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# NEXT STEP

## MARKETING TO THE MASSES

In conversation with Solaiman Alam, Senior Director, Marketing at Banglalink

In the last 5-7 years how much has marketing evolved in the telecom sector?

Marketing is not a science. Rather it's an art; an art that deals with the hearts and minds of people. And the basics of human nature generally don't change; generations after generations it remains the same. But means to get to the hearts and minds change with technology. If you look 7-10 years back, you will see that people's way of getting a credible message across was mostly ATL media. But now, social media has become the primary provider of credible information to the majority of customers. It's because people tend to lean towards peer feedback. So now it has become extremely critical to make your product or service perfect. In this era, if you can't deliver a perfect product, customers will provide brutally honest feedback. So now, just making a nice TVC campaign won't cut it. You genuinely have to go to the drawing board, come up with an excellent product that not only your customers will love, but also cherish. Then you have to market the product based on that social connection.

In our industry, we are at the forefront of technological changes. We are driving the internet penetration, data penetration, digital innovation, etc. The product that we are pushing in the market is being used 24/7. So when we market our services we try to make it innovative, reliable and customer-centric. We deal with millions of customers every day. So there is no room for error; we have to be spot on every time.

What do you think are the key traits a marketer should possess?

I don't know. If I knew I would have written a book (chuckles). I believe a marketer needs to realise that his job begins and ends with the customer. So firstly, I think a marketer needs to know

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his customer. So basically he needs to know the market. But the market isn't in your office or just Dhaka. For most marketers the country is the market. The customers, their behaviours, geography, location, culture, etc. are quite different. So you need to understand that.

Secondly, you need to be practical. There are thousands of theories in textbooks. But reality is different. So you need to trust your gut and deal with the situation objectively. You need to understand the trends, interpret the market research, and act accordingly. And lastly you need to trust your heart. Logic might dictate something, but at the end you need to listen to your heart.

What do you look for in a fresh grad when you are hiring for Banglalink's marketing department? How can they stand out from the crowd?

In order to stand out from the piles of CV that we get, it is important to have couple of things. Firstly, you need to be a meritorious student from a good institute. It matters a lot. Nobody can deny it. Secondly, we love to hire a person who has made an impact. It can be on the root level or on a local or even international scale. The magnitude of the impact that one was able to make will draw us to his or her CV. Why? Because despite being a fresh grad, he or she has proved himself or herself amongst peers. We consider them achievers.

Now comes the interview. I know interviews are cruel. It's really hard to judge someone in just 10 minutes. It's not fair. Sometimes you can't know a person even in a lifetime. So how can you expect to know someone in just 10 minutes? Hence I personally rely on references. If somebody I know is refer-

ring someone based on his experience, I will definitely consider the candidate.

It's also really important to not oversell yourself during the interview. Frankly speaking, if you are in your early 20s, it's obvious you haven't conquered the world. The interviewer doesn't expect that either. Just be yourself. Be confident, try to highlight your strengths, let them know what values you can add. Make sure you communicate all of these. I recommend rehearsing so everything you need to say is being communicated to the interviewer in just 10 minutes.

What are the perks of working for a telecom?

There are many. Telecoms are generally multinational companies. Hence the exposure that you get is invaluable. The financial rewards are great. Other perks includes medical coverage, retirement funds, etc. The work environment is great. You get to work with a product that is going to touch millions of people. Starting a career in a multinational all has its advantages. You get to grow and assume multiple roles and responsibilities.

We can see a surge of startups in Bangladesh right now. We see youth are getting more and more involved in entrepreneurship. How do you feel about that?

I salute them. I think they are doing much greater justice to themselves, to the country and to their education. They are really courageous. I wish I could do that.

For the full interview, check out the Next Step webpage.

INTERVIEWED BY SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Engineer-turned-writer, Shahriar Rahman is Sub-Editor of the tech publication of The Daily Star. He is also Head of Operations at HiFi Public

### NEWS

## NMCI ends on a high note

Young Entrepreneur's Society (YES!), the business club of North South University, successfully held NSUers Meet Corporate Icons (NMCI) for the sixth consecutive year. This year it was a two-day long seminar touting the tagline 'Know your myths, know your majors'. The goal was to deliver useful information regarding the six major business degrees and to clear any sort of confusion in the minds of the students.

On the first day, Prawma Taposhi Khan, education manager of ACCA conducted the session on accounting. Students usually do not want to choose accounting as their major because they fear that they need to have very good mathematical skills, but Prawma Taposhi explained that basic mathematical skills are more than enough. She also insisted students to study accounting because the Bangladeshi marketplace needs good professional accountants.

Dr. Ashikur Rahman, senior economist of Policy Research Institute conducted the second session, which was on economics. He shared with the students what he thinks economics really is; that demand and supply aren't just two slant lines.

The second day started off with a lecture from a most sought-after visionary, Ejazur Rahman, Managing Director of Mind Mapper. He held an interactive session on supply chain management and explained that most top leaders reached their positions only out of their interest in the area. Supply chain managers are not responsible for just a specific department; rather they have to make sure that no process, starting from planning to delivery, has any culpability.

Faija Sajia Ansari, HR director of Reckitt Benkiser, conducted the second session of the day. She explained that the employees in the HR department work more like business partners. They decide who is going to work for the organisation, and the department that employee is suited for. Students wanting to major in HR should firstly, choose it only if he enjoys studying it, and secondly, look at the current context of the major in the country.

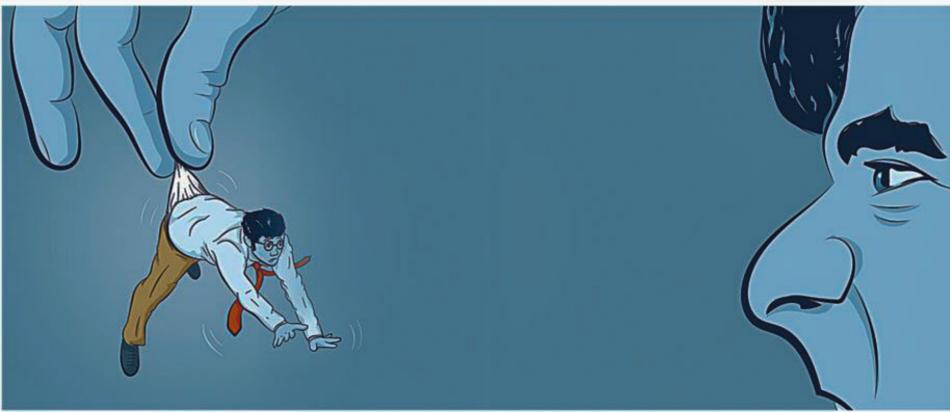
The third session of the second day was on finance. Nurul Afsar, AVP of Group Finance at Mutual Trust Bank, talked about how finance is the major that students dread the most because they think that it is only about crunching numbers. Students wanting to major in finance should know that finance and accounting are not the same. Accounting is a basic necessity of the business whereas finance is a forecast management tool. Since more businesses in Bangladesh are starting to become aware of this, the opportunities for finance majors will increase in the near future.

The last session of NMCI was conducted by the marketing virtuoso Soumendra Das, Marketing Head of GlaxoSmithKline. He held a very interactive session with questions and answers from both sides. Marketing is something you should enjoy doing and it cannot be forced upon you. The ultimate goal of a person should be happiness and one should never stop growing up.

## DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM?

5 kinds of bullies you will meet in the workplace

Tired of being shoved in the hallway or having your lunch stolen? The best part about finding a job is that you get to say goodbye to all those bullies, right? Wrong. You just graduated to a whole new level, and it's a different ball game.



It's no surprise that bullies exist in the workplace. However their tactics differ from the conventional bullies. Sometimes it seems like they get some twisted pleasure by making things harder for you. And more often than not you'll have to be on your toes to stay ahead of their sadistic minds. This is your definitive guide to the five kinds of workplace bullies you will meet.

### THE CREDIT STEALERS

These types strive to make sure they get credited for your hard work. They can be your seniors, supervisors, or even your co-workers. This is one of the most common practices that go on in offices, so don't be surprised if one day you walk in and find someone else getting a pat on the back for something you did. Don't be shy to burst their bubble because they're using an unfair means to get into the boss's good books.

### THE TOUGH GUYS

There are people who can't help but stress how tough they are by picking on minorities and subordinates. They won't spare a chance to make derogatory or racist remarks. Perhaps it gives them a false sense of power. Nishan Babai (not his real name) said that his team members often offer him beef although they know it's against his religious values. Diversity is a priority in most companies so speak to your boss or HR manager if someone is intolerant

towards you.

### PERSONAL SPACE VIOLATORS

You guessed it! These are the overly-attached people in your office. They don't mind giving you a hard pat on the back or poking your belly button. Their affection is also accentuated by hard and long handshakes. They will take the freedom to invite themselves over to your desk every few minutes to check if you're doing okay. However on a serious note there are people who might touch your inappropriately. Telling them that you value privacy and personal space is a good start. But try doing it in a polite manner.

### THE HOT AIR BALLOONS

You're sure to come across people who will be full of themselves. They'll cut you off on a regular basis and take off from where they cut you off (even if you never gave them a cue). You'll even get free life lessons, pep talks, feedback, criticism (which you didn't sign up for). In most cases these people aren't even your boss or supervisors but rather your co-workers. Another variation of this species is the person who completely disregards your opinions. Rapunzel (not her real name) was working with an employee from another department. She felt miserable when her partner completely disregarded her views. Employee participation is valuable to any business so remind such people

they're violating conduct.

### THE SLAVE DRIVER

Just like school there will be people who don't bother doing their own work. So how do they get away with it? YOU volunteer obviously. Sometimes you don't have a choice. From small errands like fetching coffee to finishing up big assignments, you're their go to man for anything they don't want to do on their own. You're likely to be the senior's minion especially when you're a new recruit. But it's also a nice way to get into their good books. However you should set your limits so that doing favors doesn't turn into them taking it for granted. You don't want people to think you'll do whatever they ask you to, especially when it's completely unreasonable.

Bullying happens in offices in many more shapes and forms. The recommendations given may work in mild or short term situations, but more extreme cases require well thought out strategies. On the bright side, companies are working harder than ever to combat workplace bullies so that all employees can bring their A game to the table.

SHAHRIAR SHARIF

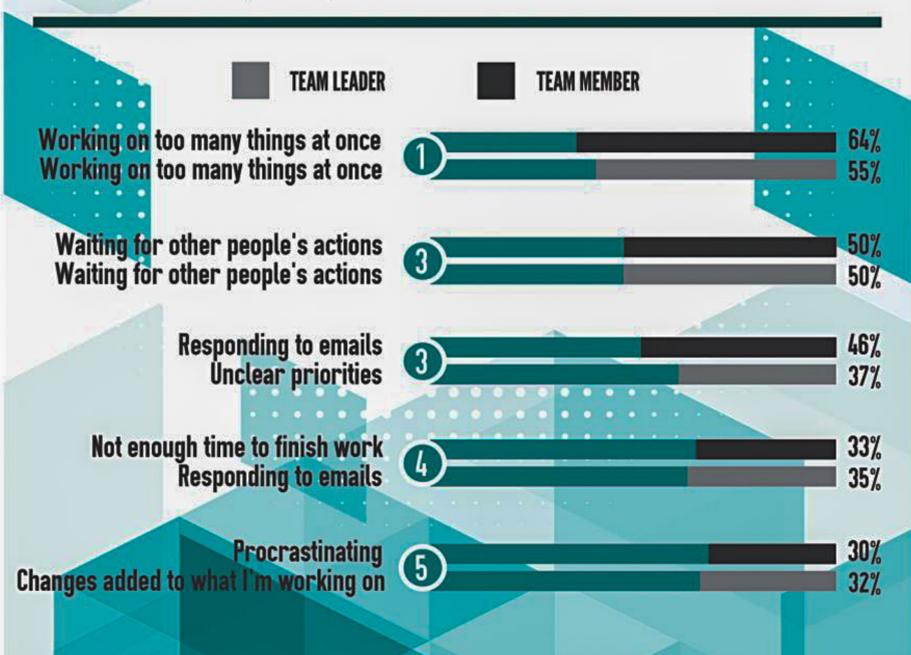
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## Making a DIFFERENCE

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.

### TOP 5 PRODUCTIVITY ROADBLOCKS HINDERING YOUR TEAM

Staying productive is a daily struggle. Wrike conducted a survey and asked participants to rank their top roadblocks to productivity. See the results for team leaders and team members below:



Check out the Next Step webpage for the full list of productivity roadblocks from Wrike.

INFOGRAPHIC BY AMIYA HALDER

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