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RESILIENCE PERSONIFIED

British American Tobacco (BAT) is a top multinational company in Bangladesh that has not only groomed brilliant minds through the years, but has also exemplified women-friendliness at the workplace. With the passing of International Women's Day, Next Step spoke to one of the most inspiring women figures of BAT Asia Pacific, Belinda Ross, Regional Head of Legal & External Affairs.

Tell us a bit about your career and journey in BAT.

I have been working in BAT for over 18 years now. Having completed my LLB & B.Com degree at the University of Otago, I started my career working in Auckland, New Zealand, and was in private practice in one of the leading firms there. I actually joined BAT just before the company Rothmans merged with BAT in 1999. So I started off serving as the General Counsel & Company Secretary back then.

I gradually had the opportunity to look after not only BAT's New Zealand market, but all of its markets in the South Pacific as well. This gave me an experience of developing economies like Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, etc.

In 2013, I was asked to move to Hong Kong to join as Assistant Counsel to the Regional General Counsel of BAT, and it was during that time I first visited Bangladesh in 2014. Then in mid-2014, I became the Regional General Counsel for Asia Pacific and started to look after all of the region's legal and security matters. Finally in 2015, BAT globally decided to merge legal functions with corporate affairs to form the Legal & External Affairs (LEX) department. Since then, I've been working as the Regional Head of LEX.

BAT Bangladesh (BATB) is known for creating future leaders in Bangladesh. Being the Head of LEX for Asia Pacific, how does BATB to other BAT operations globally?

BATB has been doing an exceptional job at producing many senior level talents who are currently contributing to different global functions in the BAT Group. BATB has its first Bangladeshi GM in recent years and what is more, five out of seven of its executive leadership team members are from the country as well. We have a big pool of Bangladeshis who are holding very critical leadership roles in leading markets like Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and also our headquarters in the UK.



“BATB is a terrific place to work, with a legacy of training diversified people home and abroad. We across BAT focus very much on gender diversity and nationality diversity and BATB has done a phenomenal job in recruiting and retaining females to support our diversity agenda.”

I think BATB has successfully managed to groom young talents and has not only created home-grown leaders in the process, but has also exported this talent to the BAT Group, especially in the Asia Pacific region. We are very pleased to see the hard work and commercial acuity of Bangladeshis, and the growing rate of their contribution is evident; currently, 45 BATB managers are assigned in 11 different countries.

March is a month that celebrates women's empowerment. How do you see women in leadership developing in BATB?

It is an absolute privilege for me to be here with all the brilliant ladies at BATB to experience Women's Day. I have always tried to interact with women in organisations of whichever country I visit so I can help and

support them in some way and they can share their experiences with me.

BATB is a terrific place to work, with a legacy of training diversified people home and abroad. We across BAT focus very much on gender diversity and nationality diversity and BATB has done a phenomenal job in recruiting and retaining females to support our diversity agenda. It also has two remarkable women in the top tier of management, which is something you rarely see across Bangladeshi industries. In the supply chain, we have a fabulous pool of high potential women who are doing a terrific job in managing our factory. BATB women are role models for all new women coming through, epitomised in it winning the Most Women Friendly Organisation award in 2015.

What were some challenges you faced during your career?

I think the hardest thing, particularly for us women, is the motherhood guilt – staying away from your children for work. While people term it as work-life balance, I see it as life balance as a whole. You have these different blocks in life – work, family, and friends – and you must work it out to ensure that you are giving ample time to each of them, not just one.

One advice I always give people from my own experience is that if you make a commitment, do everything in your power to ensure that you fulfil it. If I tell my family I am going to be home, I am going to be home. And if I am meant to be at work, I will be at work. Face-timing and social media have made connections a lot easier now, but I still try to give quality time to my family and friends beyond that. Similarly, it is important to always deliver your work on time even if you are at home, so you can ensure your boss trusts you with your word.

What has been your success mantra?

One of the most important things that help people make the transition from role to role is developing resilience because we, particularly women, often get bogged down by self-doubts. But I was fortunate enough to cultivate self-belief quite early in life. Whenever something new and difficult comes across my desk, I stay calm and trust myself to deal with it.

What is more, you should never be afraid to ask when you need help. Have your own internal board of directors. It is sometimes crucial to have people acting as a sounding board to give you their honest opinions when you ask for it. All throughout my career, I have worked with amazing people who, whenever I have struggled with anything, have helped me view things from a different angle and advised me about what I should or should not go forward with.

Check out the Next Step website for the full interview.

Interviewed by: Halima Sadia

Halima is a junior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

BOSS IS ALWAYS RIGHT

BY E. RAZA RONNY



A FRESH GRADUATE'S GUIDE TO PERSONAL FINANCE

“It's not your salary that makes you rich, but rather your spending habits.”

CHARLES A JAFFE

Unfortunately, personal finance is not something that is taught at schools or universities. While graduating and finding a job are stressful on their own, life becomes even more complicated when you are suddenly the financial decision maker of your life (no, hangouts and travel fares do not count anymore). You are bombarded with tax, investment and saving decisions that you have never had to worry about for twenty-something years. Read on to educate yourself on the basics of wise personal finance management!

1. Learn self-control

If you are fortunate, you have already been trained in this department by your parents. It is crucial to learn the fine art of delayed gratification, not just because it helps keep your finances in order, but also because often it helps you realise the priority of your expenses. Over time, you might just realise that you do not really need that brand new 4K television since your two-year-old LED is just fine.

2. Maintain a budget

Financial order is impossible without a well maintained budget. This does not just help form a visual picture of where your money goes, but makes you want to cut down on your daily expenses as well. Having lunch outside everyday may not look too significant until you add up your monthly lunch expenses, which is why you would definitely want to take lunch boxes from home.

If you do not know how to make a budget, there are numerous templates and tables available online. You can also use mobile apps, such as Moneyfy, Goodbudget and Money Lover, some of which even have financial advice based on your income and expenditure patterns.

It is wise to allot certain percentages of your income for each category of your expenses after around three months of thorough observation, e.g. you could allocate 40 percent on housing and utilities, 15 percent on food, 10 percent on transport, 10 percent on clothing and entertainment, and 25 percent on savings. These obviously vary among individuals, but anything is alright as long as your expenses do not exceed your income.

However, try to allocate more for savings,

especially at an early age. You will not just grow a good habit out of it, but also understand why Warren Buffet says, “Do not save what is left after spending, but spend what is left after saving.”

3. Get a grip on taxes

One of the first things you have to do when you get your first job is open your income tax account. This is usually an area most are not well informed of, which is exactly why it is important to understand how income taxes work even before you get your first pay check. This concept will help you plan better, since you will only be able to fulfil your financial obligations and whims with the money that

track for your future financial habits and status. This is precisely why you should consider setting some future benchmarks as a drive to spend cautiously, e.g. you might consider building an emergency fund that can cover you for at least three months' worth of expenses. This will serve as a support for any unexpected financial obstacles.

It is also advisable to start saving for retirement early, even if it is an insignificant amount. The sooner you start saving for retirement, the sooner you can consider working an option rather than a necessity.

You might find a lot of your friends doing this already, but the smart decision is to keep



remains after taxes have been deducted.

Knowing your tax mechanisms also helps when you are considering switching jobs for a higher salary. To accurately evaluate your salary increment, you need to understand how much your marginal tax rate will affect it.

It is also beneficial to prepare one's own tax return instead of leaving it entirely to someone else. Tax advice and information, in case of dependency, should be adequately checked and verified.

4. Long-term budget goals

How you manage your money is important from your very first job because it sets the

savings in a high-interest savings account, as bonds or stocks, to make sure your savings are well protected from the effects of inflation.

Personal finance management may seem very intimidating and complicated at first, but just a bit of reading up, trial and error will get your money in order. It is important to invest and save, but do so wisely. You are definitely advised to spend cautiously, but a bit of self-pampering now and then does not hurt either.

Sabrina Rahman

The writer is a junior at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka

Hat-trick for aamra at World HRD Congress



Bangladeshi conglomerate, aamra, was awarded for Best Global CSR Practices by CHRO Asia at the World HRD Congress held in Mumbai this February. CHRO Asia is a high level professional body that acts as a global platform for human resource head and benchmarks best practices for HR professionals.

Ajeyo Rohitashwo ~ Al Quazi, Group Chief People Officer of aamra, was also recognised as one of the 100 Most Influential Global HR Professionals and one of the 50 Most Innovative Global HR Tech Leaders by CHRO Asia and Times Ascent.

4th National Conference on Natural Science and Technology

The Science and Math programme of Asian University for Women (AUW) is set to organise the fourth National Conference on Natural Sciences and Technology (NCNST) between March 24-25 this year. NCNST aims to update the latest research advances in STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), as well as provide a social platform for researchers.

"STEM education creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy, and enables the next generation of innovators, leading to new products and processes that sustain our economy. To be able to succeed in this new information-based and highly technological society, students need to be able to develop their capabilities in STEM to levels far beyond what was considered acceptable even a couple of decades ago," says Montaha Chowdhury, Publicity Convener for the event.

This year's conference will focus on four different themes: biosciences and biotechnology, environmental sciences, information and communications technology, and public health. Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmed, Country Representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Haseena Khan, Professor at the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, University of Dhaka, are among the many renowned personalities who will be attending NCNST this year.

There will also be a panel on women in science considering current opportunities and challenges for women in science and why women leave STEM fields.

For more information on the conference, visit: www.facebook.com/AUW.NCNST or www.auw.edu.bd/NCNST/.

Raisa Ashraf