Grooming Goes Corporate with BAT Bangladesh

Star Campus desk

WHEN you think of leaders, grooming is probably the farthest thing from your mind. But every successful leader, at one point of time, must have been groomed under the tutelage of an individual or an organisation. This sounds like an obsolete idea in the cut-throat corporate world, where it is rare to be taken under someone's wing. But it exits in reality. British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) is the company that certainly can.

BATB takes the view that every potential leader should be groomed into the best. The opportunity for this kind of head start does not come about often. But all fourteen participating teams of the Battle of Minds (BoM) 2008 can claim this experience, thanks to BATB's fascinating grooming session.

Grooming the future leaders was the motive behind the idea for a daylong session conducted at the BRAC Centre at Rajendrapur, Gazipur. Though still actively a part of the broader BoM competition, the grooming session was not necessarily competitive. Rather more relaxed with contestants looking at ease. It was probably an attitude born out of the fact that all of the 'chosen ones' had made it through the initial screening process and become representatives of their universities.

Against the beautiful backdrop of Rajendrapur, the day's activities started. This would act as an integration exercise as the 50 participants from universities were divided from their respective teams.

Every leader has to have the ability to co-exist with others. In short, the practice of diplomacy and learning to get along with each other is an integral part of the psyche of every leader.

Based on that, the innovative exercise meant that each team was given clues which led them to a credit point location to find a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. The pieces, cleverly hidden in the compound, would have to be found and retrieved to put the puzzle together. However not wanting to make it as easy as that, at the end putting their puzzles together they all realised their puzzles were still incomplete. The teams were then guided to work together as they came together they quickly came to realisation that each of their respective puzzles was part of a greater puzzle. The final puzzle would require all the participants to work together. They would all emerge victorious as they stood around the completed puzzle, which made out the logo for battle of minds. During the process not only did all the teams get actively into the spirit of things but one could see them gelling as a cohesive unit which was the objective of the exercise. The ice-breaking was complete.

The participants were next introduced to BATB HR team in-charge of battle of minds through caricatures. Each caricature was more interesting than the next. The Head of HR , Syed Imtiaz Faruque, then shared a story of his life transitioning from student to corporate and then how he has come to his current position. Rumana Rahman, Corporate HR Manager, then shared important techniques to build skills and aid the participants in their future careers.

However, no learning is complete without practice, so all the knowledge they gained were then put to the test. The participants rejoined their respective university teams and met their "Groomers". Every team was assigned a different "Groomer". The Groomers were either Management Trainees, Territory Officers or Mid Level Managers. They were then given subjects such as Magic Pens and a Truth Mobile (all interesting innovative and creative ideas in themselves) to prepare presentations. Their Groomers gave them one to one feedback about their presentations and skills during their closed door session.

The universities represented ranged from BUET to Dhaka University to North South University to Khulna University. As they interacted during breaks and through lunch one could see the division amongst the universities disappear and all them working as one. This was one of the key rationales behind bringing the participants to such a location.

Contestants got down to business very soon. With lunch proving the go-between fun and competition, the next round of the competition was held, the Quarter Finals. In the traditional battle of minds format of case solving, each team was assigned forty-five minutes to deal with each of the fourteen cases. They were given FMCG category products to make an advertisement. The advertisement would then be presented what is meant to be a mall in front of customers

At the end, the grooming session was a hugely satisfying experience for the participants and BATB as a whole. The participants were given a small souvenir of their experiences. The souvenir no doubt is a memento from such an enriching experience. British American Tobacco Bangladesh has not only made an earnest effort to groom the leaders of tomorrow but also made sure to do so in a platform that encourages competitiveness while still retaining the old values of friendship.