I can transform you

Tech shaping careers in Bangladesh

"Technology is a gift of God. After the gift of life it is perhaps the greatest of God's gifts. It is the mother of civilisations, of arts and of sciences."
– Freeman Dyson

Dyson, the renowned physicist and mathematician, made no mistake in proclaiming the importance of technology. In every part of the world, big and small, technology has a pivotal role to play. This is best reflected by the list published by PriceWaterhouse Coopers in March 2014, which ranked Apple, Google and Microsoft as three of the top four largest companies in the world by market capitalisation. Technology now holds a stranglehold on the strategic direction of global organisations, thereby overseeing how it evolves. Just as technology has infiltrated corporations, it has come as no surprise that the array of skills required by new professionals to attain a job in the various divisions within an organisation has also been altered.

An organisation generally consists of several divisions such as marketing and finance. The divisions each play a vital role to ensure that the organisation is sustained in an efficient and effective manner. Increasingly, the success of the divisions requires employees to have a technical aptitude in addition to the basic, established skill-set. For example, marketing and finance employees with a strong theoretical understanding may be superseded by employees who are savvy with social media or can interrogate large data sets.

This need for a strong technological base can be seen through the rise in use and popularity of Facebook in Bangladesh. According to statistics published by the digital marketing firm Webable, the number of Facebook users in Bangladesh currently estimated as 8.4 million. Emerging firms like Lamudi and GradConnect have already been able to garner extensive exposure through Facebook, and well established organisations such as Bikroy and Ekhanei have benefitted due to social advertisements. This method of advertising requires an understanding of not only a strong theoretical base of understanding the market, but also the technical know-how to exploit the opportunities to determine which ad to run, when to run it, and when to boost it.

In the more traditional businesses in Bangladesh, such as manufacturing, one of the key issues is supply chain management. This is a complex issue that deals with product development, sourcing, production, and logistics, as well as the information systems needed to co-ordinate these activities. Efficiency, a combination of procedural speed and fault minimisation, is paramount, and technology has been extremely beneficial in this sector. Roksana Pervin from the Procurement and Commercial Supply Chain division of Rahimafrooz provided an example in her research article for RFID Arena in April 2013. She explained that RFID tags, small electronic devices that use electromagnetic fields to transfer data to RFID readers, "are attached to the garments during production; they are then traced throughout the whole supply chain. There is no need to remove the tags from the product afterwards"

The ability to track the product creates data, and therefore requires those with the ability to interpret such data, and formulate strategies on that basis. This may not be the skill-set that current supply chain managers have, but with technology encroaching on all aspects of the supply chain, it will be necessary in the future.

The finance departments are no different. Financial statement analysis, which was once undertaken by the accounts team can now be generated in a matter of moments by software, such as MicroStrategy Analytics and ExpressAccounts. Accountants are now required to be able to navigate the software rather than derive the ratios and profit margins themselves. Samsul Haque, Accounts Manager at Lamudi noted, "It is vital to learn accounting and financial analysis software because at this moment, most organisations, major ones and startups, rely completely on them for accurate and fast financial tables and results."

While technology has supported efficiency it has also helped to reduce waste for organizations, and to have an environmental impact. Grameenphone, one of Bangladesh's largest organisations has recently adopted such a method by creating a work environment completely reliant on electronic exchange of information, instead of paper. This not only ensures that less paper is wasted and thus less environmental degradation, but also helps to create a work environment that emphasises the importance of having the ability to use technology.

Technology has enveloped the modern organisation and in doing so it has changed the nature of how organisations do business. The ramification is that people within the organisation have to evolve, and on the subject of evolution the words of Charles Darwin's are as relevant as ever, "It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change".

ISHAQUR RAHMAN & NAIIAN YAZDANI

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Internet-fuelled
job productivity

Browser plugins
Enabling better customization through the ability to download add-ons or extensions.
● Bit.ly – A URL shortener and reporting tool
● Chrome Remote Desktop – Technology allowing secure access over the internet
● Advanced Responsive Video Embedder – Fast, clean and easy embedding at a click of a button

Online services and software
Technological tools to simplify things:
● File Management – The widespread use of Cloud storage, Dropbox and Google Drive
● Password Security – The use of password manager services such as KeePass, LastPass and 1 Password
● Virtual Meetings – Improving schedules and meetings globally through the use of voice and video chatting service technologies like Skype and GoToMeeting.

HOTTEST TECH JOBS

MANUFACTURING JOBS
It's all about skilled labour, machines, and tools in this job sector. Super charge yourself like the Green Lantern from the DC Universe with high tech activity that gives you the ability to create solid constructs and analyse targets on a larger scale.

IT JOBS
The technology industry will filled with Iron Men and Women. With lots of vacancies you can wok with super technology, robotics and be part of a digital revolution.

HOSPITALITY AND CATERING JOBS
Matter-Eater Lad, a DC Universe superhero and a member of the Legion of Super-Heroes. He possesses the power to eat matter in all form as does the hospitality job sector.

SCIENTIFIC JOBS
With amalgamated human physiology Ms Marvel is resistant to most toxins, poisons and absorbs energy. She can survive in space as can you with the latest space technologies.

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE JOBS
Brainiac has 12th-level intellect with calculation abilities, enhanced memory and an advanced understanding of mechanical engineering, bio-engineering, physics and other theoretical and applied sciences.

A lesson in leadership
at NestléBangladesh

Next Step visited the offices of NestléBangladesh and met with the Head of its Human Resources function – Akhteruddin Mahmood, to have a chat. Chances are you are having a cup of Nescafé as you are reading this - that is how big of a company Nestlé is worldwide and managing the HR department in such a large company is no mean feat. But with ten years of experience at BAT behind him, Mr. Mahmood was more than willing to share his insights and his expertise with me and the readers of Next Step.

What do you think is the main role of HR in any corporation?
"The most important role of HR is the finding and grooming of leaders. Leaders are made and it is beneficial to the success of the company in the long term if we give primacy to succession planning. A company is a lot like a family and just as in a family, we have to consider who will carry the torch when our time on earth is over. In Nestlé, we focus on creating leaders - people who are capable of taking our jobs when we move on. Our job is to ensure that the right people receive the right training and the right opportunities to develop themselves into the best they can be.

What do you mean by the right people?
The right person isn't so easily defined. It is a combination of things, which together is greater than the sum of its parts. We get applications from many candidates and we separate them using a multi-step process. What we are looking for is a combination of aptitude and attitude. By aptitude I am referring to your body of knowledge - what you can do and how you can do. But what is equally as important is your attitude. Are you a team player? Do you have the right kind of mindset? Are you willing to push yourself? Can you influence others and lead? These are the kind of questions we try to answer whenever we are selecting candidates.

Could you elaborate about your process?
We have five steps in our process. First we sort through the multitude of CVs that we receive. We look for things like your internships and experience. We look at your CGPA and no, it doesn't necessarily mean that the higher CGPA the better. We look for CGPAs above 3. After that we take a test and whittle down the candidates further. We take a competence-based interview and if you pass that, we send you to the assessment center. We test out our candidates in a variety of ways - group discussions, presentations, roleplaying, etc. and after that, we have the final interview.

How do you maintain high performance standards at Nestlé?
We standardize performance management here at Nestlé. At the beginning of the year we give each of our employees a list of objectives and deliverables. We give them specific guidelines and their performance is evaluated on how well they are completing those objectives. We look at what is being done and how it is being done. The how is as important as the what. Performances are evaluated in a nine-box model. At the end of six months we notify each employee of their current status and how they are doing at meeting their goals. And finally we have performance calibration meetings. In effect, we raise the benchmark for all employee performance evaluation if we see a lot of people doing well. In this way we can continue to grow and to challenge ourselves to become better.

What do you see as a problem in the Bangladeshi corporate culture?
One of the main problems is that we are not creating enough leaders. We have to ensure that companies seek to nurture and develop potential in their leaders. In recent years, we have seen some of the leaders in MNCs are from Bangladesh. We have to take advantage of this. We have to expose our talented minds to the richness and experience, which can be earned from outside companies, and only then will we function at the highest possible level. Instead of filling positions with outside help, we can fill it with local talent. We have seen members of other BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) rise to become CEOs of major MNCs. Why not us?

Finally what advice do you have for professionals entering the job market?
Well what I can say is this. What the industry needs and what the country needs are leaders. People who are not afraid to break the mold and challenge the status quo. Don't just settle for the average life or what everyone else is doing. That is not the right thing to do. Don't settle for small dreams - go for the big ones. Those are the ones that matter.

Also remember that just because you have gotten a job offer somewhere, it doesn't mean that you have earned anything. Don't pat yourself on the back just yet. You have to perform consistently and you have to perform highly if you don't want your career to stagnate.

But you must also be careful. If you run too fast too long, you are likely to burn out and not be able to work at all. So you must steady yourself. Corporate life, or rather life in general, is a marathon, not a sprint. Know your limits, try to push them, but do not break them. A lot of people set low goals because they are afraid of challenging themselves. Do not be but that kind of person. Dream bigger - for yourself, your family, your company and your country.

ZUBIER ABDULLAH