Niraj Kumar has spent close to 30 years in the Indian telecom industry, gaining relevant exposure across almost all stakeholder groups in the telecom value chain – vendors, operators and infrastructure providers. He started his career with BEL in 1988 and later moved to Alcatel Lucent, in 1994, in pursuit of a more challenging role. He worked with the company till 2006, post which he joined Bharti Airtel.

“At that time, the industry had started moving towards mobile telephony, and I decided to move along with the market requirements.” He was associated with the operator for a decade, during which he also worked with Airtel Sri Lanka and Africa. Currently, he heads the supply chain management (SCM) function at Tower Vision Private Limited. He is responsible for the overall management of the company’s SCM and achieving the company’s overall goals.

Kumar believes that the Indian telecom industry is going through a major transformation due to disruptive technologies. “Currently, the infrastructure provider (IP) industry is facing a severe cost pressure owing to the revenue impact on account of operator consolidation and aggressive pricing. Meeting revenue targets have become a challenge,” he says. However, since the Indian telecom industry now has fewer players, any further erosion of revenue would be for a shorter period only, he believes. “In the medium term to long term, the industry is bound to grow in terms of revenue and profitability,” he adds.

Kumar considers his stint at Airtel as his most interesting and enriching one so far. “It gave me an overall view of the telecom business. The tower sharing business and predictive cost analysis of telecom infrastructure were daunting tasks for any operator at that time. I enjoyed formulating, implementing and streamlining tower sharing. I also fixed energy contracts between Airtel and IPs,” he recounts.

Kumar is a practical and result-oriented person. “I normally take quick decisions based on data and facts, and move ahead.” In terms of team management, he likes to give his team members enough freedom to perform.

Kumar obtained a B.Tech in mechanical engineering from G.B. Pant University and an M. Tech from IIT, Kharagpur. He has also attended executive programmes at ISB, Hyderabad and at IIM, Indore. In his free time he loves reading, watching television and listening to music. Kumar’s family includes his wife and two children, both of whom are working.

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