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NEXT STEP

THE POWER OF 'WE'

Over the last two decades, Ajeyo Rohitashwo ~ Al Quazi has distinguished himself as both a corporate leader and a creative mind. A talented HR generalist, lovingly called 'corporate poet' by his peers, Ajeyo now leads as Group Chief People Office of Aamra Companies, one of the largest names in the IT and services industry. Ajeyo has been recently ranked 46th in CHRO Asia's "100 most talented global HR leaders". The first ever live mobile app on Bangla poems 'Ajeyo Kobita' portrays his writings and is available on the Google Playstore.

The power of 'we'—Aamra believes people are the heart of the business. Can you tell us a little about the concept?

It is the people who matter the most in business. Nobody is perfect—everyone has their strengths and limitations. When people come together, it is their synergy that brings forth the ultimate success. That is the power of 'we'. Remember, business is not only about generating money. Creating a reputation and a positive image is the most important thing. Money is a logical consequence.

'Employees now aspire to a career instead of looking for a job'—is this true?

Yes, it is true. In Aamra, we do not just provide a job, we provide a career. It's not easy to get a job at Aamra. When we create a position, we determine the personal attributes required for it besides setting the academic requirements. We also create something called a career path, which will determine where this employee will go in the next five years, given that he/she is still in the same position.

We have a rigorous interview

"Are you excited to come to work every day?—we make sure the answer is yes for all our employees. If the excitement is missing, something is wrong."



process. In the first phase we have an interactive oral session where we identify the personal attributes in you. Then there is an online core competency test. We also take stress and situational tests. If you pass all these phases, you get a call for a meeting with the CEO. So once we recruit someone, we retain him or her.

How do you keep employees motivated?

'Are you excited to come to work every day?—we make sure the answer is yes for all our employees. If the excitement is missing, something is wrong. We are innovative and try to do new things.

For example, it is not possible for the board to know each and every individual. So what we do is we bring five employees from different department and they have lunch together with the board. Moreover, we have an anonymous

session named 'Let Us Know', where employees can share their grievances.

When is the best time to make a change in your career?

The moment you are not excited. The moment you do not feel like you belong. When you feel you are not proud of being in the organisation. When you are doubtful of your contribution to

the organisation—make a change. For you the organisation would be a liability and vice versa.

People often mention that experience requirement is a hindrance for moving up a career. Do you think there is such a conflict?

See, I might know how to swim in a swimming pool. So I can swim in the river with that learning. But can I swim in the ocean? Experience has something that differentiates the fresh graduate from the experienced candidate. But it's not only age that gives you an edge. Your personality and intention to learn also matter. These two complement each other. One makes you agile and able to act, another one makes you think strategically. Skill and experience go hand in hand.

For the full interview, check the Next Step website

INTERVIEWED BY
SHUVASHISH ROY

The interviewer is a young marketing professional. Starting his career as a management trainee of a global company, he is currently working as the Strategic Project Planner of Business Development at The Daily Star

NEWS

NSUers Meet Corporate Icons 2015

NSUers Meet Corporate Icons (NMCI) is a series of seminars conducted by NSU Young Entrepreneur's Society (YES!) for the students of North South University to have an opportunity for hands-on advice from different business representatives. The series covers entrepreneurship, corporate life and everything in between.

This event is mainly carried out to encourage youth entrepreneurship and to impart to students the traits they need to be at the peak of the corporate world. Each and every one of the speakers have a unique background and are at the echelon of his/her field. They share with the students their experiences, work ethics, tools for professionalism, and how to be more productive.

The sixth season of NMCI is scheduled to take place from 2 to 3 November in the university premises. With the tagline "Know your myths, know your majors", NMCI 2015 aims to help students in choosing a suitable major and debunk the myths.

This year's speaker lineup includes: Faija Sajia Ansari, HR Head, Bangladesh Sri Lanka Cluster, Reckitt Benckiser; Ejajur Rahman, MD, Mind Mapper Bangladesh, CEO, ISCEA-Asia; Muhammad Nurul Afsar, AVP, Group Finance, MTB, Bangladesh; Prawma Tapashi Khan, Education Manager, ACCA, Bangladesh; Dr. Ashiqur Rahman, Senior Economist, Policy Research Institute; and Soumendra Shanker Das, Marketing Head, GlaxoSmithKline, Bangladesh.

Making the most of traffic time

Illogically long commutes thanks to Dhaka traffic is nothing new for us. No matter what we do (pray, curse, voodoo), traffic jams aren't going away any time soon. Most of us moan and groan about how Dhaka has become unfit to live in, but the smart ones make use of this idle time and make it as productive as any working hour at the desk. In fact, armed with smartphones and mobile data, you need nothing more than a little willpower to make those excruciating hours worthwhile. Below are a few ways to make your time on the road more productive.

TELE-MEETINGS/CONFERENCE CALLS

I know several busy executives who schedule work in such a way that most lengthy phone calls, teleconferences can be done during commute. This lets them make best use of idle time and allocate desk time to functional activities. Few prerequisites like privacy, no or little noise disruption do apply, but it's not impossible unless you drive yourself.

VIRTUAL SOCIALISING

Used intelligently, Facebook can be a great tool for business networking, product promotion, brand activation, etc. However, if you're looking for sites tailored to corporate themes, there's LinkedIn.com. It's been years since LinkedIn.com has established itself as the networking cum job hunting joint in corporate world. There's also Ello.com, a zero-ad social networking site launched in 2014. Whatever your preference, there are dedicated apps to help you network through these sites today.

LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE

Knowing an extra language goes a long way from just having an extra line in your resume. It broadens your mindset and gives you fresh, new perspectives. Fortunately these days you can learn a new language while you're stuck in that mile-long tailback. Smartphone apps like Duolingo are very easy to use and can cater to rookies and advanced users alike. Offering mostly European languages, Duolingo has many incremental levels, which can be modified according to time and learning speed. And the best part, it's free. Even, Bill Gates used it. There are other apps too like Rosetta Stone, Busuu, ChineseSkills, Memrise etc. Take your pick.



EARN A DEGREE

Yes, you've read it right. Now you can earn a university degree right from your smartphone. Sites and apps like Coursera.org, let you enroll, attend and complete (with semester credits) courses ranging from literature, robotics to entrepreneurship from top universities around the world. There are lectures, quizzes, assignments and even final tests just like attending a physical university. If your focus is not earning a degree, there's Khan Academy, Udemy, Alison, 360training.com based on different aspects of learning. And yes, most of these are free.

READ

Reading is the most significant workout you can give your brain on a daily basis. We all know this and most of us list reading as a favorite pastime. However, we also complain that we hardly get anytime to indulge in this hobby. So next time you are stuck in Farmgate or Banani, dive right into your favourite fiction, documentary or articles. No need to carry books anymore, your phone in fact is

a better alternative. There are electronic editions (epub, mobi, pdf and audiobooks) of almost all popular bestsellers, which you can download from directly from the internet onto your phone. Those who still complain that reading on the go makes them nauseous can install TTS+ (a text to speech plugin), this will read the book to you in your preferred voice, speed, pitch and accent.

Good news is that this list covers only the tiniest portion of tasks that can be achieved through the combination of smartphone, internet and time. As newer and better technologies emerge there are even better ways to equip ourselves with latest knowledge and skills. So next time you notice traffic at a standstill, you know how to make the precious minutes count.

IBRAHIM H RIZWAN

The writer works in the Supply Chain Department of Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd. He can be reached at ibrahim.rizwan@gmail.com

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.

Team building dos and don'ts

There was an episode of House of Cards where Frank Underwood's henchman kept cutting off a colleague from speaking, with words to the effect of 'you are here to listen, keep your mouth shut and let me do the talking.' Frank gets angry and tells him that he should stop playing office politics when there is a crisis at hand. That is definitely not how a good team works.

Google 'team building exercises' and you come across a corporate wonderland—paint ball fights, getaways, events with food and games. Now not many of those are available for those of us working in Bangladesh. But the importance of a team to be able to work together, co-operate and not want to kill each other every time someone opens their mouth cannot be over emphasised if you want the work to get done well.

Office politics are unavoidable; there will always be conflicts between individuals and their opinions on everything ranging from how best to staple a bunch of papers together to whose duty it is to get that coffee maker fixed. But when a team is so unstable that any project turns into an episode of Game of Thrones, things need to change.

Now, the result of team building exercises is to unite a team, develop its strengths based on individual capabilities and address weaknesses. But for that, the exercise, be it a dinner party or a game of tag, needs to have a strategy and a goal. If at the end of the exercise, nothing changes in the office, it was money ill spent.

The saying goes that one should separate the personal from that what is work. But taken to its extreme, this could mean that team members do not know each other, and such are not on friendly terms. Team building exercises should therefore focus towards bridging conflicts and divisions within a team; getting the team to know one another; enhancing problem solving and decision making; facilitating

communication and turning lone wolves into a well-working pack; and of course, boosting team morale.

One session involving a weekend in Gazipur will not address all the issues—it takes time for individuals to be able to work together, trust and depend on team members. For improving communication, the old game of Chinese whispers seems a good place to start. Dividing groups into groups of three or four and playing games like Pictionary—or anything similar, which needs teams to communicate better, works just as well.

For strengthening team cohesion, a trip outside Dhaka, an informal party, or even a simple dinner where they talk to each other outside the formal atmosphere of the office can be organised.

The internet abounds with suggestions on what activities or events can be undertaken as team building exercises. But what's important is the issues it aims to solve. Teams don't become amazing wholes in one day—this is a continuous process and a part of corporate culture. An important thing to remember is that these exercises should not be competitive. You don't want the group to try to outdo each other. The role of the leader is the most important—

if you are not arranging these exercises just because you have to, then remember, identify a core issue you want to solve, make a plan and then take it from there. Of course to do that, you need to be involved with the team so you know which issue needs to be dealt with. Know your team to understand what works, what needs to be improved, and what needs to go.

MOYUKH MAHTAB

The writer is a junior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

