

UPCOMING **EVENTS**

Topic: **Startup Boot Camp**
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Venue: Westin Hotel, Gulshan
For more information
<http://bootcamp.startupdhaka.org>

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CAREER

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

SKILL IMPROVEMENT

NEXT STEP

Grameenphone Demo Day: Tapping into our techie potential

Startup Dhaka along with Grameenphone organized the Grameenphone Demo Day inside the vast auditorium of GP House, on May 12. The event showcased twelve tech savvy startup companies in front of successful entrepreneurs, companies and top management executives from Grameenphone.

The program kicked off with welcome note from Zakia Zerin, Grameenphone's Head of Social Media, and Mustafizur Khan, the founder of Startup Dhaka. It was followed by a lightning round with 2 minute-long presentations from the twelve diverse startups:

Tapstar

An online gaming app firm, which makes various games for Android. You can find their games on Google Play.

Lightcastle Partners

An analytics, planning and intelligence firms. It focuses on businesses in emerging markets.

Loosemonkies

An online Human Resources/Jobs firm. It serves as a personalized profile

driven job portal.

Monasa Learning Centre

Monasa is an after school learning center for children where learning is innovative and fun.

Team Engine OCR

A firm building a Bangla OCR (Optical Character Recognition software), which makes Bengali documents searchable online.

Singularity's Lifeline

This can help people seek blood donors via mobile apps.

Bongo

Bongo provides access to Bengali movies and TV shows, via a Netflix-like service as 3G spreads across the country.

City Scope

A real time Dhaka city traffic data system, which uses Google maps, and around the clock statistics.

Dhaka Beats

This startup is devoted to keeping tabs on events happening across Dhaka city. They cover all sorts of events and provide information, venues and

dates to customers.

All the presentations had a brief Q and A session, which all startup representatives handled confidently. After the showcase and brief coffee break, the event was back on with a discussion panel. Alongside Fayaz Taher and Mustafizur Khan (event moderators and



founders of Startup Dhaka), were panelists Sana and Sayma Rahman of Grameenphone, Sajid Rahman (an angel investor with a background in banking) and Shabab E. Khan from Bangladesh Enterprise Institute.



The speakers spoke at length about entrepreneurship in Bangladesh, its exciting prospects, obstacles, and the business environment. Ms. Sayma and Mr. Sana brought forth the prevailing issue of poor internet connectivity across the country and how alleviating this could open up doors for people from all walks of life, while Shabab E. Khan discussed the difficulties budding entrepreneurs face due to legislature and policies, and urged them to seek expert guidance. Fayaz Taher's word of

advice was that everyone in the room should build strong networks and communities throughout the country. Director Strategy & Project Management Office at Grameenphone, Erlend Prestgard, announced that they are looking to work with companies that create content or technological services in the areas of Agriculture, Health & Education.

Samad Miraly (co-founder of Startup) ended the event with a concluding note about Grameenphone, encouraging them to increase their participation as "enablers" rather than just a corporate powerhouse, and to aid startup

businesses. The event was brief, punctual and very engaging. It made its point loud and clear – that coders and entrepreneurs could solve local problems using technology to propel Bangladesh forward to a middle income country. GP Demo Day left no page unturned in proving that Bangladesh has an extremely versatile pool of talent among its youth, and that there is plenty more to tap into.

To find out more about Startup Dhaka and its startup activities, please visit www.startupdhaka.org.

SHOUMIK MUHAMMED
MUSHFIQUE

Tailoring a career in retail

Sabbir Hasan Nasir is considered as a guru in the field of brand, retail, sales, strategy and marketing. This BUET educated engineer with an MBA from IBA, DU worked in various multinational and local companies including Bata, TetraPak, Golfrate, Otobi etc. At present he is serving as the Executive Director of ACI Logistics (Shwapno). According to him, the retail industry is poised to show enormous growth in the coming years. And it's going to open countless career opportunities. He shares these insights with Shahriar Rahman from NEXT STEP.



Next Step: Starting with your sector, since you are leading the Brand and retail sales of Shawpno, what are the scopes in this field, career-wise?

Mr. Nasir: In Bangladesh, I see enormous career opportunities in retail. People from sales, supply chain, marketing, etc. have huge scopes. They can learn about the market challenges, and how to overcome them. They also have the opportunity to get trained about the global best practices in an industry that is set to grow immensely in Bangladesh. Nowadays the local corporate are very ambitious and determined. Hence they want to benchmark their brands on a global scale. We at Shwapno are following these standards and policies. Career-wise, these are really helpful for the people who are working or will be working in this industry.

Next Step: Running chain-superstores means extensive dependency on supply chain management. So being a veteran in this field, how would you describe the growth opportunity of one's career?

Mr. Nasir: Yes, I do admit Logistics and Supply Chain Management is almost synonymous, however I have to add that in the super-store industry, it's a vital part but not the only part. The robustness and optimization of the supply chain in this sector are core competencies. The people who join supply chain management are generally engineers specializing in industrial processes. Over time, they specialize. In Bangladesh there are quite a few institutes where one can enroll in to get specialized diplomas. These courses are really helpful in the workplace. In retail supermarket industry: network optimization; route planning/optimization; collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment, are the areas in which people generally specializes on.

Next Step: Besides supply chain management and retail marketing, what other professionals have scope to grow their career in this field?

Mr. Nasir: As I said, besides supply chain this industry has other parts as well. Business understanding and strategy development, retail brand development, financial planning, and human resources development are some of the exigent most areas. These areas are considered as the fundamentals of retail business. Moreover creative sectors such as fashion designing, product development, visualizing, activation, ATL, and BTL, play a significant role. So professionals from these sectors can join the retail supermarket industry. Aside from

these, countless other job opportunities are being developed that are indirectly related with our industry.

Next Step: How challenging is this field considering Bangladesh has a highly price-sensitive consumer base?

Mr. Nasir: There are actually three basic challenges that we are facing in the market. They are: price-sensitive consumers and their mindset, inadequate real-estate facility, and skilled human resource. Firstly, the consumers in South-Asia region are very price sensitive, but in comparison, their bargaining power is really low compared to the supplier's. Thus profitability becomes a big issue here. Moreover consumers are more comfortable with unorganized trade. As a result they don't prefer shopping from unregulated markets, which in some cases have no overhead cost. Competing with that segment is one of the greatest challenges in our industry, I presume. Secondly real estate facility in Bangladesh is a big issue. To accommodate all the goods in proper manner we need extensive real estate. But those are almost impossible to find in populated localities. As a result we need to design each of the shops separately to accommodate our products. At Shwapno, we try to bring the look and feel of the local markets so that the customers can feel comfortable shopping here. Lastly, this industry lacks human resources with skills and real-world experience in the retail superstore industry. We, at ACI, have to train our employees time to time with the required skillsets. In a nutshell, we need more talented and diligent young people to work with us to overcome the challenges.

Next Step: How big is the market for retail superstores in Bangladesh?

Mr. Nasir: The market worth of our industry is currently around Tk. 1000-1250 Crore. The Supermarket Owners Association of Bangladesh conducted a survey recently in which it was estimated that the current size of the market is somewhere around Tk. 1400-1500 Crore. In our national economy the contribution of retail superstore is somewhere around 1.25 - 1.5%.

Next Step: Do you think there is intense competition in market now with so many players out there?

Mr. Nasir: ACI Logistics's "Shwapno" is currently the market leader in retail superstore industry. We currently have more than 45 shops. There is the Hyper-Store in Uttara that has gained much media and public attention. We've also diversified our product lines. So in terms of competition, we are ahead of

our competitors. But, yes the market is intensely competitive. Our competitors are also bringing many interesting campaigns. Besides that we are also competing with local markets. So, yes - we are encountering stiff competition in the market.

Next Step: As you mentioned this is a booming sector and will be requiring huge human resource shortly. What portion is skilled and readily available, and how much more is required to be trained?

Mr. Nasir: We need a huge human resource in this industry. In the coming days the requirement would be even higher. We see that some semi-skilled workforce is readily available in the market. Fully qualified people to understand and run operations of this nature are however really few. We at ACI are investing a lot in developing these human resources to cater to our internal needs. But we expect as the market grows and matures overtime we will be having more skilled work-force readily available.

Next Step: What would be your advice for the fresh grads or anyone who want to build a career in this field?

Mr. Nasir: It might seem like I am exaggerating, but for anyone who wants to build a career in marketing, sales, supply chain, planning or trade, marketing - retail is the best way to start. This industry has a broad learning curve. So if you work here with an open and aggressive mindset, you are guaranteed to excel in any track. Also we require various soft skills in our day to day activity. So I think everyone should at least have some basic soft skills, i.e. IT, graphics design, programming, etc. Try to develop these skills; it will invigorate your resume!

Next Step: What would you advice the up-and-coming entrepreneurs in this industry?

Mr. Nasir: I should ask them to start small. Then develop expertise. Understand the dynamics of the market. Be bold in taking calculated risk. And incorporate all the local best practices.

Next Step: Thank you so much for making the time for your interview.

INTERVIEW BY SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Bangladeshi businesses promised double survival chance

Bangladesh StartUp Cup Boot Camp 2014 held

Bangladesh Startup Cup kicked-off at MIDAS, EMK Center, Dhanmondi 27 from 15-17 of May, 2014. The event consisted of 100 founders, 20 resident mentors, 15 judges, 25 organizers along with several well wishers. The event was organized to build an ecosystem of startups, mentors and coaches of Bangladesh.

The 3-day long Boot Camp started with 32 teams selected on May 15. The teams



were mentored, groomed and brushed up intensively to define their business models with a team of highly talented resident mentors: Zannatul Lamea, Country Representative, Voices of Tomorrow; M Murshed Haider, Co-founders of OptiMA HR Solutions; M Asif Rahman, Founder CEO at A. R. Communications. The StartUp Cup is a global network of 68 accelerators "without walls" in 57 countries, born in Silicon Valley and held in Tulsa, Oklahoma over the past six years. The competition has been fine-tuned based upon feedback from participating entrepreneurs, judges, coaches, entrepreneurial services providers, and community leaders from around the world. This is first time it has come to Bangladesh.

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