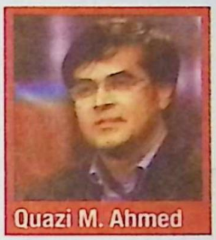
Career Planning 101 for Students

How students can search for career services and information


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I am sure many of you are wondering, if not worried, about what you are going to do after you complete your higher education. Well don't worry-- you don't need to know how to find your dream career just yet! However, what you do need is some good career planning advice and information and the opportunity to explore career choices when there is still some time left to do so. As a student at a public or private university, take the time to search for information about possible career choices, and take advantage of the career resources that are available to you as a student.

Now the obvious question is where can you find reliable career information and advice? Based on my training and experience, here are some tips to help you explore career options and find important career information and advice. Why not try some of these ideas to get you started!

Make internet your best friend. Institutions offering higher education in Bangladesh are still far away from offering quality career counseling services. You may have come across fancy names such as Career Office, Career Counseling Center and the like at various universities, but admittedly they have a long way to go. My recommendation on this? Go to the internet and especially visit these sites for a detailed self-assessment—the first step in your dream career:

www.cdm.uwaterloo.ca, www.assessment.com, www.personalitytype.com. Sadly, there aren't many teachers, parents or career coaches out there to help you; so, make the best use of the online reliable personality tests.

Look for information interviews. This is one of the best kept secrets of career exploration. Suppose you are interested in working for a reputed bank. Find someone in the banking industry or better still find someone who already works in the bank of your choice. With a little bit of social skills, set up an information interview. This is a short interview (10-20 minutes) where you ask questions about what this career is like and how to enter into this career in terms of grades, majors and such. It's crucial for you to be polite and follow up with a thank you note. Information interviews also are a great networking opportunity, and sometimes they can lead to internships or employment.

Conduct research, research, research. Having completed your personality test, you might get some ideas about where you are more likely to succeed. For instance, if you are an extrovert person, you may do better in a sales and marketing career as opposed to a high-flying career in accounting or finance. Now surf the web in search of information about industries and companies that interest you. You'll want to research types of jobs, the availability of jobs, job requirements, and even salary ranges. Visiting job sites such as www.prothom-alojobs.com or www.bdjobs.com may give you powerful insights about career trends. Individual company sites, of course, can give you excellent source of current information about that company.

Try job shadowing. You can say that this is an information interview at the next level where you "shadow" someone throughout their workday to see what their career experience is like. Those who wanted a career in consulting or training spent time with me, volunteered at an outbound training held at BRAC CDM at Rajendrapur or at Jamuna Resort. Many professionals will be flattered to allow you to spend the day as long as you also become useful and assist him or her with errands of the day's work!

Attend job fairs. In Bangladesh context, you know by now that no one goes to a job fair to get a job! However, there are many other reasons why you should still pay a visit. For one thing, you have the best opportunity to ask questions about the organizations, what qualifications are required for entry-level positions, career tracks and the like. You also get to see how they talk, what they wear and whether your values fit in.

Seek a quality internships experience. One of the best ways to develop job skills is to get an internship at an organization in a industry of your choice, say telecom, pharmaceuticals or textiles. Internships can help you figure out if a career choice is right for you. If internship sounds tough in an industry, try to write a term paper on a company's challenge (or industry's for that matter) well before your internship time comes. Having done a good job, you will be making connections and they would know your value because you probably did an excellent job of analyzing an issue through your research paper as part of a course. Some of your teachers can also link you to excellent organizations. Most importantly, do your best work during internship and this may lead to job offers.

Good luck, then! Please keep in mind that you really don't need to have all the answers about your career right now. And while it's important to investigate possible careers while you are a student, don't focus too much on this. Enjoy your life as a student and focus on getting an excellent education that builds you for the future.

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