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# NEXT STEP

## CHIT-CHAT WITH STARTUP CUP FOUNDER

# Sean Griffin

*He has many identities: serial entrepreneur, startup mentor and visionary – these are probably amongst the most popular ones. He is considered as a pioneer of the global startup movement and is highly admired amongst startup communities for his outside-the-box philosophy. We're talking about Sean Griffin, CEO and Founder of Startup Cup, a global startup-based business model competition. On the occasion of the grand finale of Bangladesh Startup Cup, Sean flew in Dhaka to have a hands-on experience of the local startup culture. During his trip in Bangladesh he talked about his passion, mission and vision with Shahriar Rahman from Next Step.*



**Firstly, tell us about Startup Cup. What is it? And how is it operated?**  
Simply put, Startup Cup is a platform to showcase the business potential of a group. We test and verify a person's knack for entrepreneurship, how proactive they are, how willing they are to take risks. Our mission is to change the course of the world through entrepreneurship. In order to meet our objective we focus on:

1. Developing the quality and quantity of entrepreneurs
2. Developing the quality and quantity of local mentors
3. Supporting the local entrepreneurial ecosystem

Unlike many other startup incubators, we operate on a global scale. While developing the website of Startup Cup we got to realize that emerging economies of the developing countries have enormous potential. Thus Startup Cup became a global initiative.

**Bangladesh Startup Cup just announced its first champion. How was this journey? What's next?**  
Yes we just had the first Bangladesh Startup Cup champion. The entire

competition started last year, where we got 46 teams competing for the title. After the boot camp, 35 teams survived. Then we had the top 12, and ultimately the top three. Each of the top three teams has great business potential.

We plan to launch the second season of Startup Cup in June. We're expecting great ideas for businesses again. We also plan to incorporate more industry veterans with our initiative so that the startups get the best mentoring. I am not going to divulge everything right now. We want to it to be a surprise.

**You are a classic 'drop-out' turned Silicon Valley entrepreneur. Did not having a degree ever bother you?**

Not really. I am a Silicon Valley serial entrepreneur, that's true. It's also true that many successful entrepreneurs are drop-outs. But it must be also mentioned that many entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley are Ivy League graduates. From my experience, I have found that in order to succeed in life the importance of a degree depends on you. I personally felt my high school degree was delaying my efforts to be an entrepreneur. So I dropped out

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from high school. I founded my first company at the age of 12. And I never looked back. To be even more honest, I strongly believe that a PhD and MBA means you're lot less likely to be a successful entrepreneur – because creativity has been 'taught' out of you, and

you've been taught judgment and fear and less risk-taking.

**There are many startups in Bangladesh right now. What would be your advice for them?**

Well there are several traits we found common in successful startups. Some of them are really interesting. For example, successful entrepreneurs are able to properly articulate the challenges in a particular industry. So they are also more open to discuss and coach fellow startups. We also found that successful entrepreneurs are doers, rather than planners. They are focused on aggressive yet innovative marketing. Hence they are able to secure customers and generate revenue in a very short span of time. Successful entrepreneurs are great team leaders and team builders. I think if you possess these qualities, you are bound to succeed in the long run.

INTERVIEWED BY: SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Shahriar Rahman is Sub-editor and Feature Writer at Bytes, and Head of Operations at HiFi public

## WATER COOLER CHRONICLES

# SATURDAY FUNDAY

Last week, we talked about how to chill out in style on Friday, i.e. without spending the entire day like a complete slob. If you read our column, you'll know we also promised to share our invaluable tips slash insights for Saturday Funday.

While Saturday Funday doesn't have the same ring to it as Sunday Funday, Sunday's sadly a weekday on this side of the globe. But it's the same idea minus the Bloody Marys (they're optional). If you are already acquainted with the philosophy and are actively pursuing this lifestyle, then give yourself a pat on the back. You're doing it right. If you have never heard of it, Saturday Funday is all about extending your weekend festivities before hanging up your dancing shoes (unless you're a professional ballroom dancer and it's your main source of income.) It's about tiring yourself out enough to miraculously fall asleep at 9pm so you can wake up for the 8am start-of-the-week meeting with the bossman fresh



as a daisy.

Partying hard has its health benefits. So put your party hat on and go crazy. Get wasted by 6.30ish – that's gotta be a full-proof plan even if you'd "accidentally" slept in till the afternoon. For the rest of the 90 percent non-alcoholic population, activities of the day can include, but are not limited to: watching sports games outside, taking part in sports games outside, or basically doing every single physical activity you can come up with that you actually enjoy. Can't think of anything?

Try something new and exciting. Drop by the gym at DU and take up squash. If that's too far away, intense laps of swimming butterfly-style will also do the trick. Or wake up early and take out that brand spanking new bike that's been sitting in your garage collecting dust. If you've cut out manual labour from your life altogether, you'll find out that this can be a real challenge. Heck, a couple of kilometers of harmless walking and you'll be pooped.

You can substitute intensity for quantity. Instead of extreme physical activity (which is desirable for a Saturday Funday), take up a weekend class. Whether you're learning a new language, polishing your musical skills or finally doing that EMBA course, getting out of the house, meeting new people and being forced to socialise are enough to make many of us exhausted.

And why not put your oven to actual use instead of using it to heat up your miserable microwave TV dinners? Bake yourself and your loved ones a steaming hot batch of pretty little red velvet cupcakes, complete with a fancy swirl of cream cheese on top. Don't be fooled. Past experience has taught me that baking is no small feat, especially if you're an amateur. Whipping up all that flour and egg and butter and sugar, washing the dozen different bowls you somehow managed to use, and wiping down the entire kitchen because everything just went flying, are enough to leave your arms feeling like putty. You might've even grown some biceps. So much win, right?

You probably have your own ideas about what you'd like to do best on a Saturday Funday. Jot them down and if you're willing to go a step further, plan an entire list of Funday activities for you and your friends. Whatever the ulterior motive is for passing out early, the gist of it is to do the things that you love with the people who you love. Surprise them. I personally plan on travelling around Dhaka on foot one of these Saturdays and writing my own guide to the city. A bit ambitious for someone like me, but one can dream.

AMIYA HALDER

The writer is Sub-editor of Next Step

# FIVE EYE-POPPING ALTERNATIVES TO POWERPOINT

We all know people who call motorcycles "Honda" - heck you might be one of them. The Honda motorcycles, due to their once complete dominance of the motorcycle market in Bangladesh, have almost substituted the actual name of the vehicle itself. I am pretty sure there's even a term for this phenomenon – but as terms go, you forgot it the moment you stepped out of high school.

Consider the above situation and imagine the whole world thinking that motorcycles are synonymous with Honda. That is kind of what happened with presentations and Powerpoints. From every single corporate meeting to school and university students presenting downloaded templates and copy-pasted contents, the mention of a presentation is almost always met with groans of foreboding – "Not again, even political talk-shows are more interesting," you think.

It's not that Powerpoint presentations are all bad, just that they have been used and abused so often, the sheer sight of another slide invokes a Pavlovian reflex of dread. Just as with Hondas, there are alternatives. Brought to you by the magic of the World Wide Web.

**Prezi**  
This is one that is catching on with the university crowd. A web-based presentation software, Prezi combines beautiful and smooth transitions through interlinked slides that can be custom arranged. The slides are cinematic and often times will look like you are just zooming in and out of concepts rather than moving on to another slide. The number and style of templates available are diverse and since it is web-based, Prezi is cross-platform. For those with internet, a desktop or slow softwa re for viewing the

slides is available as well. Very efficient for both students and corporates aiming to impress.

**Haiku Deck**

This presentation software is one frequently mentioned as a great Powerpoint alternative. Although Haiku Deck comes with only 35 templates, what makes this great is the 35 million stock photos that can be used. If you want image driven presentations, you will want to give Haiku Deck a try. It is extremely easy and intuitive to use, but lacks features for customisation compared to some others. The only big disadvantage is the lack of an option to work offline. The biggest advantage is the ease with which you can work here from your iPad.

**SlideDog**

This one is for those who like lots of multimedia and other documents in their presentations. Of course, Powerpoint offers the option of embedding, but SlideDog is a presentation launch pad which provides a far more graceful solution to move between these seamlessly. Gather all your presentations, PDFs, video, audio clips and drag and drop onto SlideDog to make your playlist. No more pausing

midway and looking through your folders for the clip you want to present.

**Project**

Best for those who work in the creative industry, Project is a different way to present your ideas. Instead of a screenshot of your Twitter feed, want a live feed? Project has it. Interactive map for your great presentation on Game of Thrones? Check. Basically, you can stream anything from the web from videos to blogs, live. The templates and design are classy and sharable. Although the number of layout options is limited, for those with dynamic content, Project is the way to go. Another great thing about Project is that you can embed the presentation on your websites or blogs – a very cool option to bring together everything you want to highlight onto a single platform.

**Keynote and Google Presentations**

These two are Apple and Google's versions of Powerpoints respectively. Keynote is for those who prefer working on iOS but are used to how things work on Powerpoint. Presentations made with Keynote are easy to share and useful if you are planning to work cross-platform in iOS devices. With Google Presentations, you can actually upload Powerpoint files and take it from there. It is similar to how Powerpoint works too, but its selling point is the option for collaboration. You can work in a cloud and have multiple people working at the same time – the perfect way to make sure your team members are not slacking off.

MOYUKH MAHTAB

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