trusted Toyota to stay committed. Even when markets shifted, technologies evolved, and challenges arose, that trust stayed firm.

This story is a great reminder for leaders like us of the responsibility that we carry at a time when the economic, social, and technological environments are changing rapidly. As we endeavour to do the best for our customers, employees, business partners, investors and communities, trust will be the fabric that will bind everything together.

To our customers, trust means consistency, transparency and reliability. When a customer chooses our product or service, they are not just buying a solution, they are investing in an experience.

To our employees, trust creates a culture of safety, empowerment and purpose. When employees feel trusted, they show up differently.

There's a story a director once shared, a story that continues to resonate:

In 1983, during a difficult time in Sri Lanka's history, a major factory of the Hirdaramani Group was burnt down. Everything was lost: machines, infrastructure, operations, and employee data. For many, this would have meant layoffs and cutbacks. But the Hirdaramani Group chose a different path. The leadership stood by their people and made a remarkable decision: every employee would continue to receive their full salary, using the previous month's pay slip as a reference point. At a time when others focused on losses, Hirdaramani focused on what truly mattered, "trust". Trust in their people. Trust in doing what's right.

To our investors, trust means responsible leadership, ethical decision-making and long-term thinking. Investors seek more than monthly results. They look for leaders and companies they can trust.

To our communities, trust is built through action, accountability, and meaningful engagement. A business doesn't operate in isolation; it exists within a community. Communities trust organisations that show up, listen and invest in long-term impact, not just short-term visibility.

As business leaders, we need to manage stakeholder trust with purpose and build a culture of trust in organisations. While recent geopolitical disruption has brought uncertainty, it also offers a defining moment to lead differently – to lead with trust.

In a world that's constantly shifting, it's easy to focus on speed and scale. But real, lasting success is built on trust, the quiet force that strengthens relationships, drives resilience and develops meaningful progress.

In 2025, trust is the real currency of business.



















XOXO
This is Happy
PICKLE SMASH
Stronger Together
This is Our Happy Place
Hellooo! It's Me



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