

# THE DEMISE OF ETIQUETTE IN HR

In 2009, I decided to pursue an MBA in Human Resource Management, simply out of curiosity. It seemed to me even then, that the field of HR had still not established itself as concretely as Marketing, General Management, Sales, Education and others. Almost seven years down the line, and despite having graduated Magma cum Laude, I have sadly retained very little of what was taught. This is obviously not just preferential amnesia or selective retention. It is simply because I still haven't found out what I needed to know.

## BUSY HIRING MANAGERS

I have often wondered about what hiring managers think; how they think; how well they understand the needs of the organisation to find the perfect fit; and whether or not they are able to mutually care about the organisation and the candidates who express their eagerness to serve them.

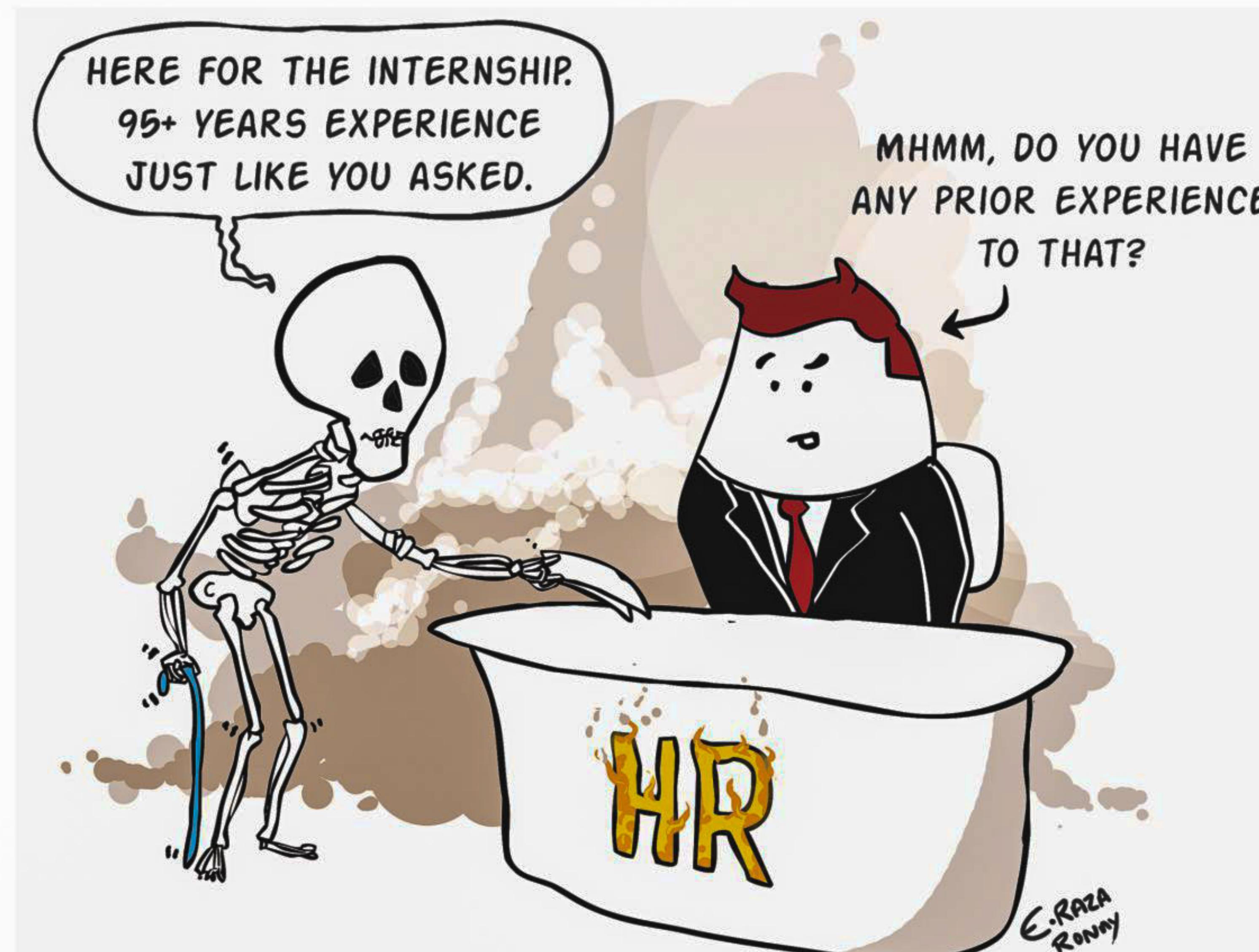
A common perception about hiring managers ingrained in our minds from numerous websites telling us to customise our CV this way and that (because it will only get a mere six seconds) is that they are incredibly busy people. Now, after a good few years of interacting with hiring managers, I am yet to understand what it is that keeps them so busy if they can't spare more than six seconds to carefully select the right candidate. I mean, excuse my naivety, but anyone can assume that a major component of their very job description would require them to ensure they are selecting the right candidates for the organisation.

## RECRUITING SHORTCUTS

In the context of Bangladesh, there are still those hiring managers who shortlist candidates based on their CGPA. In this day and age, where a strong personality can either make or break a deal while representing a company, such hiring managers should ideally be extinct. Then there are those with a tad more patience to glance at your previous work experience to see if you've worked for any of the "top dogs" in the industry. This plays the crucial role of shortening their strenuous task by assuming your candidacy based on the credibility of other big companies.

## THE INFAMOUS COVER LETTER

One might hope that with so many global



experts passing on their advice online about how important the cover letter really is, it might be the one thing to help us score us more than six seconds of the hiring manager's attention. A friend and I were chatting about this recently and we joked about how unreal, robotic and scripted we sound writing borrowed sentences like: "I am a compassionate, dedicated individual who will be an asset to your company based on my credentials." Who

talks like that in real life and who falls for it? Even product advertisements are no longer that blatant! We wondered how it would fare with our local hiring managers if a cover letter maybe flowed more like an honest and interesting introduction. The obvious answer staring us in the face was that our busy hiring managers would probably not take it in good humour or be intrigued enough to call us in for an interview.

## CONNECTIONS AND FAVOURS

Amongst some common HR practices in the region, which explain hiring managers' nonchalance and give HR a bad name, are connections and favours. No matter how good your CV and cover letter might be (and especially considering that most companies seek job applications primarily via email), I'm a tad disappointed, though barely shocked, to

realise that even today, as long as you have that uncle, friend or cousin who knows someone at the top, that entire aforesaid process of application is purely a waste of time.

## REJECTION ETIQUETTE

One thing the majority of hiring managers, even in some international organisations, do not seem to spend much time on is rejecting applicants the right way.

Roy Maurer, online manager for Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), says, "How applicants feel they were treated, whether or not they ultimately get the job, is critically important to a company's brand, according to countless studies on the subject." A company can significantly improve its image by better training the hiring manager who is often the first point of contact for all interested job applicants.

When asked what the biggest mistake employers make when rejecting applicants in an interview with SHRM, Brin McCagg, CEO and founder of Recruitify, a crowd-based recruiting program, said: "The biggest mistake employers can make is leaving their candidates in the dark. It's easy to shrug off applicants who will ultimately not be hired, but these applicants took the time to apply and showed interest in your company. Why would employers want to squash their interest by ignoring them?"

According to McCagg, the best way to communicate rejection is to be honest and straightforward. "There's no need to string them along or tell them that a position may open up in the future. If that's not true, and you're just sugar coating their rejection, then that's the wrong way to go about it."

I can only hope this will change soon and when it does, it will be a significant step forward for the field of HR. Courtesy and good manners need to be stated as prerequisites of hiring managers. Rejection might be an uncomfortable task to do, but you cannot possibly feel worse than the person on the receiving end of the rejection.

KISHWAR M CHOWDHURY

The writer has an MBA in Human Resource Management and is a former university lecturer

# STRESS = GROWTH + HAPPINESS



*Happiness is not the absence of stress, rather the ability to handle it effectively. Stress is a vital requirement for growth and legacy. The only person without stress is a dead person.*

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE STRESS

As noted by different findings, stress works both the ways—positive and negative.

Positive stress can turn into negative stress if we do not alternate these stressful situations with breaks periods of relaxation. It is our challenge and responsibility to know when it works positively and when it works negatively. The optimum level of stress for a particular person under a particular situation or time it differs from person to person, and in the same person from time to time. Moderate levels of stress may actually improve performance and efficiency while too little stress may result in boredom and too much may cause unproductive, anxiety levels.

It is obvious that we will not perform without stress. But it has to be adequate and optimal. Not less, not more. We can sustain high levels of stress, but not for long and not frequently. Positive stressful situations provide us challenges to perform, to attain results, to go beyond. These are healthy situations, which increase our capacity to deal with difficult situations. If

that adequate stress were missing in our lives, then we would not have had all the great leaders and successful personalities in different fields.

## IMPACT OF STRESS

As the subject stress is very common and important in our lives, developed countries in the world are already doing a lot of research in the area. They are trying to provide humans with valuable information, tips and techniques for better health and happiness.

Stress has a massive impact on our health, relationships and productivity. As we all know and agree, stress awareness and management techniques would help us save ourselves from both small and severe physical and mental problems. Stress management can increase life expectancy, productivity, relationships, society and yes, happiness.

## TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

Stress management techniques and approaches are only effective if you understand the root cause of stress, along with the levels and types of stress clearly. Just like a doctor's prescription only works if the root

cause has been diagnosed correctly.

There are lot of techniques, rituals and approaches to stress management. Any single technique or approach is not enough to handle stress effectively. We need to know different techniques and approaches. It's like leadership. A single leadership style will not be effective at all situations. Situational leadership is important to be effective under different circumstances.

Everybody has his or her own way to reduce stress, but there are some major ones to keep in mind, like nutrition, consistent and balanced exercise, proper rest and relaxation, time management, having a positive attitude, practicing rituals that are consistent with individual belief system, practicing gratitude, putting a stressful situation into perspective, developing need-based skills, tolerating short term stress, and nourishing a higher purpose.

M A MANNAN

The writer is the Head of Human Resources at Bangladesh Express Company Ltd. (licensee of Federal Express Corporation), and a FedEx certified stress management trainer

# Making a DIFFERENCE

## 3 SIGNS YOU NEED SOME ME TIME ASAP

Whether you're socially normal or not, an extrovert or an introvert, if you're finding yourself wanting to jump out the window just because your co-worker is playing music too loudly, you probably need some time alone with yourself.

### 1. YOU'RE YELLING AT YOUR CO-WORKERS

Did you just snap at a colleague for talking too loud? Or maybe critiqued a minion too harshly for a minor screw-up? When you're extra grumpy with people over minor faults, you probably need to take a breather. Take a walk around the block or exile yourself to the balcony. Don't come back till you feel at peace. If apologies are in store, address those. Even if you had good reason for snap-

ping, you're still going to want to make amends.

### 2. YOU'RE NOT COMING UP WITH IDEAS

When you're coming up with your next big project, even if it's not intentional, friends and co-workers can get in the way, be it their small talk or their appeals to get a coffee or poorly timed series of "quick" question.

Brainstorm with your colleagues, but when your project plan or write-up or pitch is due the next day, block out the rest of the world and take as much time as you need. Throw on some headphones or make yourself comfortable in another room in the office, it's not unsociable behavior—it's a requisite.

### 3. YOU'RE ON THE VERGE OF A MELTDOWN

Just as that coffee break or game

of COD can be great stress-relievers, co-workers can unfortunately add to your stress. When you're dealing with your own stuff and someone comes along and piles their issues onto yours, it's completely possible to get weighed down. If you feel like you're one step away from hysteria, politely excuse yourself from whatever your co-workers are trying to pull you into and work through your stress on your own. Look inward and accept your situation for what it is instead of making excuses to your boss when you've missed the deadline.

AMIYA HALDER

The writer is In-charge of the career publication of The Daily Star, and a senior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

