

"Employer-Employee Expectations in the New Millennium"

Here are the excerpts from the speech of the speakers and organizers. The seminar was organised by the YEP Forum in collaboration with The Daily Star and The British Council.

Welcome Speech

Osama Taseer
Director, Tiffany's Wear and Coordinator, YEP Forum

I am very pleased to welcome you all to this seminar on "Employer-employee Expectations in the New Millennium" organized by the Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Forum (YEP Forum) in collaboration with The Daily Star and The British Council. YEP Forum is a non-political group of dynamic young men and women from various professions who share the common vision and agenda for a more prosperous Bangladesh through young people's participation in national development. It was born in early 1997. Our members are highly skilled in their own professions and assembled together to contribute something meaningful to the society.

In Bangladesh there is a wide mismatch between the employer and employees. Standing at the threshold of a new millennium, this is our modest effort to reduce the existing gap. We would like our guest speakers to highlight on the following: [a] Keeping in view the challenges that are coming in the new millennium, what general as well as area-specific expectations do they have out of the existing and future employees; [b] Providing the audience with advice, suggestions and other tips on the topic so that the young professionals and entrepreneurs present here can benefit from their hard-earned experience. With strong patronage from the Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam and The British Council, we have been able to organize several programs specifically targeted towards the young generation. What I really hope today is that each of you can take something from this seminar that will mean benefit to your profession and career.

Moderator's Note

Quazi Mahmud Ahmed
Faculty Member, North South University and Core Group Member, YEP Forum

In an effort to set the stage for discussions on the topic, please allow me to shed some light on the basic principles that guide employer-employee expectations as we approach the 21st century. Even if habituated with the existing way of doing things, we must be aware that advent of newer and better technology and lifestyles mean that we will have to come out of the traditional mentality as far as expectations from employers as well as employees are concerned.

When employees join an organization, they make an unwritten psychological contract with it, although often they are not conscious of it. This contract is in addition to the economic contract where time, talent and energy are exchanged for wages, hours and reasonable working conditions. The psychological

From the YEP Desk

Rafi Hossain

At YEP Forum we organize various seminars and workshops keeping the needs of today's young entrepreneurs and professionals in mind. In the last one year or so, we had organized seminars, workshops and conferences on such diverse topics as Job Interview Skills, Career Opportunities for the Young Doctors and most recently we organized a workshop on How to Get finance if one starts his or her own business. This week's YEP Talk is devoted to an important topic that involves both the entrepreneur and the professional. Our purpose here is to provide our valued readers with an excellent summary of the deliberations at the seminar on "Employer-Employee Expectations in the New Millennium" held at the British Council Auditorium on Thursday, August 26, 1999.

We would like you to know that one of our expressed purposes is to become a trend setter in initiating practical and need-based seminars with innovative approaches creates an impact in real-life workplaces. In selecting our panel of speakers, we were careful so that we could represent the following major five categories of employers, Corporate Bangladesh (both local companies and multinationals), Joint-venture companies, NGOs and, of course, Government — the biggest provider of jobs in Bangladesh.

As for the seminar format, it was highly participative in nature. In this particular seminar, for instance, we at the very outset made sure that each participant could see the name tag as well as identity (organization's name, etc) of other attendees. Then we requested the participants to take seat in groups of 10 to 15 in a roundtable arrangement. This was done so that the speakers seating arrangement. This seating too, was based on the following categories: Employers/entrepreneurs, professionals/employees, and students, etc. Having formed the group, we asked the participants to go into a 15-minute "brainstorming session" on what the group expected from either employers or employees. Then one representative from each of the 5 groups read out the summary of the group's findings under the following two headings: [1] Top 10 expectations from the Employers and [2] Top 10 expectations from the employees.

Unlike typical seminars, we wanted the speakers to get a very clear and concise understanding of what the expectations from the floor were. This helped us in setting the stage for the speakers who were given only 10 minutes at the beginning to make their comments both relevant and effective. Finally, we jumped again to the participation through the always-exciting question and answer session. As usual, the event saw its conclusion with tea at the courtesy of The British Council.

Summary of the Participants' Brainstorming Session

All the participants were divided into 11 groups among which 9 were made up of employees/professionals and the other 2 groups were comprised of employers/entrepreneurs. Here is the summary of their findings from a 15-minute group discussion.

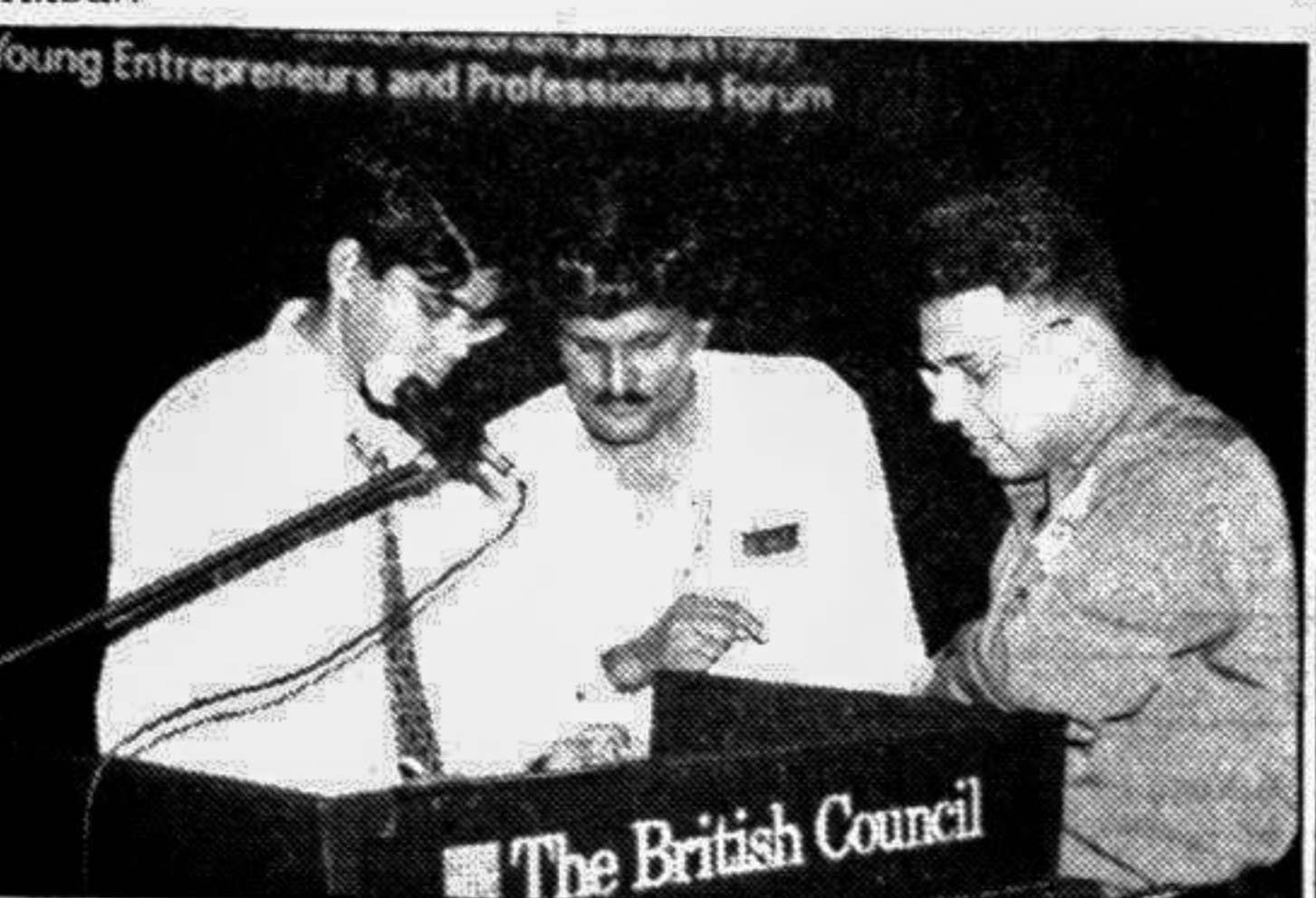
[A] "Employers group" listed the following expectations from the employees/professionals

- [1] Should be computer literate
- [2] Good command over English language
- [3] Persuasive ability
- [4] Can see beyond the immediate issues/has a vision
- [5] Strong commitment to his/her job and responsibilities
- [6] Enthusiasm and team spirit
- [7] Knowledge, skills and attitude of the relevant field
- [8] Confidence and self-motivation
- [9] Devoted to service
- [10] Proactive and change-oriented.

[B] "Employee groups" mentioned the following items as their expectations from the employers/entrepreneurs

- [1] Good working conditions
- [2] Fair selection policies for employees/ Elimination of nepotism
- [3] Job security
- [4] Reasonably good salary
- [5] Should adopt participatory management, not authoritative styles
- [6] No discrimination on the basis of sex, age, origin, religion or ethnic background
- [7] Opportunity for training and development
- [8] Scope for decision making
- [9] Appreciation and recognition of good work by employees
- [10] Open communication between employer and employees

Compiled by: Nasim Al-Rashid, Ratna Amin, Shoma and Mamun Akbar.



The seminar organizers are engrossed in planning the day's event.

contract includes both potential contributions and expectations by the employee. As is obvious, employees agree to give a certain amount of loyalty, creativity, and extra effort, but in return they expect more than just salary or economic rewards from the company. It is part of everybody's common knowledge that they seek job security, fair treatment, excellent relationship with co-workers, and organizational support in fulfilling their development expectations.

Well, if the organization only takes care of the economic contract—which appears to be the case almost everywhere in Bangladesh—and not the psychological contract, employees tend to have lower job satisfaction because not all their expectations are met. Research has shown that in such a situation employees do not bring out their best output in their work. On the other hand, if both their psychological and economic expectations are met, they become satisfied, do not think of working for another company and of course perform well.

Expectations from the Government as an Employer

Mosud Mannan, Deputy Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GOB



For the betterment of the country, I will say that we expect the following from the person who would like to join the civil service:

- [1] You have to be a patriot first. You will have to love and believe in the country. This is the most important criteria.
- [2] Should have a strong sense of ethics and morality. Should be devoid of the colonial mentality and believe in the law and order and the ideals of democracy.
- [3] In terms of skills the person has to have a quality education, at least a bachelor's degree. It is unfortunate that some can't even fill out and form or even copy something from one document to another. Of course in some areas you have to have specialized education, examples include judiciary and diplomacy in which you need to go through specific training.
- [4] It is not just enough to have computer knowledge; one should be conversant with the entire information technology (IT) arena.
- [5] Although many present here may not immediately see the rationale, I was to emphasize on the learning of a third language—beyond Bangla and English. In developed countries, especially in America, this is given a lot of importance.
- [6] Our young men and women are poor in networking skills, being a government official doesn't mean that your work will be limited yourself to the office and home only; your participation in the community development is no less important, if opportunities arise.
- [7] You should be committed to your job and have a sense of belonging to the particular cadre that you are in. And don't forget to update yourself on the current affairs in that particular field.
- [8] As the millennium draws near, you should increasingly believe in the participative management philosophy. That means you are expected to be willing to seek ideas from the juniors and colleagues when you make decisions.

Expectations from the Bangladesh Corporate Sector

Mehbubor Rehman, Group Head, Human Resources, Transcom



Within the broad framework of globalization affecting us all, here are a list of expectations from the fresh graduates or new recruits:

- [1] I am in the business of hunting heads—not just any heads but "quality heads". And when I talk about quality, it is not just education it is also how you present yourself to the employer. Now if you have finished education just a year back, I expect that you would remember the essential points of your subject of education. [2] We in the corporate sector want to see that you are flexible in your approach and do not have a rigid mind—which is often an obstacle to career growth and development. [3] Your adaptability to work in a new environment is a precious skill. [4] Be a good team player. You must be able to work in a team and not say that "I am the leader". Corporate sector need people who can work on project teams. [5] I would also expect initiative. You need to be creative and be able to expand your horizon whether you join in a sales position or work as a production executive. We simply want you to be initiative oriented. [6] People Skills: here I am talking about your interpersonal skills. Obviously not all people are leaders; some are born to lead and others are born to follow. [7] One of the things we look for is whether the individual is change-driven. Can you accept change? As they say, change is the only constant in life and unless you are the kind of person who can embrace change, we will most likely not be interested in you. [8] Mobility: Are you mentally and physically mobile? Whenever I recruit I ask, "Are you ready to go to Sylhet, Bogra or Rajshahi?" The answer is often "No". Everybody wants to stay in Dhaka. If you are difficult to move up the corporate ladder. Many corporate success stories had their humble beginnings in the remote places. [9] On the attitude side, are you proactive? About 90% of the candidates I interview don't ask a single question. When I ask do you have a question? The answer is "No". If this is the case, how do I know that you will take initiative and not be just a reactive kind of a

Umbareen Interior Design Consultant, Bridgehouse Ltd.

I believe that an employer-employee relationship should be built on the following pillars: [a] the employee should have a clear understanding of what the employer wants and she or he should be well aware of her/his position in the organization hierarchy; [b] The relationship should be friendly to the bring the best out of the employee and [c] A conscious effort should be made by the employers to create a reward system that leads to high-performing employees.

Nishat Husain Area Manager, British American Tobacco-Bangladesh Ltd.

Good companies value their people and their thoughts and ideas that contribute to the overall well being of the organization. They believe in employee relationship, built on communication (interactive of

course) and transparency in the way they operate and make decisions.

If I broadly speak about employee expectations, the first thing that comes to my mind is with the growing importance of "speed in action" in the coming millennium, it is only logical that system bureaucracy is avoided within the companies by introducing "open-door" policies and cutting layers wherever necessary. Companies must also believe in the strength of their business and invest in long-term opportunities rather than looking for short-term gains.

We, the professionals, spend most of the times in our life spans in our work places simply because the world ahead of us demands so. It would only make sense that along with meeting training and development needs, the employers would provide us with the atmosphere that offers continuous motivational support (e.g. achievement awards, performance based remuneration, a culture of fun and sharing etc.) that creates the true bondage and makes them "human companies". After all, it is the people who bring profit and growth to a business

Ronald Biswas Operations Manager, Kuerner Process Systems

person? [10] Common Sense: It looks like the common sense is not so common these days. It has become a scarce commodity. Use your common sense to understand what employers want, how to present yourself in an interview, etc. [11] Be confident and don't sway in the face of different opinions. Hold on to your position if you believe it has merit. In interview room, be confident the way you enter, sit and even make your exit. [12] English is the only mother tongue of international trade. And by learning English you are not disrespecting your mother tongue Bangla. Rather you are enhancing it. It is indeed a tragedy that Bangladesh is the only country in the British Commonwealth which has relegated English in the background. I feel lost when I interview candidates. But at the same time don't seek perfection in English. A typical business person in Malaysia, Korea or Thailand doesn't speak a perfect English but they have made their countries to be known as economic tigers. [13] Finally, pay attention to the human factor; don't lose the human touch because human resource management is nothing but management of emotions. For instance, even if you have to terminate an employee, do so with a human touch and only then you will have a greater mileage over others.

Expectations from a Multinational Company's Perspective

Shamsia I. Mustasim, Resourcing and Remunerations Manager, British American Tobacco (BAT) Bangladesh.



I would like to thank YEP organizers for giving me this excellent opportunity to speak here this evening. In simple English, Millennium means a "thousand years", to a philosopher it means a frontier of possibilities, to an optimist it may mean a time full of promises and to business it means a time for change. A change with utmost speed. A change that is inevitable and the only constant.

The new millennium will pose such challenges as globalization which will lead to competition and availability of low-cost products and Services. At that point of time, in order to run our business with competitive advantage we will have to have people who are creative, people who can act fast, who set for themselves stretching targets and achieve them. The millennium will also pose a lot of other expectations from the employer's side: [1] Make an effort to bridge the gap between the employer and the employee by working as partners. [2] Introduce more flexibility at the workplace and the as is obvious employees will have more opportunities to hop around for jobs. So employers will encounter turnover in increasing frequency. [3] And of course the employees will expect more transparency, in operations; they will want empowerment for them to perform better. [4] The employees expectation will go beyond salary and benefits. They will want overseas postings, they will want development, they will want training, both on-the-job and off-the-job. [5] Then the employees would want to see that the employer is leading by example not just by words or policies.

[6] And of course you have to know the computer; computer literacy is a must. [7] Your involvement in extra-curricular activities is also important as they enhance one's social skills and contributes meaningfully to your professional capabilities. [8] The last thing I want to say is that you may have all the academic qualifications in the world, but they are not necessarily valuable career currency without the right personal qualities. So, please develop yourself not only as a good graduate but also a s a good human being having respect for people and having the right attitude for work.

Expectations from Employees: the NGO Perspective

Khushi Kabir, Chairperson, Nejera Kori



Speakers who spoke before me emphasized on learning the English Language but I think that side by side we need to learn and use Bangla too. This is especially true for non governmental organizations because bulk of our work involve working at the field and grassroots level. Please don't misunderstand me, I am not saying that English is unnecessary; my point is that many in the young generation growing in cities have difficulty speaking, writing or using Bangla and this is very unfortunate, especially when we so quickly learn Hindi (due to watching Zee TV and other satellite channels) and are lagging behind in having a good grasp of our own mother tongue.

NGO workers are of two types. One involves the rural areas where Bangla (and often other variation of Bangla/dialect is in use) is the only medium of communication. The other work is city-based that concerns NGOs and government, etc. Here both Bangla and English are used. We also expect that one should have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree if you want to work at an NGO. In the NGO community, we value analytical ability— the ability to analyze social, economic and other development issues and then to make decisions.

I see lack of professionalism every now and then. The young must be aware of the fact that whatever you do, you have to give your full commitment to work. I still remember what a Filipino nun I had met told me. When it comes to NGO work, she said "We need a passion. A passion to change society." You should not look

at it as a typical job—it is much beyond that. I also believe that both the employers and employees should have commitment. Unless the employer shows commitment, how can you expect that employees will be committed?

To conclude, let me say that I am in full agreement with other speakers when they pointed out that the following qualities make a good employee and a good citizen: team spirit, initiative, patriotism and respect for democracy and the like.

Expectations from the Joint-Venture Window

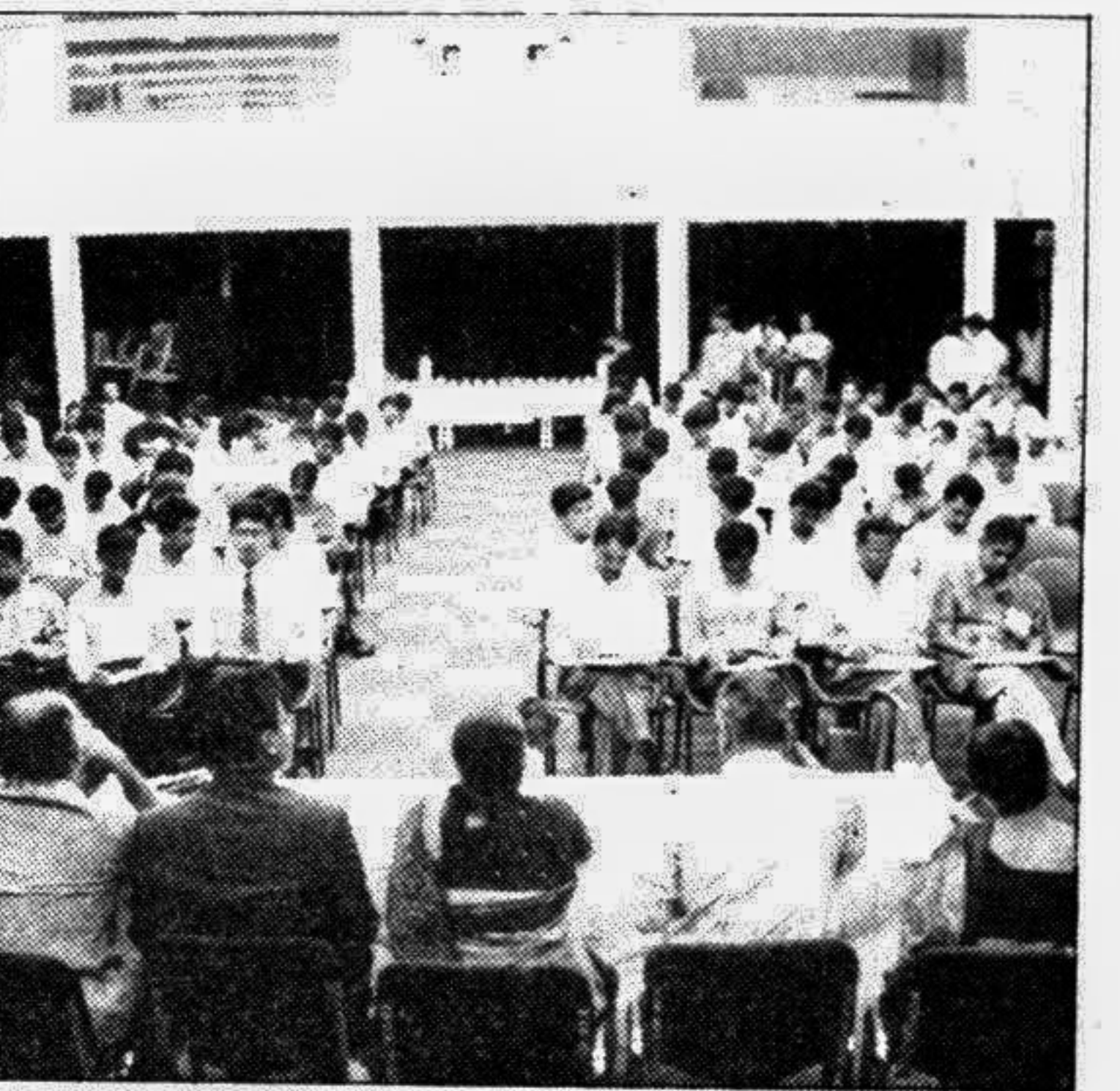
Khan Sadat Anwar, Manager, Human Resources and Training, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel



In my opinion, competition will be the most important issue in the next millennium. Major changes will take place in the business environment. From the employers' perspective three major expectations are in order: Knowledge, skills and attitude.

[1] Now as well as in the new millennium, we will need employees who have multi-disciplinary exposure and experience. These are the people who will take leadership roles. [2] We are looking for individuals who feel comfortable with total business

management approach, who do not limit themselves within the confines of narrow specialization. For instance, an HR person can say that he or she has nothing to do with marketing or vice versa. Each and every person should be a blend of various disciplines and be able to see issues in a holistic manner. In an organization like this, main support will come from the IT department and IT background will assume unprecedented importance. [3] Well, if you think carefully you will find that unlike knowledge or skills, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to help develop positive attitudes required for the workplace of the future. [4] We will also be looking for personnel who can change easily and are flexible, proactive and can analyze issues with a good sense of time management. [5] There is a great need for open-minded staff who can handle criticism and can rectify themselves without taking too much time. [6] Multi-skilled staff will be in high demand in the future. Giving an example from the hospitality industry, let's say an employee is working for 8 hours a day; under the multi-skilled scenario, this individual will spend 4 hours in housekeeping department and the rest of the time may be utilized in the banquet department supporting food and beverage.



Mahfuz Anam, Editor of The Daily Star, and Advisor, YEP Forum, was also present on the occasion and delivered an inspiring speech. Referring to the English-Bangla controversy, he emphatically mentioned that the issue is not Bangla versus English, it is with whether we on the side of knowledge or ignorance.

While speaking on the expectations out of the young generation, Mahfuz Anam highlighted the following:

Show Humility: One must be modest to earn respect and love from others. Most people around us are too quick to boast their petty achievements: "I have done this, I have done that" they go on whether you are interested or not. And if you ask yourself deep down whom do you appreciate and like most, you will invariably find out that it is the humbleness in an individual that attracts you most.

Maintain Dignity: You should also maintain dignity in the way you present yourself to others and in times of crisis. It is the sense of self-respect that defines you as a worthy citizen of a nation. Unfortunately, we are labeled "bookish" if we expect nobility of manners and dignified behaviors from our fellow men and women.

Manage Time: We in this country waste too much time. Of course, there is a time for fun, time for family, and so forth, but it seems that our time for "addabaji" has gone out of proportions and unless checked, this alone can ruin unrealized potential of a sizeable portion of our youth. One should make the best use of time by committing to the professional endeavors. You should not forget that time is the only resource that all of us have in equal amounts, whether you are rich or poor, young or old.

Love Your Country: Finally, nothing would mean much unless you love your country. But I will argue that you should love your country for your own "selfish" reasons. It needs no telling that this is the country where you can make a contribution. Frankly speaking, I don't know where in the world I would have been able to become an editor of an English newspaper. But here I am trying to do something to the best of my ability. Many look forward to going out of Bangladesh but soon they realize that this is the country where you can live with dignity and self-respect.

Excerpts prepared by: Quazi Mahmud Ahmed

Young Entrepreneurs and Professionals Speak Out!

Umbareen Interior Design Consultant, Bridgehouse Ltd.

I believe that an employer-employee relationship should be built on the following pillars: [a] the employee should have a clear understanding of what the employer wants and she or he should be well aware of her/his position in the organization hierarchy; [b] The relationship should be friendly to the bring the best out of the employee and [c] A conscious effort should be made by the employers to create a reward system that leads to high-performing employees.

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Ronald Biswas Operations Manager, Kuerner Process Systems

The new millennium comes in with a lot of hopes and aspirations. We look forward to achieving things which we had never done before. During the present time of corruption and deceit we all dream of a better tomorrow which we would be proud of. The new millennium gives us an opportunity to make these dreams come true in the nearest future.

Human rights and standard of living would be the revolutionary mechanisms of the new millennium. One of the noticeable factors in the business community of Bangladesh would be the relationship between the employees and the employer. Previously the employees were in a wrong conception of being in the mercy of the employer but the trend is changing persistently. Education has played a major role in providing the employees self-respect and a boost in their self-esteem. The new millennium would witness employees who would be as much involved in conducting business as their employer. Total quality management would be the top priority of all the employers and they would try to achieve it to guide their firms into the stormy sea of the new millennium.

However, some of us who already belong to our own companies must not forget that the expectations are largely mutual and meeting up these expectations would be a major challenge in the new millennium!

Adeeb H Khan Partner, Rahmat Rahman Huq Chartered Accountants

It is often thought that as Bangladesh has a tiny economy in international standards and as we are "apparently" so far removed from mainstream world affairs, change here will be slow and in small doses. I feel that in this age of global trade, finance and communication, the wind of change will invariably touch us and rapidly at that. Change has come and will continue to come in the way we live and the way we work.

Employee and employer expectation will see much of this change. I feel that there will be greater convergence between the two expectations because of technological progress. As human input continues to be reduced in routine and mechanical work, employees will expect

greater involvement in the decision making process and in areas where judgement and innovation is called for. Similarly, employers will have reduced need for unskilled and semi-skilled people who restrict themselves to working under clearly defined instructions and supervision. The few people that they will employ will be expected to be more managerial and imaginative with a long term view, so that they act as partners in development and progress.

(c) The employer should let the employee know his position in the company organogram and his future growth plan. This is essential to inculcate a sense of worth in the employee.

Ihtesham B Shehjan Director Marketing, Quality Feeds Ltd

The employer employee relations should be nurtured in such a way that employee can contribute his maximum potentials.

- In the work place employer-employee relationship should be nurtured on the basis of efficiency, transparency and devotion.
- Factors which are outside of a professional relationship such as personal relationships should at all cost be kept out of the

Shoma Zahid Station Officer, Emirates

1. Expectation from my employers

In the 21st century application of IT will be such that information will be free flowing from top to bottom in my office and this should be done by using digital nervous system the way human nervous system works. The employer should make necessary infrastructure available for us. We should be updated with the new products. We should get training to use the modern technology.

2. Employer's expectation
The employer having made the investment, should put a target. And too much personal judgement should be avoided, the measurement of excellence should only be judged by the records of the employee's work. A motivated team can only achieve the target.