

**Inc.
5000** COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

Business With a Soul: People Before Profit Is a Success Secret

Hafiz Sikder's people-first mindset has been a powerful catalyst to Axiom Healthcare Strategies' success

Hafiz Sikder has nearly 20 years of experience in various leadership roles in the life sciences industry. Partnering with several big-name consulting agencies, he noticed one thing: the relationship was often transactional. When he left to start his boutique oncology and rare disease think tank in 2016, he vowed to change that.

At Axiom Healthcare Strategies, Sikder disrupted the model by building a team with deep clinical and commercial expertise and innovative minds. He embraced a people-first strategy, which turned out to be the secret to his success. An ecosystem that focuses on people—clients, patients, and teammates—all centered on a singular goal of transforming patients' lives.

"We're not a traditional agency where we will take on a book of business and manage it like managing a budget line," says Sikder. "We will always come back and say, 'Have you considered this?' or 'How about this pivot in thinking?' The money can always come later."

And it has. In just four years, Axiom Healthcare Strategies surged 685 percent in growth, creating a disruption in the typical consulting industry.

"We are taking work from brand-name consulting shops because clients cannot get the bespoke level of service we offer," Sikder says. "We have zero attrition from a client perspective."

THE POWER OF PEOPLE

Sikder is also a disruptor in his culture. "When we were hiring talent away from our competitors, some of the candidates asked if we provided after-hours meals," he says. "I told them, 'I'd rather you don't eat dinner at work. Unless there's a crisis, shut down, go home.' That's not the life I am seeking for myself or for my team."

Axiom's benefits include Summer Fridays, quarterly Axiom days, SPOT bonuses, and shut-down week. And pandemic support includes surprise DoorDash dinner drop and cash payouts for unused vacation days.

Sikder has built an ecosystem of smart, caring teammates who can step in to lead the brand planning of a \$12 billion oncology brand and help a new start-up biotech launch its first niche drug.

Instead of cubicles and corner offices, Team Axiom comes together around a giant table. The flat organization has no org charts, managers, departments, or supervisors. Business consultants told Sikder, "You need reporting structures and systems. That's what



Nº717
2021 Ranking

685%
3-Year Growth

2016
Year Founded

53
Thinkers at
the Table

Axiom
HEALTHCARE STRATEGIES

traditional companies do."

"We are not here to follow tradition; we are here to build a disruptive legacy," quips Sikder with a smile.

BUSINESS WITH A SOUL

Giving back to society is an equally important part of leaving an enduring legacy, and Sikder built caring for others into Axiom's DNA. Growing up in Bangladesh with a Jesuit and Muslim upbringing, he saw what it means to have a life with service at the core.

The think tank's nonprofit arm, Axiom REACH, offers cancer patients free rides to their doctor's appointments, provides full tuition scholarships and pre-professional support to underrepresented students pursuing careers in health care through its unique cohort-model ARGOS program, and sponsors lodging at Hope Lodge, NYC,

providing free housing for cancer patients receiving treatment.

"The Axiom REACH foundation has significantly contributed to the American Cancer Society over the last three years, providing critical funding and support," said Dr. Mark Goldberg, American Cancer Society Board member. "The Axiom team has now set their sights on helping ACS obtain funding to address disparities that prevent equal access to cancer screenings and care across all communities."

Team Axiom strongly believes genetic coding should dictate one's prognosis in cancer, not your zip code. "It's unacceptable that, as a society, we would allow such disparities across racial divides," Sikder says. "We are here to change that."

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