



What's Next for Battle of Minds Champs?

PHOTO: DARSHAN CHAKMA

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

This year's 'Battle of Minds' by British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) saw a team from IBA – Sanjir Ali, Naziza Akhter Alam, Jidny Rubaiyat Shoummo and M. Samiul Haque – take home the crown of champions. Last week, SHOUT sat with the winning team at The Daily Star

Bangladesh needs self motivated young leaders. Battle of Minds is a fantastic platform for these young leaders. Another side is that all graduates are not job seekers. There are people who will be job-giving entrepreneurs. This platform is creating an opportunity to make entrepreneurs. If anyone wants to succeed, they need to put in the hours, because there is no other way of getting to the top. Also if anyone isn't passionate enough about what they do, it isn't worth doing so. Passion needs to become our purpose and only then can it become our profession too.

Syed Nasim Manzur
President, MCCI
Chief Guest, Grand Finale, Battle of Minds 2015

Centre and engaged in a conversation about their BOM experience and future plans.

SHOUT: How did you develop as a team over the course of the competition?

SHOUMMO: We knew each other as we always had the same classes at IBA. I believe that got us an upper hand. We had a good chemistry from the start and used our strengths to gel well.

SAMIUL: I would say that we were all very good “communicators” with a winning mentality. I remember that during the final round teams took their lunch break but we

stayed back and worked really hard – that says something about the dedication we had.

SHOUT: How is Battle of Minds (BOM) different from the many business competitions in Bangladesh?

SAMIUL: The primary difference is that participants enter BOM as individuals, and later are placed in teams after 3 rounds. This allows for individual assessment so everyone can realise their respective strengths and weaknesses and work on them. Moreover, working for this competition, in a professional environment gave us a taste of the real world. The mentoring part of BOM was also unique and extremely helpful.

NAZIZA: Working as individuals in the first rounds was some experience, I would say. We were final year university students doing tasks together so one needed to know how to deal with people from different backgrounds – which is no short of an eye-opener.

SANJIR: To add to that, BOM requires that we come up with both feasible and practical solutions to problems rather than a hypothetical one. And to be able to mention one's involvement in BOM in one's CV is a great achievement in itself.

SHOUT: What about the organisers impressed you the most?

SANJIR: The “people” at BATB, hands down.

NAZIZA: Yes, and I think we all agree to that. Not only were they approachable, they never backed down to listen to our constant naggings. They were ever present as mentors to throw constructive criticism our way, and that helped massively.

SHOUMMO: It was encouraging to see professionals from BATB walk into our rooms, to ask how we were doing, and giving us valuable advice on improving our ideas. When we'd be low on confidence, they were always on our toes telling us to liven up.

SHOUT: Would you prefer working at multinational companies (MNCs) like BATB or become entrepreneurs?

NAZIZA: To be very honest, it's difficult to say that at this moment. But I think I'd like to work at an MNC first and then move on to entrepreneurship.

SAMIUL: I suppose our end goal is to become successful entrepreneurs, and we can only become so if we apply knowledge from our experiences at various organisations. Nothing's set in stone and priorities might change, of course, but entrepreneurship is what we're aiming for.

SHOUT: And lastly, what's next?

SHOUMMO: Getting a job, preferably. All of us had an

amazing last few months. Now it's time to work.
SANJIR: We want to start from a point and become serial entrepreneurs in the future. The learning won't stop and it's only the beginning of a journey.

This is an amazing initiative taken by BAT Bangladesh, and they should be congratulated for it. Not enough companies focus on nurturing talent and building capacity the way the Battle of Minds competition does, and this is why the competition has become a fixture in the calendar of students with an eye on the future and a lodestar of excellence. To participate in it is a mark of quality and achievement, and BAT makes sure that every man and woman who takes part leaves the competition with first-class training under their belt. Of course, I would reserve my best praise for the students who participate in the competition. The level of creativity and invention on display is remarkable, and the sincere effort they put into turning the experience into a first-class learning exercise really needs to be commended. The competition really showcases the best of Bangladesh.

Zafar Sobhan
Editor, Dhaka Tribune
Special Guest, Grand Finale, Battle of Minds 2015

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