

Take your next step to connect to us. Email us if you have an interesting story to share related to career.

facebook.com/
thedailystar.nextstep
Email: nextstep@thedailystar.net

The Daily Star
DHAKA, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2015
e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

CHORKI

A startup to look up local content online

Chorki is a local search engine that specialises only in local content. We talked with Rashed Moslem, Chorki's Chief Operating Officer, about how Chorki works, its future plans and the team that built this platform.

What Is The Core Idea Behind Chorki? Initially, our plan was very simple. We wanted to develop an e-commerce platform, which can be used to help local entrepreneurs start their business effortlessly. So we started working on that. While working on the project, we found that searching for local product is actually quite tough and we don't have a proper solution for that.

Thus we got the idea for a search engine that specialises in product searching. This is quite unique and new, even for Google and Yahoo. Bangladesh's economy is growing and there is a big opportunity for a local commercial search engine to play a very vital role here. We launched our beta version in April 2015. Now Chorki.com has four search categories: Web, Product, News and Foods. With more than 10 lakh local contents, Chorki is the biggest search engine in Bangladesh.

So is it a Bangladeshi version of Google?

I wouldn't claim that. Google has decades of experience with search engines. Chorki is only a few months old and we are working every day to make results more intelligent and relevant. Plus the core idea of Chorki is different from Google. Chorki is making local content searchable, whereas Google is the global giant in the search engine industry.

For example, Chorki currently has almost 200,000 searchable local products. More than 5,000 local websites are available on Chorki's web search. We are working to cater to the interest areas of Bangladeshis. Hence the slogan: "Search Bangladesh". And we want it to be just that. Our whole team is working towards achieving this as soon as possible.

How did you guys come up with the name?



Well the chorki is a symbol of Bangladeshi culture. Whenever we think of any local fair or festival, a chorki is something you cannot ignore. Moreover, Chorki.com displays the universal searching sign as chorki that's spinning. As a whole Chorki reflects what we mean by "Search Bangladesh".

All the co-founders of Chorki left a secured job to work here. How challenging was it?

Yes, it was challenging. We all had secure jobs. But our passion and dream was to make something meaningful for the Bangladeshi market. It is very important for any startup to have the right business partner. We are lucky to have that. Chorki Limited has a strong and capable investor who backed our ideas and backed our decision to quit our jobs and start this dream journey.

Working on a startup requires funds. How did you guys secure funds for your startup?

Developing a search engine is one of the toughest jobs in the world in terms of tech-

nology as well as sustainability. Plus from Chorki Limited we have two other major projects: Ghoori (e-commerce platform) and Lateem (ad-engine). All these products are unique and tough to develop. So we needed proper backup in terms of business experience and funding. Hence, before starting our journey we pitched to several investors. Mind Initiative, a VC from Malaysia showed interest in our vision and product ideas. Thus we found our funding and business partner.

Do you and your co-founders miss your old lives? Working for a corporation and the perks?

No we don't. Chorki is our dream and passion. So we were all completely ready to leave our corporate career to start this amazing journey. Yes, startups are tough as you need

to do everything, from managing developers to office/admin work, whereas in the corporate world you have your own specific responsibilities. But in our case, we are enjoying the current situation – working to develop three awesome products and a great organisational culture. We started our journey with four people, but right now we have a team of 23 people and it is increasing every month. Interestingly, not a single person has left Chorki in its 7 month-long journey. We share a common goal and vision for the company as a team and reflect the culture of Bangladesh and her heritage. Our office is designed to encourage interactions between ChorkiBajj (that's what we are calling ourselves) and to spark conversation about work as well as play. Summing it up, we are just enjoying the entrepreneurial lifestyle.

Do guys have any competitors in the market? If yes, how is your product different from them?

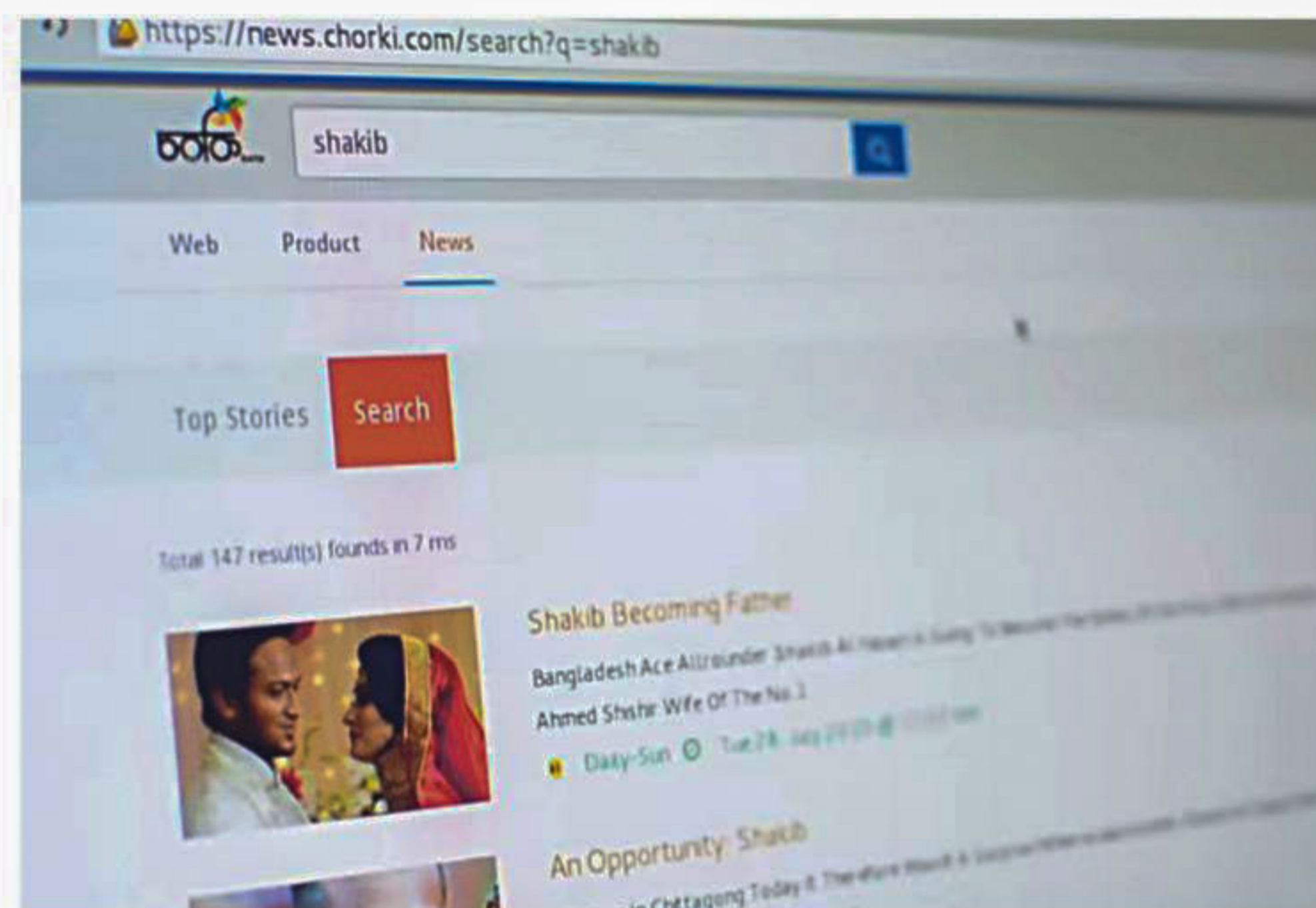
Chorki.com actually is the second attempt at developing a search engine. Pipilika.com, a research project from SUST, was the first search engine from Bangladesh. But that was not a commercial project. So in a sense Chorki.com is the first commercial search engine from Bangladesh. We are actually quite different from them. Firstly, we believe Chorki.com has the cleanest and easiest-to-access UI compared to any search engine in the world. Secondly, our algorithm and searching technology is also unique. We are using our own developed ranking system and AI to give more relevant local search results. Yes, we have a long way to go, but we are sure we are on the right path. We are currently working on introducing more categories like: Jobs, Cricket, Image and Video.

Chorki's beta site has been out for a while now. How good has the response been so far?

We are overwhelmed with the response. We're getting 3,000 unique searches every day. As a number, it is very low, but as a start this is amazing. We got great traction from users as well as media. People are excited and they are helping us by submitting thousands of web links (<https://chorki.com/submit-links>). We have had steady growth so far. This gives us the foundation to launch big communications campaigns soon. As a whole, we got the start and now it is our duty to give excellent search results so that more and more people come to Chorki and start searching.

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



NSU HAAT BAZAR TASTE OF THE REAL WORLD

Haat Bazar, a day-long business and entrepreneurship simulation by Career & Placement Centre and the Department of Management of North South University, was successfully held on the 25th November for the fourth time since fall 2014 by Young Entrepreneurs Society (YES!), the business club of North South University. The goal of the event was for the students enrolled in the Entrepreneurship course to gain exposure on being a real-life entrepreneur for a day, frosting it with a first-hand experience of the problems a real business could face.

33 teams with students in groups of four are primed from a month in advance, with each group assigned a budget of BDT 20,000 of their own money to set up a stall to sell their products and services to the students of NSU. The teams are educated by respective faculty members on how to make their stalls stand out and where to save an arm and a leg or two.

Stalls with striking names such as Jog-a Khichuri, Ei Dike Bhai, Utt-er Dol and many more were selling a

variety of cuisines as well as cosmetic and clothing products, some with quirky product names like Kalo Jongol and so on.

Interesting additions to the simulation are real-world factors that entrepreneurs may face. Students from the organising club NSU YES! act as goons trying to tax the stores, as well as a quality control body or Mobile Court, who examine the stalls for hygiene and quality and are able to confiscate products if any issues arise.

Performances of the teams are evaluated by the course instructors throughout the day on multiple factors, such as leadership abilities, customer satisfaction, innovation, publicity and promotion, operational management,

etc; with the objective of the simulation being to prepare the students for the real world business hardships they might face in the years to come.



RAHIN SADMAN

Samsung awards first batch of ARISE grads



Ashok Kumar Bishwas, Director General of Bangladesh Technical Education Board; Choon Soo Moon, Country Manager of Samsung Electronics Bangladesh; and other senior officials were present at the awards ceremony of the ARISE programme.

Samsung Electronics Bangladesh has awarded 72 graduates who have passed the ARISE program of the Dhaka Polytechnic Institute. ARISE, which stands for Advanced Repair and Industrial Skill Enhancement, is a six month-long training program for the final year students to develop basic technical and people skills.

As part of their Creating Shared Value (CSV) initiative, Samsung established a lab and a classroom with modern and advanced repair equipments. Upon completing the

course, students were provided with internship opportunities at Samsung's service centres for a month. 32 graduates have already been employed, of whom 12 are employed at Samsung's service centres.

Through this program, Samsung strives to bridge the skills gap between industry requirements and academic education.

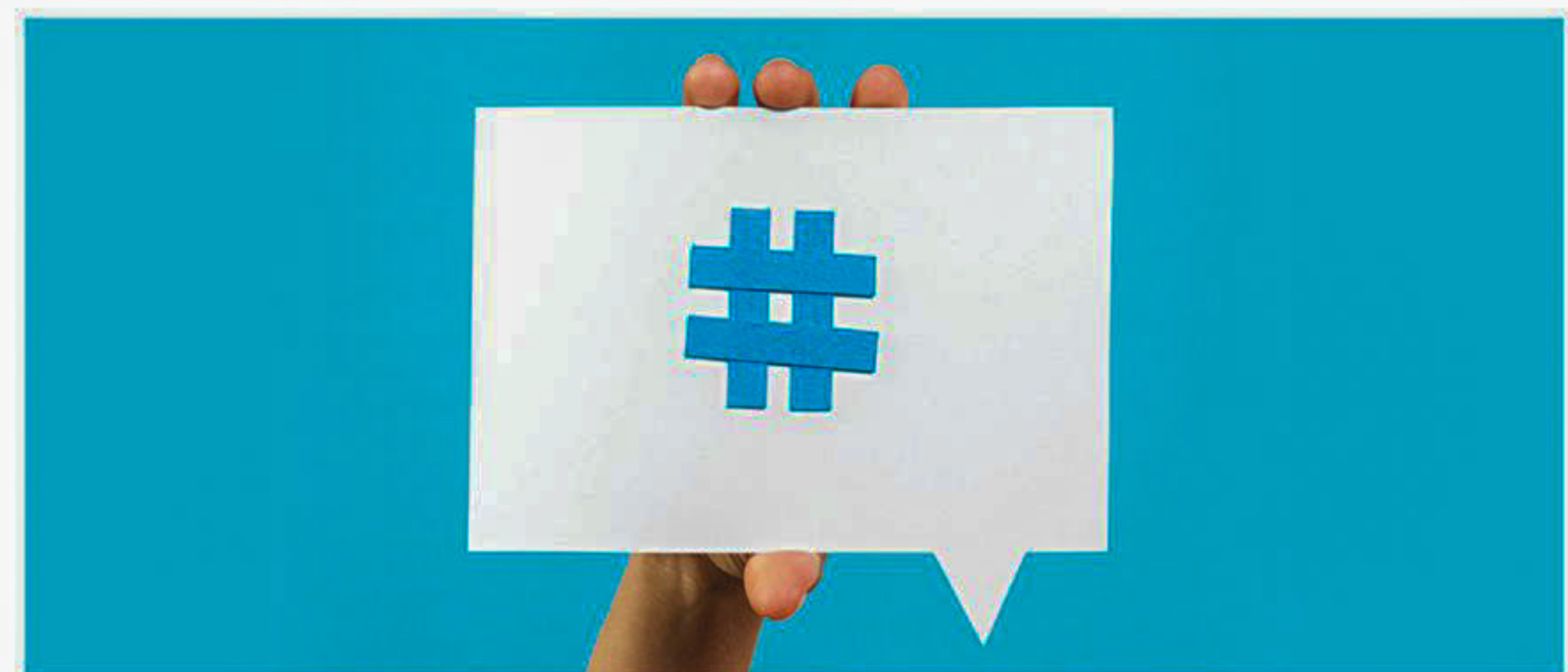
"I was always concerned with the uncertainty of the job market after my graduation. But now I've

improved my technical skills and have even gained actual experience through the internship. And after graduating, I got a job to work at Samsung – which is great!" says Razib Ahmed. Omar Faruk Rasel, another graduate working at Bengal Communications added, "I am grateful to have received such an opportunity. Often with a little help, we can realise our true potential and self-worth, and this is exactly what Samsung's ARISE program has offered".

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.

4 QUESTIONS LIKEABLE PEOPLE ALWAYS ASK



Sometimes we say or do things that give the wrong impression in a work setting. We don't do it on purpose – we just don't think through how we're coming off. What sounds direct and sufficient to one person is curt and arrogant to another.

While some phrases are misleading and induce a negative reaction in the other person, others can instantly improve the mood and your workplace relationships.

1. What are you working on?
We're all busy people, but if you get too self-involved, you're not going to have time to connect with other people. One easy solution is to get off that swivel chair and go up to somebody else's desk for a change. Don't you ever feel like telling someone about your day? Chances are someone else wants to be heard as well. Maybe there's a project they're working on and would love to flesh it out with someone. So take an active stance and find out what other people are up to.

2. Can I help?
Now it's completely possible that

you really are too busy to get super involved with something else. You have a heap of tabs open on Google Chrome, trying to make the next big revolutionary campaign for the new client your company just bagged. But if you have a few extra minutes, pitch in and help with what the person sitting in the next cubicle is working on. If you can't help directly, maybe you can at least offer a second opinion. This question shows that you're a team player, willing to make time for others. And just like that, you come off as more approachable and hence, more likeable.

3. What do you think?
It's pretty common for co-workers, even ones working on different projects, to share their work and their ideas with one another. Getting a new perspective is like testing how effective your work is and opening it up to criticism before it reaches the client. And wanting to hear from someone else what they think shows that you value that person's insight. While it's easy to overlook, some-

times out of shyness, break the ice and share away!

4. Do you want to get lunch somewhere?
No, you don't have to have lunch in the canteen every single day of the week. And if you're too busy to have lunch outside, grab some tea with your co-workers after work hours. While you probably do this all the time with people you already have a good rapport with, you might be forgetting the office newbie or someone you don't know very well. So next time you're headed out to grab a quick bite, invite someone new with your team and get to know him better.

We all have someone with whom we wish we had a better relationship. So give it a shot – you might just brighten up somebody's day.

AMIYA HALDER

The writer is Sub-Editor of the career publication of The Daily Star. She is also a junior at the Institute of Business Administration, University