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NEXT STEP

6 WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SEMESTER BREAK



Let's be honest here. You are not going to score an internship for the two-week vacation you get at the end of the term. Neither are you going to be partying 24/7. But that hardly means the entire vacation has to go to waste. If you set realistic goals and set aside plenty of time to relax, the two weeks can be a perfect way to de-stress, and also get a few productive things done in the process.

1. Volunteer

There are plenty of organisations that arrange day long volunteering programmes which can give you an opportunity to network and hone your leadership skills, all the while having fun and giving back to society. Plenty of these organisations also require you to brainstorm and come up with innovative ideas, thus jogging your creativity in the process. You could volunteer at a retirement home or spend some time at an orphanage. JAAGO, Durnibar, CommunityAction, Youth of Bangladesh, and One Degree Foundation are just some of the options you could look into. Some organisations also provide recommendation letters and awards for your brilliant work, which could help you build your resume too.

2. Travel

If possible, arrange a trip outside Dhaka with your friends or family. There are lots of beautiful places inside the country that are low-budget and are perfect for students. You could opt to spend a few days in the tea gardens of Sylhet or the beaches in Cox's Bazar. However, whether you choose a scenic place or somewhere historic, make it a point to learn something about the

region and interact with the locals. You could start a personal project of your own – be it photography or journal entries or even filming documentaries – which would improve your creativity and organising skills.

3. Learn

This one truly has no bounds – learn an instrument, a new language, or how to cook. It could even be world history! You could check out YouTube videos on various subjects to make your learning easier, or try specialised sites such as Duolingo to learn languages, Codecademy to learn coding, or CreativeLive for arts and design. Skills such as learning Photoshop, InDesign or Excel are never out of date, and you are sure to be at an advantage if you take a bit of time out of each day to practice these. If you are looking for something more related to your course, MIT OpenCourseWare is a good place to start, with course materials and classroom lectures from MIT. If online learning is not your thing, there are often two-week long workshops on skills such as cooking or painting around town that you can try out.

4. Get fit

With a bit of time on your hands, why not

take on an exercise programme and monitor your eating habits? Try yoga or go for the morning jog you are usually too tired for. Alternatively, you could try riding the bicycle more instead of using your car. You could join BDCyclists or organise cycling events for your community yourself! Not only will it help you build stamina, but you would also end up making a few new friends in the process.

5. De-clutter

Do you still have all your old books, notebooks, and files lying around? Why not use the vacation to clean up a bit and get more organised? Neatly organize your current notebooks in shelves, and colour-code them so that it is easier for you to find something later. Throw out the old unnecessary stuff while you are at it. That way you will find it much simpler to work when your semester starts.

In fact, you would be surprised at what you can find cleaning up. There are always the old DVDs that you do not enjoy anymore, books you are done reading, and gifts you never really used. While donating them is always an option, you could even sell them at online sites like Bikroy.com, ask your friends to find you takers, or post

in Facebook groups.

6. Re(gain) focus

Between the countless quizzes and assignments, it is quite easy to lose focus in your life. Use this time to research on potential careers, get advice from your seniors, and talk to those already in the industry. Think about your goals – both short-term and long term! Meditate and read motivational blogs. Get to know the professors in your department – what they like in students, how they grade, and how they teach. This way, you will know exactly what to expect from your upcoming semesters. Also, create a basic resume that you can keep working on as time goes by.

What is important in your vacation is, once again, to not overwork yourself. Doing that all throughout your semester is more than enough. Do not attempt to do everything at once. Take it one day at a time, and you might just surprise yourself at your progress.

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THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



THE STORY OF EDUTUBE

There are multiple EdTech startups that have amassed quite a bit of popularity in Bangladesh. Edutube is certainly one of the underrated top few. The founder, Sharmin Mahjabin, shares how she embarked on the journey to start edutube, a startup operating on treacherous waters.



What is the story behind edutube?

Videos have started to go viral. All of a sudden everyone is learning everything from YouTube. It brought to mind the educational system in Bangladesh – which is quite traditional, methodical, and vast here – as well as my schooldays – a mess of classes, coaching centres, private tutors, mock exams, and running after suggestions. If the whole system – parents, students and teachers – take an approach to share this content with each other, a lot of less privileged students can access this content, perform better, and get ahead in life. Thus, edutubebd.com started its journey with the tagline 'Learning gets better with sharing'.

What makes this portal unique? How big are your operations right now?

The most unique feature has to be

the live class feature – teachers can take live classes straight from the website itself. Our content includes animations, simulations, interactive tests, colourful images, diagrams, and videos. We have teachers from top schools like BAF Shaheen College and Shaheed Bir Uttam Lt. Anwar Girls College taking lectures here. There are over 5,000 registered users – parents, students and teachers – who have uploaded around 10,000 unique contents, including questions, notes, suggestions, textbooks, presentations, solutions, etc. We are also involved with the Teaching Quality Improvement II project, and are getting guidance from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board to develop digital content on Physics, Chemistry and Bangladesh and Global Studies for teachers of classes 9 and 10.

How do you plan to monetise it?

Running such an initiative is

expensive given the cost of marketing and maintaining a regular supply of quality content. However, our focus has never been to churn out videos regularly. What we want is to raise awareness that a bigger part of our society needs our help, and it is inexpensive to do so. Our plan for the future is to convert edutube into the biggest marketplace for the education sector. A teacher who teaches 20 students per batch and five batches per day can earn a similar amount by providing paid lectures and suggestions that get downloaded from all over Bangladesh. Students will also be able to enter into marketplace by providing services that will be launched in the second quarter of this year.

INTERVIEWED BY: SHAHRIAR RAHMAN

Engineer-turned-writer, Shahriar Rahman is In-charge of the tech publication of The Daily Star

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.

FIND TIME IN YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE WITH ONE, EASY STEP

Does your schedule on an average day sound something like this: wake up, scurry to work, spend 80 percent of your day there, commute home for an hour, eat, and watch TV till you pass out?

If the bulk of your free time is squandered on binge-watching your favourite shows (don't get me wrong – TV is life), consider punching in some digits into Omni Calculator, a free online tool that is "working on a technology that will turn every calculation-based problem trivial to solve for anyone."

The "time-saving" calculator can compute how often you watch TV every day and then suggests alternative activities you could be doing instead and their respective takeaways over a particular span of time, e.g. the number of calories you could burn running or bicycling, or the number of books you could finish in a week.

Now Omni doesn't recommend you remove all trace of television from your life. Choosing a less extreme scenario, e.g. cut 75 percent/half/25 percent of my TV time, can still pay off really well – I could read 109



books a year if I cut down to 1.5 hours instead of three.

While numbers can't promise anything, having the calculations in front of your face like that really puts things into perspective. Think about the number of times you've complained about not having time to pursue your

dreams. That guy who get things done you're envious of? Re-evaluate your free time and be that guy.

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