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e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

NEXT STEP

THE ENABLING ACT

Rumana Rahman, Head of Human Resources at BAT Bangladesh, shares best kept secrets for upcoming talent

BAT is such an expansive organisation. As Head of HR, how would you describe your job in a nutshell?

I look at this job very simply. I see it as enabling the other functions of the organisation. So it's almost like being the lubricant in the wheels of the organisation. As HR you make sure organization has the best human resource. Sometime we as HR professional give more focus to process and become process obsessed overlooking the purpose.

What do you like most about working in HR?

I think HR is the unique function where the balance of heart and head is very critical. You have to look after the commercial side of the business as well as the interest of the people side, both of which are very critical to the success of the organisation. That balancing act has been an amazing journey for me so far.

You're the first female head in BAT Bangladesh. What kind of challenges have you faced as a female leader?

To grow women in the organisation is a continuous challenge. I did not face less challenges in the early years of my career. As you go up the leadership, it's get more challenging. Just before I took the role in the executive committee I could feel the walls telling me, "Accha dekhbo kemon kore."

I think the best way to deal with a challenge is to not change as an individual. You have to keep caring about the people and caring about the business. There were challenges, like when I took business cases to senior leadership who were not used

to dealing with females working with millions of pounds of investment. So it's very critical how our leaders deal with it. I had and have very open and unbiased line managers who really made me feel comfortable and evaluated me based on my capability, not my gender. Of course in our society, the corporate world continues to be dominated by males and we as females have to take along our male colleagues in our journey of equity. You cannot work in isolation.

Battle of Minds is in its 12th year now. How has the journey been so far?

We gave birth to Battle of Minds around 2004. It was a very small endeavour that started in a small room in East West University. Back then it was just a case competition. Firstly, we were trying to spot talent. Secondly, we were trying to see what we could do to bridge the gap between academic life and professional life. Today it's not just a competition – it's a life-changing experience that we offer to individuals. It helps them realise what they're good at, what they're bad at, how they need to prepare for the corporate world, what instincts they have, so that they come out as stars at the end of the day at whatever they do.

There has been criticism regarding Battle of Minds conflicting with the Tobacco Act. What is your opinion?

First of all, we are a responsible and compliant company doing business here for over 100 years. We would not do anything outside the compliance factor and we respect the laws of the country fully – that is our biggest

You learn every single day during your time at BAT. So developing yourself never ends. That's the first philosophy this organisation has.



pride.

Battle of Minds is a talent initiative completely for university students and it has nothing to do with the product we manufacture and sell. The theme of the competition is always based on contemporary business topics that are relevant for the new talents, and helps them to understand the corporate world.

But there are perceptions about it that are otherwise because of a lack of understanding of the law. I would urge critics to explore fully about this

platform and not be counterproductive to something that is so productive to the students and the future generation of the country.

Battle of Minds is like a grooming process that BAT provides to university students outside the organisation. What are some grooming processes inside BAT?

You learn every single day during your time at BAT. Even our GM went

ABOUT RUMANA RAHMAN

Rumana started her career in BATB as a Management Trainee after completing her BBA from IBA, Dhaka University. She performed various roles covering specialist areas like reward, talent and generalist streams of business partnering. Before taking over the Head of HR role, Rumana was the Regional HR Planning & Reporting Manager in the Asia Pacific Region based in Hong Kong. Rumana is the first local female Top Team member of BAT Bangladesh.

for a training a couple of weeks back. So developing yourself never ends. That's the first philosophy this organisation has.

We have trainings which help people to acquire skills. We put them in jobs, 'crisis' situations and various projects. They learn and they crawl and they climb. Then they jump and they leap through those initiatives. We take risks with our young talent who come to the leadership level. You cannot just risk an individual with a big job. We make sure they are

supported through good coaching and mentoring programs so that they are set up for success.

I also think exposing our talent to the international stage makes them more confident. And when they go to our headquarters, they don't see the business from one point of view, they see it from 180 different points of views (as BAT operates in more than 180 countries globally). The more culturally sensitive you are, the better you can deal with different issues and the better you will do at the top.

One thing to be mentioned is that we develop business leaders so we give them a very good orientation to the business. It's not like you're working for external affairs or HR or marketing, you are working for British American Tobacco Bangladesh's business. You're not compartmentalised to think that you just do one job. You need to know how your job is connected to the rest of the organisation.

And the million-dollar question: how do you decide that somebody is BAT material?

Attitude. That's what's most important. It's not skills, it's not intelligence – you will be checked for those. We want to see sharp, resilient individuals, who can take failure and respond to it – that is where attitude comes in.

For the full interview, check out the Next Step web page

INTERVIEWED BY AMIYA HALDER

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

CROSS FUNCTIONALITY IN BUSINESS

ICMAB DBC's Chairman discusses the Cross Functional Summit



accomplish that goal. But we have frequently observed inter-functional conflicts, which can easily be avoided through awareness, relation-building and proper interaction. We intended to bring the three major functions into a common dialogue, which will ultimately help to perform better in the organization.

What do you think are the reasons of conflict in an organisation?

Each group has its own way of working, academic orientation, seasoning processes and set of job-specific norms. There are gaps among the groups because of lack of sharing and unorganised interaction. Therefore, conflict arises.

Do you think the summit will help remove conflicts among the functions?

While a single summit cannot remove conflicts completely, it gave some ideas to the participants about interaction between the functions. Finance is strict on compliance and HR on policies, whereas Marketing is always focused on sales. Although business should get the highest priority, compliance and policies are in no way less important. At the same time, Finance and HR should focus more on the business.

What do you expect the participants to take away from the summit?

Not every participant will have the same take away from the conference. There were some very knowledge-rich panels. A single tip or a statement may change or reshape the attitude and career of an individual. Therefore, I would like to convey the message "Let's understand others, let's interact positively and let's strive for better productivity."

this can ultimately expedite the process of achieving organisational goals.

Why sustainable growth?

Despite our focus on professionals in organisation, we also kept the national objective in mind. Bangladesh achieved the status of lower middle income country and we are in the process of achieving the status of middle income country. We do not yet know what the parameters for that are. But we feel that organisational productivity occupies a place in the process of acquiring middle income status. We believe that the summit put emphasis on this area.

How do you feel such a summit is useful?

As you know that each organisation has its own goals. Employees and sponsors always endeavour to

Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh's (ICMAB) Dhaka Branch Council (DBC) held the Cross Functional Summit on December 19, 2015. Partnered with the Bangladesh Society for Human Resources Management (BSHRM) and Bangladesh Brand Forum the summit was attended by professionals in Finance and Accounts, Human Resource and Marketing/Branding.

This year's theme was cross functional collaboration for sustainable growth. We talked to S. M. Zahid Uddin Haider FCMA, Chairman of DBC, about the event.

What was the main objective of the summit?

The main objective was to strengthen relations and understanding among the three main organisational functions, as

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.

HOW TO LAND YOUR DREAM JOB

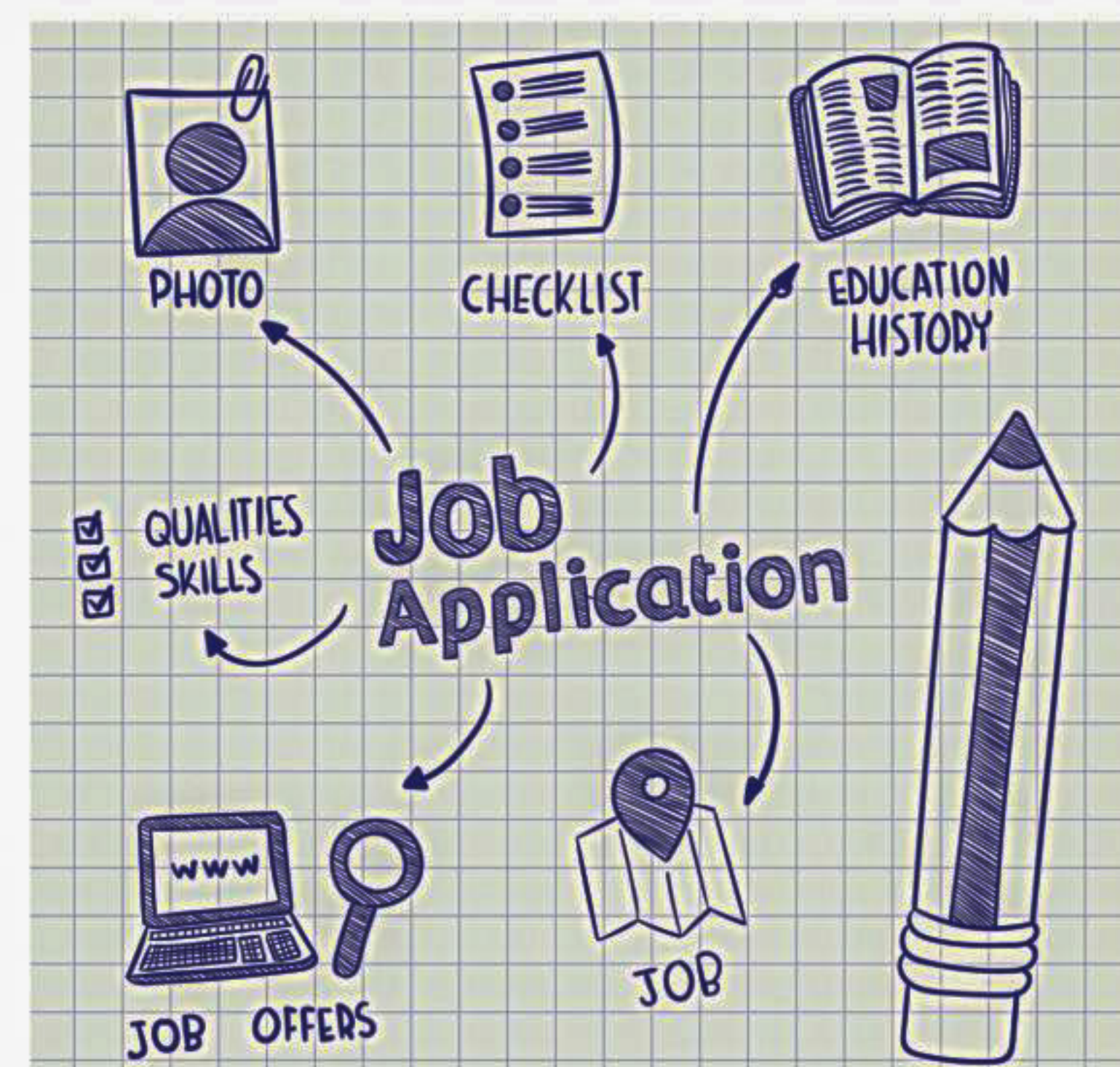
These days, most of us have a dream company even before we have a dream job. And while it's great to not be broke halfway through the month, there's a difference between a job that pays the bills and a satisfying career.

So you know what your dream company is. Now what? You need a game plan that's going to get you noticed and that's going to flaunt what a great investment you're going to be.

1. Really dig in
Being the creeper that you are, you've probably already stalked every single photo of your dream company's stunning office that you could lay your hands on. You know all about its home-made packed lunch catering service and its glamorous annual parties. But there's gotta be more beneath the paint and the polish. Start digging into the organisation's core values or core offerings. The first place you should look to for more information is obviously the company website. There's always more to learn – whether it's from social media or articles.

The more you know, the more you'll stand out in networking events and application materials. You can go the extra mile by checking out the company leadership on LinkedIn and finding out how the company runs.

2. Where do you fit in?
It's time for some introspection. What led you to this particular company? Perhaps you're a genius at making sense of financial statements, or maybe you're a coding wizard, or the 'it guy' of the fitness marketing world. Whatever your niche, start



stringing together your story and coming up with a solid elevator pitch of what you have to offer. You're going to need to make an unforgettable speech in front of all those people you've been stalking on LinkedIn.

3. Find an "in"
This is where it can all fall apart. You know exactly what you want to say at the interview. But how do you get in that room? It all depends on the type of organisation you're applying to, and on your contacts to an extent. Hit up the inside guy with all the great networking connections and find out who knows who in your dream company. Try to arrange a sit-down or a quick networking call. If you have a friend or an

acquaintance already working at the company, even better. The key here is to know what you want to find out, i.e. possibility of an opening or other people's interview experiences.

4. Application time
With your groundwork laid, it's time for the final step. Whether or not you've gotten an internal referral from all the networking you've been doing, you cannot send in a half-hearted resume. Customise that resume like there's no tomorrow and make sure to construct an impressive intro for your cover letter. Enthusiasm will only get you so very far – it's all about the effort you put in.

AMIYA HALDER