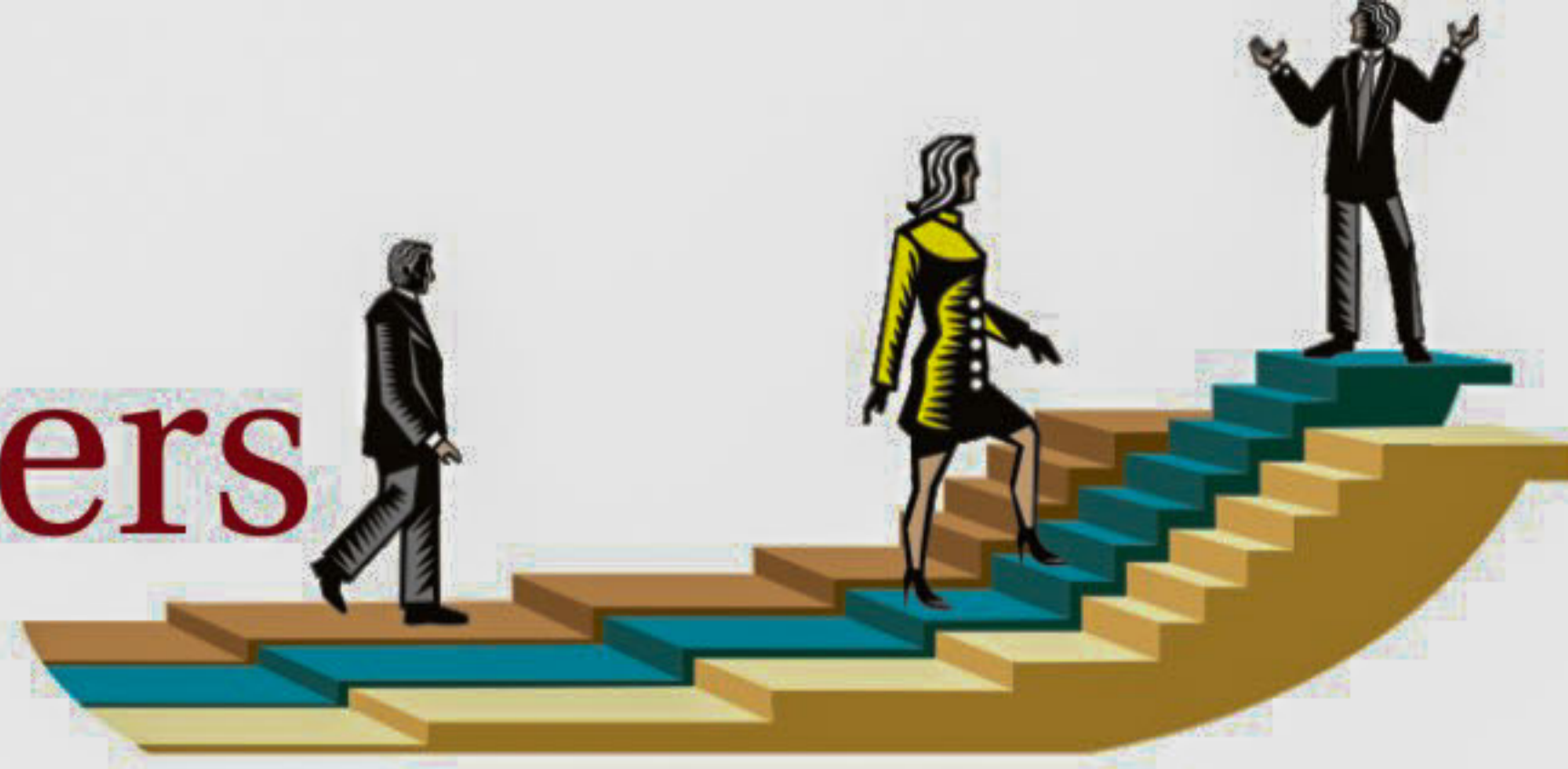


Careers



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Challenges to landing a job

SUMAN SAHA

EVERY year a good number of graduates come out from different disciplines, descending to a world of competition, as too many candidates chase too few jobs.

The required criteria for high grades and experience, the lengthy recruitment process, internal influence and an unfair recruitment policy can give them a hard time, say fresh graduates.

"Nowadays, the job field is very limited. So, it is difficult to get a job. For the fresh graduates, it is even harder to find a job because most renowned companies look for experience," says Debashish Bhowmik, an engineering graduate of Bangladesh University of Science and Technology (Buet).

"If I am applying for the trainee position, then why do I need to have prior experience?" asks Fatema Moriam Nisha, who recently completed her BBA from American International University of Bangladesh.

The graduates argue that they often fail to get their expected jobs because of unfair recruitment policies in the corporate sector.

Md Zahidul Hasan, who holds an MBA from Dhaka University (DU), said, "Getting an interview call is the most challenging factor. I applied for 139 jobs online in the last one year, but only 23 companies read it."

"I graduated in marketing and I got first class throughout my educational life. If I don't get an opportunity, how can I prove myself?" he asks.

Hasan urges corporate policy makers to open their doors to all university students so that they can at least get a chance to face an interview.

Farah Haider Chowdhury, a business graduate of North South University (NSU), says, "The main challenge is to be informed about a job vacancy. Fresh graduates are often unaware of job openings in different organisations due to internal recruitment systems."

Sadia Afroz Lisa, who is an engineering graduate from Buet, says, "Nowadays it is difficult for a graduate who holds good grades to get a good job. Eligible candidates are not getting the appropriate opportunity."

Lisa, who studied electronic and electrical engineering, says, "The corporate sector should be fair in recruitment and give value to eligible candidates through proper evaluation."

Md Abdul Hamid, a business graduate of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, says, "I am not aware of the skills required for a job in a renowned organisation due to a lack of proper job counseling."

A lack of information on vacancies is a problem. Even though some web based job hunting

sites have been launched, this sector should be improved, he adds.

The graduates urge the corporate sector people to emphasise linkage and talent-hunt programmes with the universities for the development of future leaders.

The corporate sector should attach more importance to university-industry collaboration programmes, as it will help them realise market demand and skill requirements, says Shaila Sharmin, a business graduate of Institute of Business Administration, DU.

They should also arrange roadshows at different educational institutions so that students can get clear ideas about the requirements of employers and the recruitment procedures in various organisation, says Hamid of Shahjalal University.

He says employers should arrange job fairs to collect CVs from the upcoming graduates. This will help them reduce the cost of recruitment and enable them to select the best candidates.

"At present, some job fairs are taking place, but I don't think they are effective enough. The corporate sector should contact the universities and take some fresh graduates from each university," says Bhowmik.

The job aspirant urges local conglomerates and foreign corporations to arrange more nationwide competitions to find the best talents.

"Events like Promologic, Battle of Minds, Young Entrepreneur Awards, boost a candidate's smartness, confidence and knowledge," says Farah Haider Chowdhury, an NSU business graduate.

Graduates also urge educational institutions to

launch career counseling departments, so that every student can get direction and support.

They also stress the need for relating what they read in their texts with the real corporate world because it would help them prepare for the battles for a job.

"To cope with the job market, educational institutions should train their students properly through industrial attachment and career grooming," says Abdullah Al-Mamun, a mechanical engineer from Buet.

For this purpose, they should link their students with different companies to gain work experience, he adds.

Graduates urge corporate policy makers to not look for over-qualified people for a particular post unless required.

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The interviewer's aptitude

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AN interview is one of the most important hiring tools for an employer to judge a prospective candidate.

Business enterprises do not want to compromise on it because they know that one wrong decision will ultimately slow the organisation's performance and productivity.

However, a career expert says outdated interview techniques, 'paid-servant' questioning and unnecessary interference could keep the talents at bay and this is especially true for Bangladesh in most cases.

"To me, an interview is the first Valentine's Day for two 'lovers'. Here the candidate and the interviewer both have to like each other so that their future will bring good to the organisation," says Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed, human resources director of Best Air.

Unfortunately, over 70 percent of time, interviewers in Bangladesh fail to successfully interview a candidate and as a result, the organisation fails to identify the right person at the time of need, he adds.

The problem is that interviewers are simply unaware of the contemporary techniques of taking interviews. Often, this incompetence is fuelled by the ego of the interviewer. "They think to themselves, 'I have the power here, you don't. You are at my mercy!'"



Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed

In Bangladesh this saga continues because the demand and supply situation is in favour of the employers in most cases, he adds.

Ahmed, who has over 20 years of experience in human resources, says, "The interviewers' fallacy injures the selection process. So, they either hire the least competent person or hand over the most competent person to a rival by not hiring him."

He says many countries, such as India, have adopted the latest modalities in interviewing, to select the right person by radically changing the 'master versus servant' pattern that was in practice 20 years ago.

They have changed their mentality as the company gurus in India genuinely want professionals to be on board with the right attitude and know-how, and who have the ability

to become the chief executive in future, says Ahmed.

Ahmed, the former general secretary of Bangladesh Society for Human Resources Management, says, "A shortage of technical competency may be overcome by proper training, but a little vacuum in the right attitude can never be filled by training. It can bring disaster to the company if not detected during the interview."

On the contrary, many company managing directors want to be present at interviews that can be taken by an assistant manager, he says.

"In a proper interview, no one should ask about the candidate's home district, marital status or father's occupation. But 90 percent of the time, our local gurus love to ask these questions within the first 10 minutes of the interview, with no relevance to the job," says Ahmed.

Ahmed, who has served in renowned organisations such as Pepsi-Cola, Unilever, Sanofi-Aventis, Pan Pacific Hotel and Apollo Hospitals Dhaka, suggests local interviewers adopt scientifically proven process to hire the best people.

"The opening of an interview should put the candidate at ease so that he/she feels a welcoming breeze. The room, greetings, body language, all should reflect a positive feeling to the candidate."

By standing when the candidate enters the room, leaning forward to

offer a handshake, and smiling are great ways to break the ice and establish an instant positive rapport, he adds.

Ahmed, who graduated from University of Kentucky US in 1990 on human resources management, says, "We should not treat the candidate as a paid 'servant'. They can be a client for the organisation or a friend or relative of a vital supplier or customer."

He says interviewers should adopt a structured behavioural interviewing process, as it is scientifically proven to select the right candidate.

There are hundreds of questions with which the interview board can assess a candidate's skills, such as technical, functional, self management and interpersonal, he adds.

"A few examples of how such questions could start are -- give me an example of a time in which..., describe the most significant..., describe a situation where..., narrate a situation in university when you..., tell me more about..., help me to understand why..."

"I hope to see the days when a university graduate or a senior level job seeker will say after facing an interview that it does not matter whether he/she gets selected, but was pleased with the way the interview was conducted."

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