

IN an era when social media can magnify service delivery interruptions to unprecedented proportions, consistency, reliability and adaptability have become the new yardstick by which enterprises are measured.

Here, success stories illustrate the exacting standards expected by consumers, end-users and purchasers across industries. Within the specialised arena of global airport rail link operators, Express Rail Link (ERL) Sdn Bhd's achievements have set the gold standard worldwide, with a reported on-time performance of 99.7% surpassed only by the Hong Kong Airport Express.

Raising the bar

"I have been with ERL since 1997 under various capacities, but my focus upon taking the chief executive officer role was on raising service and safety standards for passengers, as well as constant vigilance with regard to punctuality. As in any organisation, staff is one of the most critical assets. We emphasise teamwork and always discuss decisions prior to committing to a given course. We also run a number of corporate social responsibility programmes to serve the community and foster a spirit of teamwork," says ERL CEO Noormah Mohd Noor.

Noormah's approach has seen ERL's clientele of business, leisure and transit travellers rise steadily since 2002, including a

42% boost in ridership following the extension of its services to KLIA2 in 2014, with the operator celebrating its 75 millionth passenger this year.

The scope of the line includes 137 express journeys daily from KLIA and KLIA2 to KL Sentral via KLIA Ekspres, as well as a commuter service running 89 trips daily to stations at Bandar Tasik Selatan, Putrajaya & Cyberjaya and Salak Tinggi dubbed KLIA Transit.

Along the way, it has catalysed the development of communities and related amenities along its route, including the massive Southern Integrated Terminal at Bandar Tasik Selatan, as well as a large residential enclave and the

first branch campus of Xiamen University to open outside China at Salak Tinggi.

Looking to the future

Despite its accomplishments, ERL isn't resting on its laurels, maintaining its industry leadership and remaining relevant through initiatives such as its 2013 migration to a new automated fare collection system, replacing a 10-year legacy system with cloud-based solutions and technical innovations which facilitate partnerships with airlines and other service providers.

Other value-adds include an in-town check-in service at KL Sentral which sees a current volume of about 1,000 bags per

day and has operated for 14 years without a single piece of luggage lost. In view of a projected growth in ridership, the operator has also ordered six new four-car trainsets from China-based manufacturer CRRC Changchun Railway Vehicles Co Ltd to increase its overall capacity, with progressive delivery from September this year.

"Regarding the Kuala-Lumpur Singapore High Speed Rail, we first mooted the idea back in 2000. There will be an international open tender, and we are definitely keen to participate, being hopeful about our prospects in view of our expertise. The Express Rail Link was one of the first privatised projects in the 1990s, and the

only remaining project that is still privately held," says Noormah.

Given its track record, the rail operator's optimism regarding the project is well deserved. In the meantime, ERL will continue to enhance its services through strategic partnerships with players such as MasterCard, Touch 'n Go, Amadeus and TripAdvisor/Viator, while keeping abreast of new technologies such as ride-sharing apps which have encroached upon the rail segment.

Looking to the south

Express Rail Link's world-class on-time performance positions it as a natural contender for the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail project

