

Caution: Women at work

We've all heard about the glass ceiling and the failed sexual harassment court cases. But what truly stands in the way between your miserable entry-level paycheck and that one gratifying step up the ladder? We asked around and turns out, real women hardly see the challenges in black and white.

Today more than ever, there is an impressive number of female higher-ups in the usually male-dominated corporate industry. While certainly refreshing, this change is accompanied by the pressure for a new shift in cultural perceptions. Women's dreams are no longer limited to securing independence or landing a job. As Lubna Sharmin, an educator for the past seven years, puts it, "The young women in our country not only dream about working in a reputed country. They dream about having companies of their own." The reactions of families, peers and the community as a whole continue to pose problems. Women constantly question themselves – How do I balance my work life and personal life? How do I meet expectations the expectations of my family?

In Bangladesh, women's participation and professional careers are limited by social obstacles such as raising children, taking care of elderly parents, working odd hours, and providing the kind of commitment required in a competitive world. Needless to say, females face more disapproval from home when it comes to matter of working overtime, taking a trip out of town, etc. "Extreme work pressure for which it is difficult to maintain a work life balance is the main challenge I've had to face. I've had to put in late hours and come in even during weekends. However, the environment in this industry is

extremely friendly and safe which helps," says Oditi Shirleen Mostafa, a Senior Executive in Brand Communication at an advertising agency.

While it is true that in many offices, women are scrutinized

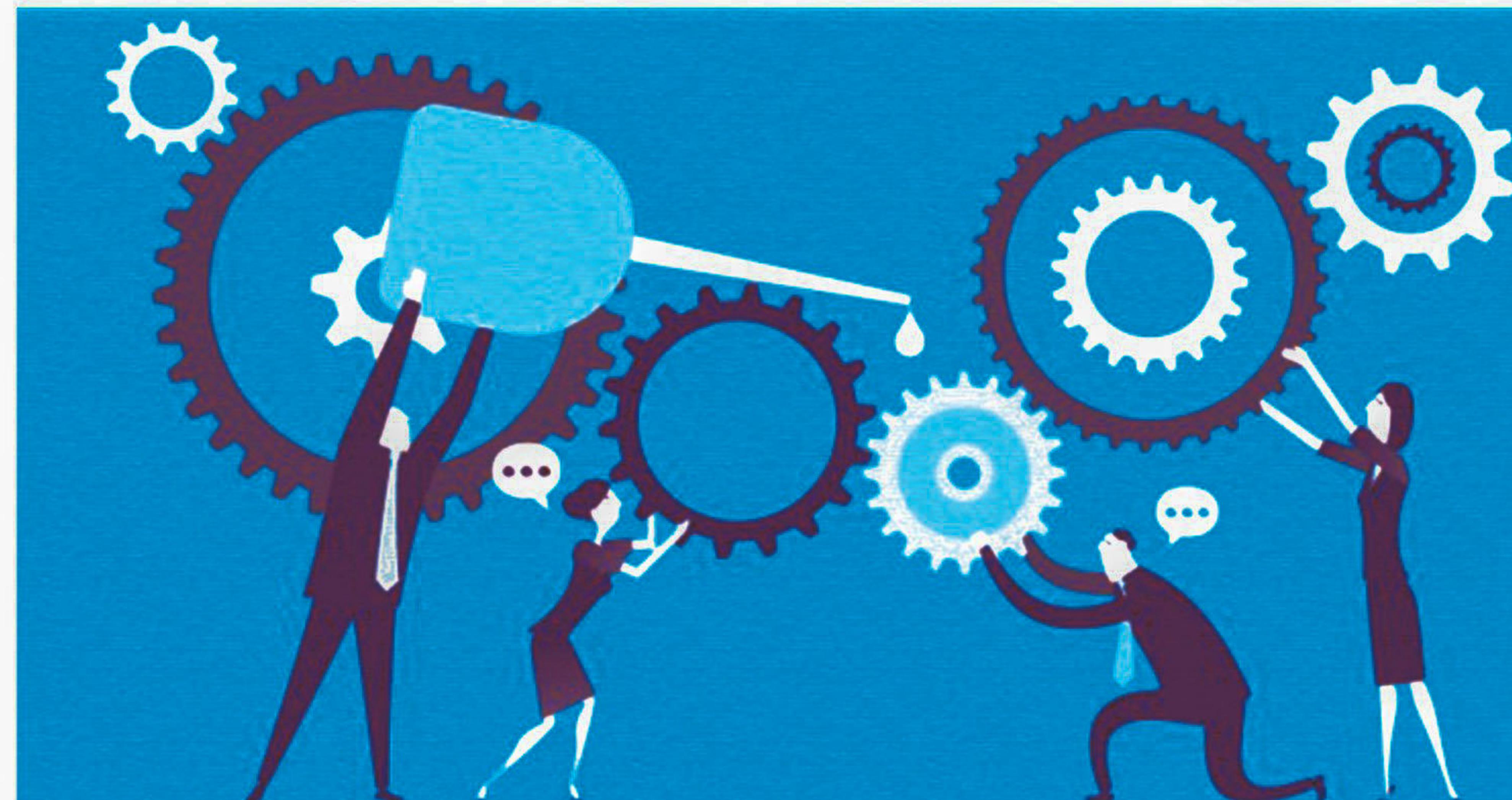
have to appreciate themselves as a confident personal. In Bangladesh, women are gradually becoming equally successful as men in many fields. I think with proper institution women would learn to appreciate themselves and make

work that she'd designed from scratch.

In an article in Business Standard, Vinita Bali, the managing director of Britannia Industries, expressed her views of working in a male-dominated industry. "We talk

their own terms. But according to writer Olinda Hassan, "Modern women in the region do not need to act like the stereotypical male banker to advance their careers." Networking and working hard, however, are inevitable.

Studies by the World Economic Forum, for example, stresses that women in higher positions broaden the company's perspective on social welfare issues. Both the genders must take a conscious decision to choose diversity over



much harsher than their male counterparts, Tanzila Tajreen feels quite the opposite. "I think women are responsible for their disparity. Now this may sound very conservative, but I feel that women

better progress," says Tanzila, a Program Coordinator for the Market Development Forum. Instead, Tanzila feels the main challenge she's faced was actually getting the proper exposure for

about it so much we make it bigger than what it is," she says. Women need to take up a vigorous and vocal stance in defending themselves at home. In South Asia, women can join the workplace in

Having more women on governing boards and in leadership positions is not only a woman's issue. It is a pressing issue of "empathy deficit" that should concern both men and women.

tradition and open the path for generations to come. Unless tried and experimented, it is not impossible.

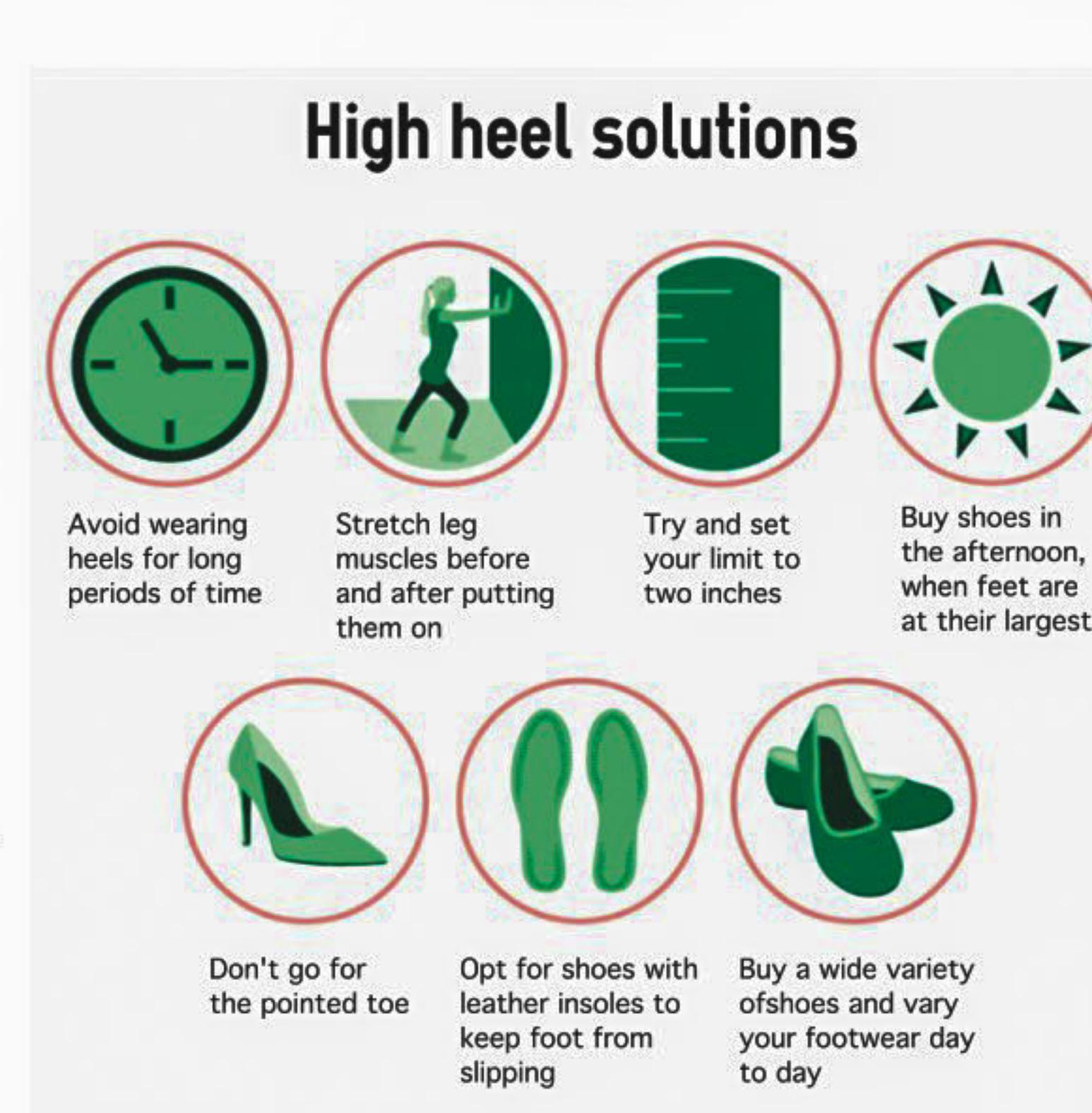
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The real deal with high heels

Although the Carrie Bradshaw's and Kate Beckett's of television reality would have us believe that your average fashion-conscious working woman wears nothing under a six-inch heel, most of us probably know better. And if you don't, it's about time you wake up from your misled Tinseltown stiletto fantasies. Unless you're willing to dish out a couple thousand grand for bunion correction surgery a few years down the line, swap those medieval torture devices for something a little easier on your hooves.

I'd always wondered how my mum got a bump on the inner sides of each of her feet. She didn't know it herself, but it was actually years and years of wearing high heels that mutated them so. From the start of university, she's been wearing them heels well into her work life. At the rate I'm going, I ought to be worried myself, and I don't even have a full-blown career yet, or at least the type that requires you to wear dress heels five days a week. And that brings us to the question of whether high heels are a formal must-wear, or simply an occupational hazard.

Now real lawyers and businesswomen don't covet in multiple inches of pure hard plastic. And even if you've got a desk job, you're probably on your feet enough to pull a muscle going around in one of those babies. Eye sore or sore feet? Your choice. Most of the time we chose to ignore the blisters and the persistent aching feeling in our calves. We blame ourselves, never the heels. The truth is most women can't maneuver the stiletto like their television counterparts,



stores don't offer much variety for me. So usually I wear peep-toes, gladiators, ballerina flats with and without ankle straps, flip-flops, sandals and some sort of wedges to the workplace. Gladiators are the best bet for me because they look not-so-informal and are comfortable. "And she's right. Variety might just be the way to go. Alternating between lower and higher heels, coupled with regular exercise, help stave off excess pressure on the knee, ankle injury, and other gnarly medical problems like hammertoes and pain in the ball of the foot.

Heels might actually help women in the workplace because they are one way of leveling the playing field with men, who are generally taller than women. Studies have shown that tall people earn more and are thought to be more authoritative. But in any case, with the professional scene in Dhaka expanding, it's good news for your feet, ladies. The tech sector, agencies, and not-for-profit organizations, for example, don't make the same demands as a lot of corporate houses and financial institutions. Rishad Habib, who works in telecom, says "Dress code isn't that strict and everyone is pretty casual where I work (as opposed to a bank). So I usually wear flats to the workplace."

Last bit of advice: wobbling around while walking is the opposite of smart and confident. Get a smaller or better shaped heel, and ditch anything with a pointy super-narrow toe-box. Don't let your feet overcompensate for you.

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preferably wedges since they are the easiest to walk in." But even a three-inch heel can shorten the Achilles tendon, which hurts like anything. If you've got back troubles and can't wear two-inch heels, wedge shoes with about a half-inch platform and an additional inch of heel, will give the impression that you're wearing heels. You can wear these when you know you'll be on your feet all day without hurting your back or feet.

Maliha Rahman, a former Executive Trainee at Mir Real Estate, believes wearing different kinds of shoes could be the answer. "I don't really have a thing for heels. Moreover, my shoe size is 41 so the Bangladeshi shoe

Global People Paradigm

Shifting the frontier of people management

With a view to help the young generation of the country face the challenges of the global job market of the 21st century, the Career Development Center of Daffodil International University organized an exclusive international training workshop on "Global People Paradigm – Shifting the frontier of people management" on August 14, 2014 in the university auditorium. Michael A. Potter, international trainer, speaker, and people expert, facilitated the training workshop. He was the winner of the Dev Kusum International Fellowship Award in 2012, and winner of the Global HR Excellence Award in HR Leadership in 2009.

Mr. Md. Sabur Khan, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Prof. Dr. M. Lutfar Rahman, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Aminul Islam, Emeritus Professor, Prof. Dr. Yousuf M. Islam, Executive Director (HRDI) and Mr. Maruf Reza Byron, Director, Career Development Center spoke at the closing ceremony of the workshop and distributed certificates among the participants.



The workshop featured strategies and techniques required to manage a multi-generational workforce, and aimed to develop the participants' competency and influence as people matrix managers. Mr. Potter introduced value and engagement in a new light, and further discussed leadership, management and other HR skills.

A large number of HR professionals from different corporate houses, students from different public and private universities and entrepreneurs participated in the training workshop. Bangladesh Society for Human Resource Management, Jobsbd.com, The Daily Star and Radio Bhuban were the media partners of the workshop.