



COUNTING SUCCESS

WHO:
Nurul A'in Abdul Latif

WHERE:
PwC Malaysia

WHAT:
**First female executive chair,
to succeed current executive chairman
Datuk Mohammad Faiz Azmi
in July 2023**

BY DIAN PASQUINAL KAUR

Growing up with parents who were teachers had a profound impact on Nurul A'in Abdul Latif, deputy executive chair of PwC Malaysia. It was the constant emphasis on education that would eventually propel her to pursue accounting at the University of Malaya and champion a cause that is close to her heart at PwC.

"Education was a way of life for as long as I could remember. Being a part of the firm's efforts to bring upskilling to clients, our people and the community, and as a programme sponsor for our 'New World, New Skills' initiative means a lot to me," she says. A total of US\$3 billion (RM13.3 billion) has been invested in this upskilling effort, which will be the key focus area for PwC's global network in the next four years.

Nurul has always enjoyed working with numbers and how they tell a story. "I joined PwC upon graduation and I've been here ever since. Over the years, I've asked myself why I stayed on in the professional services industry. For one, there's always something new to learn. There are new regulations and ways of working to become familiar with, especially with the digitalisation of the accounting industry, where the automation

of routine tasks gives us more time to address issues that are important to our clients."

Another reason would be the gratification she derives from the relationships and trust she has built with her clients over the years. They truly value her advice in making business decisions.

Apart from her role as deputy executive chair, Nurul is a partner in PwC Malaysia's assurance practice. In the audit role, she oversees all aspects of client engagement, from planning to final reporting, while finding ways to differentiate the firm in the marketplace and add value to its current and new clients.

Come July, Nurul will celebrate a momentous career milestone. PwC Malaysia's current executive chairman Datuk Mohammad Faiz Azmi is retiring and she will step into the biggest role of her career as the firm's first female executive chair.

"I look forward to furthering the work we're doing on inclusion and diversity, and ensuring that others around me are given the same opportunities. Reaching your goals shouldn't be a matter of luck. Opportunities for female leaders should be given based on merit and they shouldn't have to wait for the stars to align," she states matter-of-factly.

She will also continue to champion PwC's New World, New Skills, programmes. It has done work to support large and small organisations in their digital journey, and she would love to see how the firm can do more to prepare our youth with the right digital skills as they enter the workforce.

In her role, she is always thinking about how to do things differently and to tackle an ever-growing list of priorities. "As a leader, I think it's important to help people embody our firm's purpose to build trust in society and offer solutions. For me, that means empowering people to run on their own towards new opportunities or respond to an issue that has come up at work."

She is appreciative of the opportunities and recognitions she continues to receive at PwC. "When I was a few years into my job, I was given the opportunity to take a secondment at the PwC UK firm to work on an account with a new global client. It was a wonderful opportunity, and when I left, I knew a lot more about client engagement for global businesses whose operations spanned multiple countries."

Another career highlight would be when she was made partner in 2008. The road to partnership was not without its challenges. As a working woman who was starting a family, it really boiled down to being seen for her abilities and skills which she demonstrates every day, and not speculation about her work-life arrangements. "I had good mentors in our leaders, including our past and present executive chairman, and other senior partners with whom I've worked over the course of my career, apart from family members who were unwavering in their support of my ambitions, who let me do what I love."

What guidance would she offer those looking to begin a career in accounting? "Whether people are looking to become successful accounting professionals, well-rounded career women or make the most of their time in the workforce, always remember technical skills are important. But knowing how to learn is critical. Lean into your strengths and constantly seek out mentors."

Nurul is proof that women can climb the corporate ladder while parenting. She has four

children between the ages of 16 and 25, and she had them close together in the hope that they would have a strong bond growing up. But how did she manage to do it?

"Motherhood was not a decision I made lightly, but I always knew I wanted a big family. As an auditor, there are peak periods during the audit cycle when work gets very busy. When my children were much younger, I juggled work and taking exams to qualify as a chartered accountant with my share of childcare," she recalls, proving that it really takes a village to raise a child.

This is why there needs to be a greater push towards flexible working, which must be accessible and equally used by both women and men, she says. At PwC, the flexible work policies take into account people's lives outside of work. "For example, with Reduced Work Week, our people have the option to work a shorter work week, allowing them to focus on their children or ageing parents, or the FlexDad policy which allows fathers

to utilise our enhanced paternity leave of 30 days over their newborn's first year of life.

"When I think about what my parents' dreams were for my brother and I, and what mine are now for my children, it's clear that we've moved up Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Where my parents wanted us to secure a good livelihood, I want my kids to be happy, to take pride in working hard for their achievements, to understand that they are the only ones who can hold themselves back, not anyone or anything, and certainly not because they're men or women," concludes Nurul. ■

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