

## THE 'NO SHORTCUT' WAY

Whether you're a struggling entrepreneur or a student/employee fighting to make ends meet, stories of people like Richard Branson and Oprah Winfrey always provide the much needed inspiration. They illustrate how hard work and perseverance lead to the desired results. But then you see someone being 'handed' top management positions because their father or uncle happen to own a well established business (bummer) and you begin to question if all your hard work was in vain. However today we bring you a rare story that will restore your faith in the good old 'no shortcut' way while giving you a whole new perspective.



Rahnuma Ahsan works as a management trainee at AG Agro, a subsidiary of Ahsan group. Now it goes without saying that she could have been assigned any position she wanted because her family owns the conglomerate. But she rather chose to start from the bottom and work through the ranks as she's a believer in achieving a post rather than inheriting it. We caught up with her to gain more insight about her work life.

## ABOUT RAHNUMA

Rahnuma is a freshman at IBA, DU. She likes to try out new restaurants with friends when she's not busy. She's also popular among her friends for her #DekhoAmraKotoShundor hashtag she uses for her groupies. And as is evident from the interview, Rahnuma is a valuable asset for the corporate sector of the country.

## What is the nature of your job? What post do you get?

I have been given the post of Management Trainee in AG Agro. In the first few months, I tried to understand the entire process and the technical aspects of this sector. I was amazed to learn that so much thought and effort went into the production of chicken feed! I would say the greater part of my work is the learning process. Every day I learn something new in the office. When I started out I used to look into the accounts but I enjoy the marketing side so I work on that sector more. Apart from that we have the freedom to come up with innovative ideas at AG. So currently I'm working on the feasibility and design of an idea. Do you think you fit in with the other workers?

It has been some time now that I am

working here so I get friendly nods when I come in now. Whereas before, they used to stand up for me, like I was their teacher or something. And it has been easier to fit in because of the post I was assigned.

## Do they treat you differently?

See we belong in a culture where there is high power distance. People like their status and position and even if I don't want it that way. When I first went to the office, the HR manager took me around to get introduced with everyone. They told me their names and positions and in reply I said to each of them, "Hello! I am Rahnuma and I am here to learn from all of you. Please treat me like a student of yours and let me learn as much as I can from all of you." But they still call me Madam even after I asked them not to.

## Can you make a real impact from your position?

From my position I do not think I can make an impact on the company's performance yet. But through this position the knowledge and trust of employees that I am gaining will surely help me make an impact in the future. I believe building trust and cooperation between employees and the top management is very important if a business is to be successful. This trust will help develop better ideas and make better decisions.

## Do you think you experienced something working as a regular employee which you wouldn't have otherwise?

Definitely. I mean if I started working after I graduated from university, I would have joined as a director or CEO of some venture of my father's. It wouldn't have given me the same opportunity to understand the core of the business. I have the opportunity to meet people from the lowest to the highest inside the organisation. When I think of my father, he is the head, the chairman. So although he encourages openness, many

employees will think twice before approaching him with a complaint or an idea or an issue. But I think by now everyone in the office is quite free and frank with me. There is mutual respect between us, but there is also a friendly vibe. That is what we need in our corporate cultures.

## How is working as an MT helping in your personal development?

Practical knowledge and academic knowledge – what better way for personal development? I have grown as a person. I am no longer confused about what to do in the future. I have found my motivation and drive through this opportunity.

## Whose idea was it?

My father's. I got a long break after completing my A levels and I think my father was tired of seeing me sitting at home all day. So one day when I asked for pocket money, he replied "Only if you go to office." Yes, I won't lie. That is why I went to office the first time.

## Would you suggest the same for your siblings/children?

Yes, I already suggest the same to my younger brother. And I would to all the young people belonging to a business-based family. This is a better way to start a career in business. Instead of starting in a higher position and making decisions of a company you don't have any idea about, having to work through ranks allows you to be more aware of your own company's culture and behaviour.

## Who is your inspiration?

My father inspires me the most. How he became who he is today from nothing inspires me the most. He truly symbolises that if you have passion and determination, anything is possible. I hope I can achieve my dreams as well.

SHAHRIAR SHARIF

Writer is a freshman at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

## 8 questions you should ask your interviewer

## 1. What role will I fill?

When it comes to an employee's role in a business's strategy, the job title explains only so much. You are filling a void on the living, breathing team. Is this company hoping for an ideas person, a mentor to other employees, a creative force, a rule follower, a rule breaker? Get to the specifics of "who" your position is supposed to be.

## 2. Why does this role matter to the growth of the company?

Use this question to explore the expected level of engagement. Are you more comfortable being in a low- or a high-impact role? Do you want to be in a role that is universally respected within the company or are you okay being the undercover hero?

## 3. Who would my colleagues be?

The best interviews include three to four team members. If that is not the case in your interview, use this question to gain insight into team dynamics and personalities. These are the people you will spend every day with, so they need to pass "the airplane test" – someone you would enjoy sitting next to on a long flight.

## 4. What would I be doing that makes your job easier?

This question has two benefits—you will find out who is going to lean on you the heaviest and what you will need to do to keep the other teammates happy. The answers to this question will be the immediate problems each team member is hoping you will solve.

## 5. What are additional important skills I will need to do this job well?

What are the soft skills needed for this particular job? Find out if the company needs someone who is also a self-starter or works well in teams. This is also an excellent time to bring up any additional skills you have that are appropriate for position.

## 6. How does the company measure success?

Identifying how your progress in this position will be measured will give you a better idea of whether or not you will be successful. Get specifics on what your deliverables will be per project. Ask about common work habits of people who have had this position in the past whom the company considered successful.

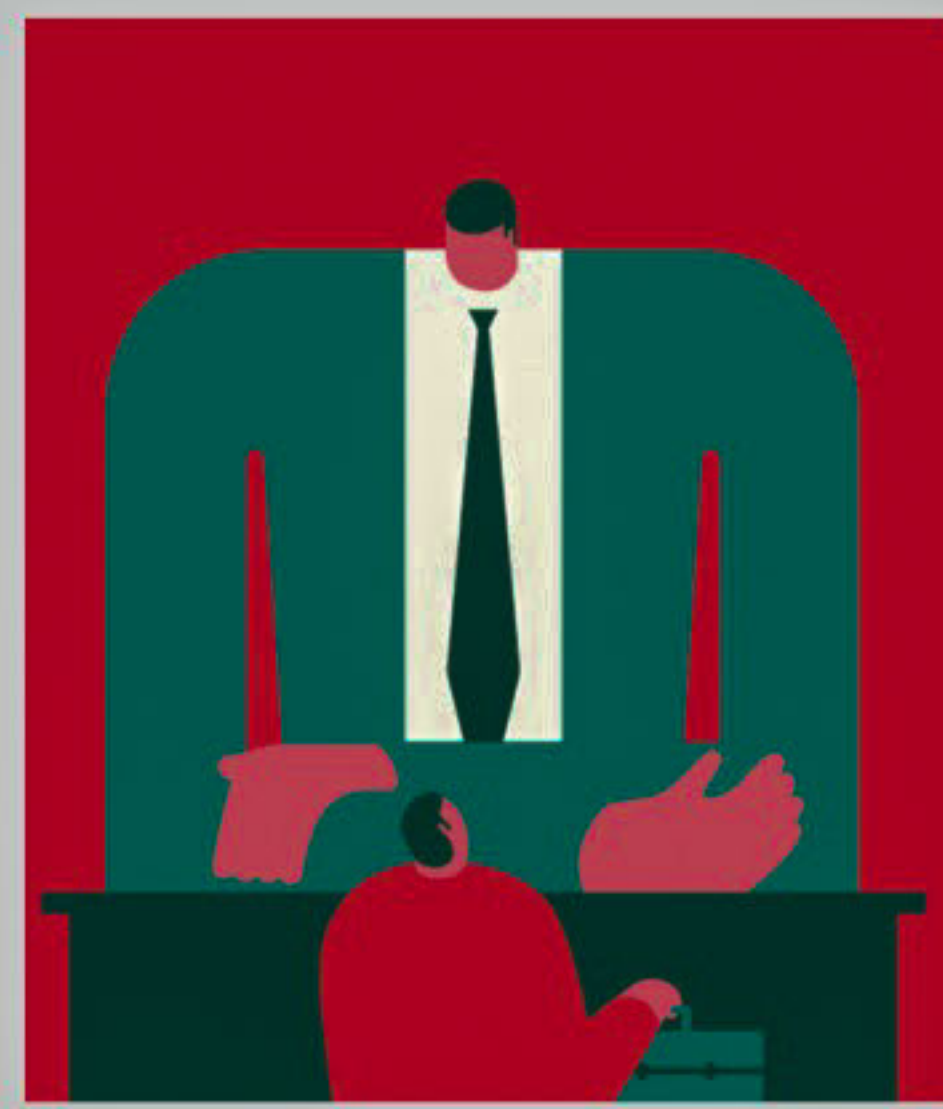
## 7. What would you expect from me this month, in three months, and in a year?

Chances are that your employer has a trajectory for your role in mind. Find out what you will need to deliver in the next coming months. Ask yourself if this pace feels doable for the way you work.

## 8. What is your mission?

This is one of the most important questions you can

*If you want a job in today's business environment, the hard work starts when you prepare for the interview. That means not just nailing the interview questions you are asked, but actually asking the kinds of questions designed to make the interviewer sit up and take notice. It's no longer enough to be qualified. You have to shine, and there's no better way to show your excellence than by asking excellent questions. These questions could also help you avoid a bad boss before it's too late.*



ask. Research shows that employees are most happy when their goals align with those of their employers. Get philosophical here and find out why you are both here in this room and if you want the same things.

Questions are the best way to demonstrate that you understand the company's challenges, emphasise how you can help the company meet them and show your interest in the most unmistakable manner possible – by actually asking for the position.

## Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.



## 5 THINGS AN INTERN SHOULD AVOID

Interns are expendable. There's no way to sugar-coat it. So it is primarily the intern's job to impress the employer, future or present. I interned twice. Once was during university. People gave me a research project. I did it. No one asked me anything, no one made me make any coffee and it was super easy. I stepped out with a recommendation and a course grade but nothing else.

Second time was for an agency. They made me write everything others wouldn't but I did it quicker than anyone else would. In short order, they gave me more duties. I ended up with a permanent job before my internship period was over. Bottom line is I got lucky. Luck usually prefers kicking you in the nuts. Here are the five big ways to avoid that uncomfortable feeling in the end.

## Avoid the easy just because it is easy

You can intern anywhere and get a certificate. Unfortunately, internships need to be in line with your field of work. If you

want to be a mechanic, you don't want an internship at a restaurant. Big name employers usually require more effort from you simply because they know you will be using their name in the future to get a better job. The work may not be easy but it's worth it.

## Don't go in blank

Know the job before you go in. Interns aren't usually considered amazing from day one. They do the job none of the full time employees want to do like make copies or park the boss' car. You go in, show everyone you know your stuff and you become amazing.

## Don't bog down cause of the money

Many internships will be unpaid. Whatever they DO pay will feel like the peanut shells thrown away by a zoo monkey. The choice is hard: can you get by without a big month end cheque?

## Don't think it's not a real job

Just because the money is nearly

non-existent doesn't mean an internship is a mock exam. It IS a real job because it will pave the path to further real jobs. It's not practice, it's a building block. What you learn, who you meet and what you produce are meant to translate into a better paying job in the future.

## Avoid sitting silently in the corner

Speaking of who you meet, an internship isn't ever about the money you make. It's all about the people who see you. So step up, step out and talk. Say something even if you think everyone else will think it is stupid because interns cannot have ideas. If that is the case, you're in the wrong place.

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