SPOTLIGHT:

Sajid M Lakhan

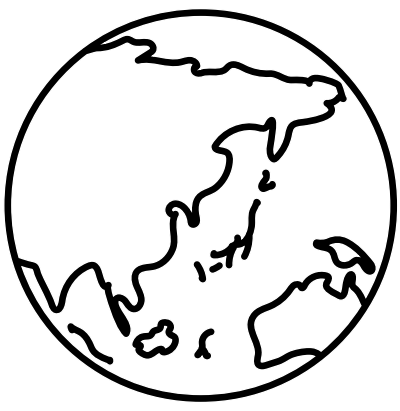
At Aii, we strive to work with leading experts in supply chain technology who bring deep knowledge and impact to the industry. One of them is Sajid Lakhan, who recently became the first Pakistani to receive the Energy Professional Development Award in the Asia Subcontinent Region category from the Association of Energy Engineers (AEE) USA.

His recognition highlights the critical role experts play in shaping a more sustainable future. We took the opportunity to sit down with him for a short Q&A about how experts drive facility-level change and industry-wide decarbonization.

Q1: WHAT'S ONE THING BRANDS AND MANUFACTURERS MIGHT NOT REALIZE ABOUT THE WORK EXPERTS DO BEHIND THE SCENES?

Many brands and manufacturers may not realize how much technical groundwork goes into identifying opportunities that are both cost-effective and sustainable. A major challenge is getting accurate data from factories, as teams are sometimes hesitant to share information with consultants, fearing it may reflect poorly on them. Once data is collected, verification is another demanding step, especially since Aii maintains very strict standards to ensure that results are credible and defensible. Beyond the numbers, experts also invest time in building trust with factory staff and engineers, showing them that the purpose is improvement, not inspection. This combination of rigorous analysis and strong collaboration often makes the difference between a report that sits on a shelf and one that drives real change.

"By engaging engineers, operators, and management, we ensure that improvements are realistic, respected, and sustainable within challenging local market conditions."



Q2: HOW DO YOU BALANCE GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES WITH THE REALITIES OF WORKING IN LOCAL FACILITIES AND MARKETS?

Balancing global best practices with the realities of Pakistan's manufacturing sector requires flexibility and cultural understanding. Global frameworks provide proven methods for reducing energy, water, and carbon impacts, but not every factory here has the same resources or infrastructure. For example, while advanced monitoring systems may be ideal, many facilities rely on manual checks or limited instrumentation. My role is to adapt these best practices into solutions that are affordable and practical, without losing technical rigor. A positive development is that local facilities increasingly recognize climate change and feel the international pressure from brands, which makes them more willing to act. By engaging engineers, operators, and management, we ensure that improvements are realistic, respected, and sustainable within challenging local market conditions.

Q3: WHEN IT COMES TO DEPLOYING AII PROGRAMS ON THE GROUND, WHAT PART OF THE WORK EXCITES YOU THE MOST, AND WHY?

The most exciting part for me is seeing the moment when factory teams realize that sustainability is not just a compliance requirement but a real business advantage. Through Aii programs, we get to show them how energy efficiency, water savings, and process improvements can lower costs while reducing emissions. I particularly enjoy the Clean by Design philosophy, which feels very real and practical; it's about "cleaning the carbon" through smart engineering design and proven best practices. This structured approach makes it easier to translate global standards into local actions that deliver results. It's especially rewarding when simple measures like leak repairs or condensate recovery demonstrate quick wins. Knowing that these steps build both climate impact and industrial competitiveness makes the work deeply meaningful.

Q4: IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT MAKES AN EXPERT–FACILITY PARTNERSHIP MOST EFFECTIVE?

The most effective partnerships are built on trust, transparency, and shared goals. As an expert, I bring technical knowledge and global best practices, but the real success comes when facility teams feel they are equal partners in the process. My strategy is to train and empower factory teams to carry out engineering calculations themselves so they understand the true energy-saving potential. When I'm transparent about the science, they automatically trust me, because they see the logic and evidence behind every recommendation. Open communication is also critical; factories need to feel safe sharing accurate data without fear of judgment.

"By combining knowledge transfer with ongoing engagement, the relationship shifts from consultant-client to collaborators, creating ownership and long-term, meaningful results."

Q5: LOOKING AHEAD, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN EXPERTS AND AII TO DRIVE FASTER PROGRESS?

The biggest opportunity lies in scaling up the Clean by Design approach so that it becomes a standard practice across supply chains, not just in selected facilities. Aii already provides a strong framework and strict verification, which ensures credibility. Experts can build on this by working closely with factories to translate technical solutions into actionable steps that fit their local realities. Another key area is capacity building, training in-house teams to carry out audits, calculations, and monitoring so that expertise remains within the facility long after a project ends. To drive faster progress in Pakistan, Aii also needs stronger visibility and outreach, since many facilities are still unaware of the important work being done. Improved marketing can accelerate adoption.