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## CHALLENGE

# The single biggest driver of success

Stephen Filotas, Group Head of Route-to-Market and Customer Management, has spent what he calls "15 very short years" at British American Tobacco. After going through just about every position at BAT in trade marketing and distribution, as well as brand marketing, he ended up leading the marketing work stream in the merger of a local family-owned business the company had just acquired in Colombia. He shares the biggest lessons he's learned over the years with Next Step during his visit to Bangladesh.

Tell us a bit about your career, work, and journey in BAT?

My journey in BAT has been 15 very short years, which by the way is very typical in BAT. It is actually quite normal to encounter colleagues with 20-30 years in the company.

I will tell you a little bit about the company. It is a company that manages to attract great talent, and people who enter BAT tend to fall in love with it. They realise that it is incredibly dynamic, very competitive, a fantastic school, and has a great culture.

Coming back to your question and talking a little bit about myself, the reason I stayed in BAT is because of the corporate culture. Previously in my career, I worked for two other large multinationals, but when I joined BAT, I fell in love. I found a fantastic fit in a fast-moving consumer goods company with a challenging environment and a great corporate culture in which anybody from anywhere on the globe can have a fantastic career. I entered through Mexico, went through many positions in trade marketing and distribution (TM&D), as well as brand marketing. Then I had the opportunity to move to BAT Colombia and was there for four years. Afterwards, I was invited to work out of Globe House in London, our global headquarters, as Route-to-Market (RTM) Global Manager, which is where I am now.

Is this your first visit to Bangladesh? How do you like it so far?

Yes, it is my first time in Bangladesh. I find the visit, so far, absolutely extraordinary. Having always worked in the Americas, I had been

exposed to Western Europe, but had a very little knowledge and exposure to everything that is Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa, as well as Asia Pacific. As I landed in the country, I found a reality that is very similar to Mexico, my home country—a developing economy where you have some challenges and many opportunities. The way BAT Bangladesh (BATB) has successfully met these challenges is probably the reason why we have so many Bangladeshis around the BAT world building careers, and helping us build our business in other countries.

You mention Bangladeshi talent. As the Group Head of BAT for RTM and Customer Management, how do you feel BATB is doing compared to other BAT organisations worldwide, especially in terms of creating talent?

BATB has been doing an exceptional job at producing many senior level talents who are currently contributing to different global functions around the world. BATB has had its first Bangladeshi GM in recent years and what is more, five out of seven executive leadership team members are from Bangladesh. 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 UK.

I think BATB has very successfully managed to mentor young talents and has not only created homegrown leaders in the process, but also exported this talent to the BAT Group. We're very pleased to see the hard work and commercial knowledge of Bangladeshis and the growing rate of their contribution is



clearly evident: currently, 24 BATB managers are internationally assigned in 11 different countries. Within my team in the UK headquarters, which is a team of six people, I alone have three Bangladeshis.

How do you think BATB is doing in terms of developing female leadership?

BATB is a wonderful place that has a legacy of coaching, training, and grooming people home and abroad. Across BAT we focus very much on gender diversity and nationality. BATB has done an exceptional job in recruiting and retaining females. It also has two remarkable women in the top tier of the management team, which is something you don't always see across Bangladeshi industries. At the supply chain, we have a fabulous pool of high potential women who're doing a terrific job in managing our factory. BATB women are role models for all new women coming through and they won the Inspiring Women's Award earlier this year, the Most Women Friendly Organisation Award in 2015, and four more awards in various women leadership categories in the past.

Going back to your career. What do you think were the main challenges, before BAT or within?

Before BAT, the main challenge for me was to find a job that actually fit my personal values. This is what I would tell any young professional: the first thing you have to do to be successful is to find some place or something that makes you happy. If it becomes painful to get out of bed every morning to go to work, you're probably not doing something right. You need to find a place that makes you happy. You need to find a job, an environment, a corporate culture, and work colleagues you can feel com-

fortable and satisfied with. If you don't have that, it's going to be extremely difficult to be successful. If you do find that, don't let go.

I've been in the group for 15 years and not once have I felt bored. As a matter of fact, as soon as I start to feel a little bit comfortable in a role, BAT changes the rules of the game. I've never had a role where I've actually said, "I am a 100 percent comfortable. I have nothing left to learn. I'm happy where I am. I can navigate without a lot of effort." BAT always keeps you challenged and learning."

How do you strike a balance between life and work in an environment that's continuously challenging you?

A mentor once told me, "Work is life." So you need to find a work environment that makes you happy and then balance finds itself. Challenge is a good thing for me. A challenge gives me an opportunity to learn, express myself, make mistakes, stand up, dust myself off, and know that I'm a better professional for having learned from my mistakes. So being able to find yourself in a work environment that motivates you, for me, is the single biggest driver of success. I've never seen somebody being successful at something they dislike. I wake up energised every morning. I feel excited about reviewing results of ongoing programmes and starting new ones. My work-life balance is fantastic. It's about finding something you truly enjoy and being able to make a living out of it.

INTERVIEWED BY: AMIYA HALDER

Amiya is In-charge of the career publication of The Daily Star.

## THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY

CANDIDATE # 1

OOOH, A HOLOGRAPHIC CV. GRAMMAR IS IMPECCABLE. YOU'RE PERFECTLY QUALIFIED. BUT WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WILLING TO WORK FOR VERY LITTLE.



CANDIDATE # 2

I printed it all on colored paper. in comic sans

SO UNQUALIFIED AND CHEAP.

YOU'RE HIRED!



HI, I'M THE NEW GUY. OR GIRL. CAN'T TELL COZ THE ARTIST CAN'T DRAW. DOES ANYONE KNOW HOW TO DO MY JOB?

I HAVE A FIGGET SPINNER!



FOR PANELS 2 AND 3, CARTOONIST FOUND AN ARTIST WILLING TO DO A QUICK JOB VERY CHEAPLY.

## What's the BEST COUNTRY to work in?

While every company is different national statistics for wages, paid holidays, sick leave, compensation, work hours and the world happiness index can be good indicators of what's a good place to work.



Source: Accident Claims Advice | Infographic: Amiya Halder

## 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.

## 3 LINKEDIN HABITS TO PICK UP TODAY

Everyone gets to a point where they want to dig a little deeper, go beyond the basics and into the nitty-gritties—really hone a skill or a habit. That's what your attitude towards LinkedIn should be.



LinkedIn users with All-Star ratings are 40 times more likely to get contacted. And while getting there is fairly simple, i.e. your page should contain industry and location info; up-to-date details on your current position; two past positions; complete education and skills sections; a profile photo; and a minimum of 50 connections, to really make the most of the platform, there are three habits you should pick up.

### 1. Craft custom messages

Say thank you every time someone endorses your skills, not only when you've made a new connection. And while LinkedIn provides its very own super-professional-sounding ready-made replies, what good are they to a person? I, for one, would prefer a couple of skill endorse-

ments in return, or even a nice "Hey, how've you been? Thanks for stopping by my profile!" From congratulating promotions and work anniversaries to the way you accept connection requests, adding just one or two personal lines can leave a warm, lasting impression.

### 2. Use it as a bulletin board

Don't stop at using your LinkedIn profile as a decorative billboard selling the exquisite product that is you. Instead, consider it a dynamic place where you can share yourself, your resources, and your ideas with the world. It's not enough to be on top of your update game, you should be proactively commenting and connecting with people. This means you should extend your professional network to people

you don't directly know as well as by introducing like-minded contacts to each other. If you add value to their networks, they'll be more likely to repay the favour when the time comes.

### 3. Listen in on relevant groups

Of course you should be actively using LinkedIn as the powerful recruitment tool that it is—reaching out to others, setting up informal interviews, and learning more about people working at your dream company or competitor's. But LinkedIn also is a rich resource to develop new products and services by staying updated on what's going on around the country and the globe in your industry. Follow your competitor's newsfeed, find out what their biggest wins are and where they're just not filling the gap.