



He had gone to a good university and done well as a student. He wonders where he has gone wrong.



Students must plan early in order to enter the job market .

Confucius says, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work." I am sure most of today's jobs didn't exist then. Neither was it so difficult to find one.

Despite the ever-rising cost of getting a degree, one fact stands out today like a student shouting in a quiet campus library: out of more than half a million Bangladeshi graduates each year, an alarmingly high number of them can't find a job. According to a 2014 report prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit, nearly 5 out of every 10 Bangladeshi graduates are unemployed (against 3 out of 10 in India and Pakistan).

And those who finally manage to find a job—the positions are often part-time, low-wage or not related to their career interests—they are underemployed. "The problem has two sides—the demand side and the supply side," Dr Fahmida Akter Khatun, Research Director of

CPD says. "Companies that still want to recruit are often not getting the talents they are looking for. On the other hand, some graduates are not finding enough companies that can hire them." The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) is an apex think tank that conducts research on issues of critical national and regional interests.

Underemployment is indeed an issue that concerns many graduates. "In a company like GP, both engineers and business graduates can realise their full potential," says Quazi Mohammad Shahed, Chief Human Resource Officer of Grameenphone which is the largest mobile phone operator in the country with more than 50 million subscribers. "But the entire country is not like that. I graduated from BUET with a degree in mechanical engineering. There are few companies where we can use our knowledge and skills. Industrialisation has not flourished in our country."

Not your typical look-straight-in-the-face-kind-of-advice

What is it that employers are looking for in a candidate? You think you know. You have a good GPA, a shining resume, good manners and you are determined to work hard. All set? Not so fast, according to these leading Human Resources professionals:



QUAZI MOHAMMAD SHAHED
Chief Human Resources Officer
Grameenphone

"In business graduates, we look for the ability to deliver results, analyse data and find a trend. That means he or she should be able to look at data and be able to say what we can do to serve our customers better. Don't be shy. Don't try to dominate

either. A good leader never dominates, he or she enables others. You can develop leadership qualities by leading a student body, a sports team or organising events. The ability to collaborate with others and influence others is important in terms of putting across the right argument.

We have started to recruit graduates in a programme called NBL-Next Business Leaders. We hire both engineers and business graduates under this programme. First, we test their numeric ability. Engineers usually fare well but business graduates not so much. And when we test their literacy abilities, it's the other way around. Students need to have a balance of the two. They should have good writing skills."

ANJAN KUMAR PAUL
GM, Human Resources
Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd

"We test candidates' aptitude and academic knowledge. They must have excellent writing skills in English and Bangla. We work in an informal environment here. We see if they will be able to fit in. We won't hire a candidate with strong academic

credentials but a bad attitude. Soft skills are equally important. They must be punctual and willing to work under pressure. When a machine breaks down, the engineer has to fix it. He or she must be willing to put in those extra hours.

If a candidate has done some research about our company, and comes to the interview well-prepared, we would be impressed with that. A candidate has to be focused about why he or she wants to work here."

ARIF IQBAL
GM, Human Resources
Transcom Distribution Co Ltd

"We mainly hire in sales positions. But we also have graduates in computer engineering, network engineering, accounting and so on.

At the officer level candidates have to sit a written test and then go through an interview. We see if the candidate has a good command of his/her subject, general knowledge, good manners and communication skills. Students must read text books thoroughly. Developing analytical skills is very important."