

Airtel appoints Malawian as Zain MD



By [Gregory Gondwe](#)

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Zain Malawi, which is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of India's Bharti Airtel, has announced the appointment of Saulos Chilima as the new MD of the company. Chilima is the first Malawian to head Zain Malawi ever since it arrived in the country as Celtel.



Chilima takes over from Zimbabwean Fayaz King who has since been re-assigned to Zambia in the same position. Chilima, holding a University of Malawi Master of Arts degree in Economics, has a wealth of experience spanning a combined 15 years in telecommunications, banking and the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

Instrumental in growing the business

He joined the company in September 2006 as sales and distribution director, a position he has maintained to date. Prior to entering the telecommunications business, Chilima held senior sales and marketing positions at Unilever and the local Coca Cola distribution company, Bottling and Brewing Group Limited (BBGL) and had a stint in banking at Leasing and Finance Company (LFC), a subsidiary of publicly-listed FMB Bank.

As part of the Zain Malawi management team, Chilima has been instrumental in growing the business by pioneering award-winning merchandising standards. These include the Quick Refill Centre (QRC) initiative, a merchandising model that uses containers to place Zain's products and services within easy reach of customers in the market.

Growing the corporate segment

The QRC scooped the Innovation of the Year Award for Central Africa in 2008, the same year when Zain Malawi won the Operation of the Year (OPCO) Award in the Zain Group.

Chilima is also credited with driving the company's Payphone Micro-Finance initiative, growing the corporate segment, and increasing Zain's points of sale outlets across Malawi.

As the new MD, Chilima's immediate task is to oversee the seamless brand transition of the company from Zain to Airtel later this year.

"I would like to thank the board of Airtel for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading a dynamic team of individuals as we move forward to consolidate and position this new global brand in Malawi. Let me also take this opportunity to thank Mr King for supporting me over the last two years and for his wise leadership," he said.

ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE

Gregory Gondwe is a Malawian journalist who started writing in 1993. He is also a media consultant assisting several international journalists pursuing assignments in Malawi. He holds a Diploma and an Intermediate Certificate in Journalism among other media-related certificates. He can be contacted on gregorygondwe@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter at @Kalipochi.

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