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NEXT STEP

WEAVING A CAREER IN RMG

RMG is the top export industry in Bangladesh. More than one tenth of the population is directly or indirectly related to this industry. This growing industry has still room for more expert manpower to start their careers. With over 30 years of experience in this industry, Md. Moshui Azam Shajal, former Director of BGMEA & Managing Director of Posmi Sweaters, gives us the scoop on how rewarding this industry can be career-wise.

HOW DID YOU END UP IN THIS SECTOR?

When I was a student, I started working at my brother-in-law's office. I helped him with one of his projects, which was erecting a sweater factory. After graduating from DU, I joined a corporation. But I terribly missed working in the RMG sector so I left that job within 3 months of joining. I got back to the garments' company where I was minority shareholder. After working there for 2 years, I was hooked!

WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK?

There are challenges in every profession. But in our industry, the challenges are quite different. When I started working in the RMG sector, the first challenge that we faced was communication. Basically, we lacked merchandising skills. I had to enhance my skills as a merchandiser first because we lacked the required human resources. Even today, I lead the merchandising department of the business.

The next waves of challenges were the new compliance regulations imposed in Bangladesh. Dealing with child labour was a crucial aspect back in the 90s. I admit, for a country like Bangladesh, regulation is actually doing good for the business. Yes, thanks to that, all the reputed garments are more or less complying with the global standard, which in the long term is helping the industry thrive.

Another challenge is the new emerging competition. Due to political stability and human resources, countries like Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and India are becoming our

competitors in this sector. Surviving tough competition is a challenge as well.

Lastly, one thing that most people in the RMG sector will admit: the scarcity of technically educated human resources in Bangladesh.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES THAT YOU LOOK FOR IN PEOPLE WHEN HIRING?



“Be aggressive. Without aggression you won't be able to make a mark in the industry.”

This varies from position to position. In case of entry level fresh grads, we want them to be creative and fast learners. In the case of mid level hires, we look for people who have worked in the industry for a certain period of time. We also take into account the time someone has worked in each particular company. The last thing we want is a job hopper. It's bad for my company as well

as his/her own career. For top level positions, we generally hire people who are veterans in the field and have a keen eye for upcoming business trends.

WHAT'S THE COMPENSATION PACKAGE LIKE IN THIS INDUSTRY?

Quite impressive to be honest! Fresh graduates with a technical degree in the relevant field are easily able to secure their first job

150,000 per month whereas top level executives draw over than BDT 250,000 per month on an average. So as you can see there are lots of perks involved.

Another interesting thing is that there is scope for career growth from the very lowest positions. In my company, we have 3 production managers all of whom started out as swing operators. And now, with over than 7-8 years of experience in production, they look after an entire floor's production. Their compensation package has grown as well; now each of them earns no less than BDT 80,000.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE TO BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS IN THE RMG INDUSTRY?

I would ask them to start by building a sustainable and compliant infrastructure for the factory. The competition is stiff now so you need to be creative and you need to be able to foresee what's coming. Be aggressive. Without aggression you won't be able to make a mark in the industry. Follow all the Accord Alliance compliance guidelines. And be good with the people you are working with. If you follow these I am sure you will be able to create a great business.

Check out the Next Step website for the full interview.

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 YES! hosts Masters of Ideation for the fourth year



North South University Young Entrepreneur's Society (NSU YES!) is proud to be the organisers of the nationwide inter-university event Masters of Ideation for the fourth time. Masters of Ideation is a business strategy based, case solving competition for undergraduate students.

The successful completion of intra-NSU Rounds of Masters of Ideation 2016 led up to the inter-university workshop held on March 18. 50 stellar groups representing 12 universities from all around the country signed up for the competition. Six teams will qualify to the final round for a chance to become the Masters of Ideation and receive a grand total of BDT 300,000.

Corporate elites, entrepreneurs and business strategy specialists from illustrious organisations in Bangladesh presided over the workshop. They shared tips and tricks for succeeding in the professional life and the upcoming competition rounds ahead. The speakers comprised of Ashiqur Rahman Khan, International Marketing Manager of Square Foods and Beverages; Saimun Hossain, Co-founder of Geeky Social as well as Lecturer of Business Studies, University of Dhaka; and lastly, Iftiqar Tawhid, Executive Manager of Banglalink.

After the completion of the workshop, the first round started off at 3 pm, with the goal of becoming the prestigious winner of Masters of Ideation.

The competition is gold sponsored by Aamra Solutions Ltd. and silver sponsored by Dhaka Bank. Media partners for the event were Radio Foorti, Jamuna TV, Dhaka Tribune, The Daily Star and The Daily Ittefaq.

Take charge of your life

Ishtiaq Ahmed, CEO of Omera Petroleum Limited and Omera Cylinders Limited, sheds light on self-transformation

Why are only five percent of graduates truly successful in their careers? Why does the majority live out an average life? Have you ever asked your seniors these questions? Instead of delving into details, I'm going to lay down the path to 'self-transformation', to show you how to lead a better career.

Graduation is your ticket to the job market, but it doesn't guarantee a robust career. Just as each product or organisation has a life cycle, your career also has a life cycle. Therefore, each stage of this life cycle needs a strategy relevant to it. The moment you graduate, you are at the "introduction" stage of your life and career cycle. A promising future depends on how well you start this first stage.

After 19 years of professional experience, mostly in MNCs in the FMCG, telco and energy industries, I've gone through the 'red ocean' of corporate life. I strongly recommend the following steps before you apply for a job:

- Ask yourself what you want from life. In other words, what are your goals?
- Define your action plan and take action.
- Observe what's working and what's not working. Form a contingency plan.
- Modify your approach until you achieve what you want. Remain flexible and act fast.

In each stage of your life and career cycle, these four steps will remain the same, but your thought and approach will change. Let me very briefly explain some of the steps you'll need to take.

The first step is extremely important as it will determine your quality of living to a great extent. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How am I going to live today in order to make the tomorrow of my dreams?
- How am I going to spend the next five years of my life?
- Is working in MNCs a must? Why not work in a good local company? (The ratio of MNCs to local companies is around 1:20. Isn't it foolish to believe that you'll have no future if you work in a local company?)
- Do you want a life where you can strike a balance between personal achievements and constructive contribution to social development?
- Do you want a career in sales? Or marketing or HR or supply chain? Why?

You know the answers to these questions, but you should also obtain quality information from your seniors.

Life isn't a science and doesn't follow a set formula. Therefore, I cannot stress how important it is to have at least three contingency plans for each action you take. For example, I have seen many graduates apply only to MNCs and after 6 to 8 months, hastily apply to an average local company out of fear of unemployment.

Many are determined to work only in marketing and end up compromising on the quality of the company. You must be open-minded and keep your options open to two other functions.

If you don't get your dream job or the right job, will you start to think your life is unsuccessful? This is the biggest mistake you can. You will need to start planning how to turn your below average or average job into a platform for success. You simply need to find out high potential opportunities in your task to deliver beyond what's expected and draw the attention of management to give you more challenging assignments. Delivering results on challenging assignments puts you on the fast track for success.

But what if you do get your dream job? What's next? Academic results are no longer a criterion to decide your potential to grow in the organisation. Age or seniority is not taken into consideration. It's fairly common to report to a younger person. After all, the Managing Director of British American Tobacco Bangladesh is only in his early 40s!

You need to take complete control of your professional development and face the fact that no one is going to spoon-feed you. The organisation can give you a platform to learn, but you have to exploit that platform and always be ahead of the learning curve.

We make the mistake of not reading professional books once we're on the job, but there's lots of writing by CEOs, consultants and academics that are backed up by years of research. And such reading is actually fun because you are not doing it for grades. The next most important variables that determine a successful career are:

- Being proactive and getting involved with more projects or high priority agendas of the management.
- Being ready to explore uncomfortable areas as such assignments ensure high 'returns on investment'. Most employees reject or lobby to avoid challenging tasks.
- Building your network because it helps you get new ideas and promote your personal brand.
- Exploring cross-functional projects. It'll help you understand other departments as well as the big picture.
- Having exposure in both line and staff functions. It helps strengthen your skills and strategic thinking abilities.
- Perfecting your time management abilities because they make you look credible and dependable. It's extremely important to meet submission deadlines and attending meetings at the scheduled time.
- Learning how to multi-task. There is simply no alternative in today's competitive environment.

As the saying goes, "Nothing happens unless first a dream". You must have "passionate curiosity" to explore and learn and grow in your career.



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.



Face it, most of us don't get the eight hours of sleep every night that we need and deserve. Result? We wake up feeling the opposite of refreshed, excited, and happy. And whether you're in your first year of university or the tenth year of your career, you've probably found yourself pulling an all-nighter or two, or at least staying up way later than a normal working individual should. So if you're running on empty, here are some tricks to pull through the day without falling asleep all over your paperwork.

DELEGATE

I know, we all want to have everything done just the way we like it. But that usually entails doing everything all on our own, down to the last detail. Entrepreneur magazine advises you start delegating tasks to others. "Utilise co-workers, friends, and every family members." After all, conquering the world takes a team.

STIMULATE YOUR SENSES

While you're more likely to reach for a can of coke or make yourself a ginormous mug of black coffee when you're sleep-deprived, there are healthier non-chemical remedies to stay alert.

First off, roll up the blinds, or turn on all the lights in your workspace. Your body's internal rhythm is in sync with the amount

of light you receive so maximise your exposure to light. Next, start a casual conversation with a colleague. If you can tune into the tone, volume and content of the conversation, you can effectively boost your focus. If that doesn't work, there's always upbeat music to get yourself up and running.

And if all else fails, get off of that chair and splash some cold water on your face or turn up the AC. Coldness pushes your body to readjust its internal temperature, which in turn keeps you alert.

BRAIN FOOD

Steer clear of the sugar blues by indulging in foods that boost productivity like yogurt and dark chocolate. Check out our full infographic on 'Brain food for the office' on the Next Step website.

LOOK GOOD, FEEL GOOD

To avoid one of those days when you really just want to go back to bed and catch a few more minutes of shut-eye, take the time to pull yourself together instead. Counter-intuitive you say? Nay. Spending time on picking out clothes that'll earn you compliments and swiping on a bold lipstick won't just make you feel good about yourself, it'll jerk you out of your lethargy and give you a put-together impression.

AMIYA HALDER

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