

Sanjeev Kakkar comes with more than three decades of experience in the telecom technology and policy space and has been involved in the areas of R&D and technology management. Kakkar has led the development of multiple indigenous telecom products, from conception and development to successful commercial launch. However, his most exciting professional phase began when as founding chief operating officer of Vihaan Networks Limited (VNL), he set up first-of-its-kind R&D centres in India and abroad. “When we started in 2004, our vision was to indigenously design and develop an end-to-end mobile technology solution based on 3GPP standards,” he says. Along with the aspirations, there were challenges as well. “Building the team to handle such a complex programme with limited local expertise was a big challenge,” he says.

Over the years, Kakkar has played a leadership role in the organisation across diverse areas including technology development, management, operations, regulatory and public policy advocacy and corporate strategy formulation. Currently, as president and chief strategy officer, he drives VNL’s overall business strategy with a special focus on institutional businesses, large international businesses and government-to-government projects. He is a part of the governing council of the Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council and a member of many committees on manufacturing in government and industry bodies. Kakkar believes that India’s dependence on the telecom equipment imports has caused a trade deficit of about \$17 billion. He sees a big opportunity for domestic equipment manufacturers, especially start-ups and technology companies, to become global leaders by building competence in evolving telecom technologies such as big data, AI, 5G and cognitive computing. He is an expert in intellectual property right strategies and considers his deep technology knowledge and nuanced understanding of policy and regulation as his key strengths. On his management style, he says, “I use a mix of authoritative and participative approaches.” He considers himself a tough but fair taskmaster. Kakkar has a master’s in physics (electronics) and an M.Tech in microwave engineering from Delhi University. He also has a postgraduate diploma in theology from the Dayalbagh Educational Institute. Most of his spare time is spent with his family, comprising his parents, his wife Sandhya, a son and a daughter. A technology enthusiast, he likes to read on issues related to evolving technologies.

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