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NEXT STEP

E-COMMERCE IS NOW A 300 CRORE INDUSTRY AND GROWING

Syeda Kamrun Ahmed, CEO of Bagdoom, shares insights on the e-commerce industry in Bangladesh

What are your thoughts on Bangladesh's e-commerce scene?

We were one of the first players in the e-commerce scene. One might even say we are one of the pioneers. But when we started to work, we did not just think of our company. Rather we wanted to set a trend – a trend of going online to buy and products. When we started, the online marketplace in our neighbouring countries was flourishing. Yet in Bangladesh it was almost nonexistent. So besides building our own business, we also had to raise awareness about the e-commerce industry.

But right now, the e-commerce scene in Bangladesh is really exciting. There are lots of local e-commerce platforms in the market. Not only that, multiple massive foreign e-commerce platforms have started investing here. And more are on their way. The reason is obvious – they can see that this market has enormous potential. In the last couple of years, smartphones have also made up a huge portion of the market as a target for e-commerce.

The best part is that people in Bangladesh are starting to enjoy the benefits of the e-commerce industry of the country. It saves time and money, and makes our lives simpler. After the implementation of online payment gateways, we saw a slow rise in e-commerce. Thanks to mobile payment system, the pace of e-commerce picked up massively.

Our estimates show that e-commerce is currently now a Tk. 300 crore industry. Of course, the figure might vary a bit, but one thing is for sure – the trend is uphill and it will grow exponentially in the years to

come.

How intense is the competition? What sets Bagdoom apart from other e-commerce platforms?



As I said, with more and more local and foreign players in the market, we are seeing positive competition. Everyone is trying to provide the best possible service at the best possible price. But we frequently see many e-commerce platforms facing problems

in the planning and execution phase of their operations. Not Bagdoom though. Past experience has taught us to streamline the processes. Hence, we are able to make smart decisions

at the right time.

Also, Bagdoom maintains strict quality control. All our products are double-checked before making their way to the platform for delivery. In addition to that, we work round the clock with our delivery partners to

ensure smooth last mile delivery in the metropolitan areas. I think this really sets us apart from our competitors.

From Akhoni.com to

inexpensive. Hence, we branded our platform in a very different way.

Since the market has evolved a lot, we too are adapting. Bagdoom, our new name, is trendy, energetic, youth-

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centric and fun – in line with our brand manifesto. Our portal is for young adults who are tech-savvy and willing to try out new things. So I believe with the new name and brand identity, Bagdoom has a long way to go.

What are the challenges you

now sense in this industry?

Over time, the challenges in this industry have changed. Neither online payment nor customer traction is the biggest issue now. Today the challenges are more mature. With many players in the market, the biggest challenge has become providing quality service round the clock.

The second challenge is dependence on cash-on-delivery (COD). Keeping the right amount of change for the payment can be bothersome. In addition to that, the courier picking up the cash is also risky. He might lose the money or get mugged – creating mistrust within the e-commerce industry. Surveys show that 75 percent of transactions are still COD.

The third challenge is ensuring doorstep delivery outside Dhaka in the shortest possible time. Many of the e-commerce business are even getting requests to deliver products overseas. I believe NRBs are a big market and we should also come up with a solution to deliver our product to them as well.

What's Bagdoom's game plan for the year 2016?

Our top priority this year is to overcome the delivery challenges that I mentioned. We are planning to run some major campaigns this year to encourage customers to opt for online payment. We also want to implement even stricter quality control regulation, which will lead to better service delivery. These are the

aspects we really want to focus on

INTERVIEWED BY SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Engineer-turned-writer, Shahriar Rahman is Sub-Editor of the tech publi-

6 MUST-HAVE MARKETING SKILLS FOR 2016

For marketers everywhere, 2016 means new skills and staying ahead of the competition. Are you diversifying your skill set? If you intend to succeed this new year, focus your efforts on the creative expertise your work demands most.



1. ANALYTICS

Analytical marketers make use of web behaviour, such as purchase history and device engagement – to facilitate traffic and leads. Researchers predict that by 2018 there will be a deficit of up to 1.5 million analytical marketers. So if you're data-savvy, you'll be a hot commodity this coming year.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA

The ever-expanding world of social media will require social media managers to add new networks to their marketing strategies. According to Formstack, an online form builder, marketers plan to include Google+, SlideShare and Pinterest in their new social media strategies. Stay on the cutting edge and create the trend, not follow it.

3. DATA VISUALISATION

It's been well-established by now that websites that utilise

infographics see an increase in traffic. But mini visual media is gaining popularity as well due to ease of sharing. In 2016, work on creating visual media that are people and that people will be excited to share.

4. TECHNICAL SKILLS

Being a jack of all trades is definitely going to pay off in 2016. While bosses might not expect you to take up coding or video production, marketers who are knowledgeable in these areas can work better with tech teams and developers to create products and services that customers want. Technical skills will be particularly important for new marketing hires.

5. NEWSJACKING

No matter which industry you're in, being aware of pop culture and breaking news is a must in the digital age. Advantages are not bound to just limited-time market-

ing opportunities. Staying current also helps your team react to PR messes quicker.

6. SOFT SKILLS

In an interview with Forbes, Mark Murphy, the founder and CEO of Leadership IQ, a top-rated provider of cutting-edge research, stated that nine out of ten times individuals reported job failure due to poor attitude or behaviour. So this new year, pay extra attention to your workplace relationships. Being a marketer isn't just about what you know – communication, teamwork, friendliness, and flexibility make the man.

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 of Dhaka

MEETING ETIQUETTE THAT EVERY PROFESSIONAL SHOULD KNOW IN 2016

Work isn't always fun, and work meetings even less. But when you're required to attend one, it's important to be respectful and professional among your managers, colleagues, and clients. To help you in your work life in 2016, here are the top tips from Barbara Pachter, career coach and author of The Essentials of Business Etiquette.

1. Pre-meeting mingling

Go up to people and introduce yourself, or make small talk (no matter how little you know one another). If everyone doesn't know one another in the meeting room, break the ice and make introductions, starting with the person of the highest rank.

2. Stand when you're being introduced

Besides being respectful, standing helps establish your presence. It's much easier for others to ignore you or get a bad impression if you don't stand.

3. Get to the point

Yes, you are making small talk. But that's no reason to reveal unnecessary information. There are limits in all professional settings so it's best not to make a fool of yourself.

4. Higher-ranking etiquette

If you're hosting the meeting or the higher-ranking person in the conversation, regardless of gender, you should extend your hand first.

5. Be punctual

No matter your position, you don't want to waste anyone else's time by being tardy.

6. Adjust your chair

So that you're at equal height with everyone else at the table. It's also best not to cross your legs because it can be disrespectful or distracting in a professional setting.

7. What's the dress code?

Clothing can greatly enhance or detract a person's professional reputation. So make sure your attire falls within the guidelines.

8. It's okay to hold open a door

But don't pull out someone's chair for them. Leave those



social gender norms behind in the 20th century.

9. Prepare yourself

Know the content of the meeting beforehand and know what your part in it is. There will be questions and some of them will be for you.

10. Don't digress

If you stray from the agenda, chances are you're going to lose your audience. If you do, make sure to have a co-worker who can manoeuvre you in the right direction.

11. Speak loudly and speak early

Make sure every single person at the table can hear what you're saying. To make the most impact, find something meaningful to add at the very beginning so people know you are there. Don't save all your questions for the end when everyone's ready to get out. Don't be "that" person.

12. Understand the unspoken rules

While it is impolite to interrupt others, sometimes you have to. Understand your position and get your position across so that you can have a productive meeting.

13. Keep your phone in your pocket

If you can, avoid taking notes in your phone. It's easy for others to get the impression that you're doing something else. It's also easy for you to get distracted. Set your phone on silent and step outside if you have to make that call.

BRACU organises Freshman Orientation for Spring 2016



BRACU Freshman Orientation Program for Spring '16 students kicked off on January 5, with 930 freshmen students and their parents. The orientation program was designed to introduce new students to life at the campus as they begin their journey at BRAC University, from academics and community norms to resources and support services. All department heads, faculty members and administrative staff were present to welcome the excited fresh undergraduate students along with their parents. BRACU has designed an interactive dialog session between the concerned personnel and the parents to help them to support, understand and encourage students during the transition to university life.