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NEXT STEP

NURTURING THE HIDDEN TALENTS OF OUR YOUTH

Passionate, forward-looking youth must be groomed and guided in order for them to contribute in the sector that best suits their skills, said experts at the 'Skills for middle-income Bangladesh: Preparing today's youth for tomorrow's challenges' roundtable on July 18, 2017.

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC)'s Office of Professional Development (OPD) and The Daily Star co-organised the event at the newspaper's office in Dhaka to explore effective methods of increasing professional development initiatives for young people to access relevant jobs.

Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher at The Daily Star, urged BYLC to establish a professional linkage that can aid in nurturing these youth. "Bangladesh needs an extensive professional training institute that will supply our need for skilled youths," he said.

Akhter Matin Chaudhury, chairperson of BYLC, and Ejaj Ahmad, founder and president of BYLC, co-moderated the discussion.

Creating the right fit

A key highlight of the three-hour long session was the rapid shift to a tech-savvy job space and how this poses the need to brush up the diverse skill sets of the youth. "The more diversified the job scenario gets, the more we need people with interdisciplinary skill sets and not just graduate degrees. The tech space is more dominant than ever, and e-commerce is now the way to go. So skills that pertain to this field are a must," explained Asif Zaher, Zero Gravity Ventures Limited.

"Millennials are a passionate crowd; every company needs to brand themselves so that they stand for something that resonates with the target market. By communicating effectively, we can encourage the youth to choose the job that best suits their skills," said Tanvir Haider, CEO of Kazi Food Industries Ltd.

Md. Sabur Khan, CEO of Daffodil University, pitched, "Foundation building starts at school, but institutions mostly focus on CGPA rather than on practical skills. This needs to change through practical and refined course curriculum designs."



Adding to this was Abrar A. Anwar, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank: "Banks too are changing, and so are the profiles of the workforce. For sustainability of the prevailing jobs, diversified talent acquisition is a must."

Senior VP of BGMEA, Faruq Hasan, introduced some valuable insights regarding the youth bulge in Bangladesh, and added that industrial sectors like RMG have a dearth of varied skills and specifically designed curriculums that could contribute to the growth of these.

"The youth today are already hard working, so there is hardly a lack of effort from those who are focused. But do they know how to deliver? In fact, do we as leaders know what we really mean when we ask for results?" asked Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, CEO of Robi Axiata Limited.

New careers up ahead

Leaders must be aware of the fact that 65 percent of children entering primary school today will do jobs that have not been invented yet when designing mentorship or internship programmes.

"The real estate bubble will soon burst. Retail stores we see now will cease to exist in face of increasing internet accessibility. So some current professions will become irrelevant in the future. Are we doing enough to prepare ourselves as well as our youth for the near future?" added Mahtab.

Pial Islam, Managing Partner of Pi strategy, focused on the need to cultivate the right value systems among the youth: "There are some fundamental shortcomings in today's

youth, one of which is ethics and moral values. Most people do not contribute effectively to the productive output of the organisation."

Emphasising on the challenges more than anyone was Rubana Huq, Managing Director of Mohammadi Group. "We are actively replacing labour with automation so capital-intensive industries are on the rise. There is an ever urgent need to hunt down specific skills that can co-exist with the automation and robotics of the future," she said.

Nabeel Ud Daulah, Managing Director of DIRD group, added some further insight to the discussion: "We need to change the sceptical mindsets of the youth and make them realise that mistakes are sometimes the only way to make the transition to better results. Moreover, their communication skills in English as well as other interpersonal skills must improve."

CEO of Grameenphone, Michael Foley, mentioned that the extremely fast-paced and streamlined short cycles of innovations is a major issue: "By the time you groom yourself, the job will have transcended into some innovated form that your outdated skills cannot match. Hence a massive resourcing of skills like agile development, design thinking, scrum skills, data science, minimum-viable-product skills, and so on is needed pronto."

Green Delta Insurance's CEO, Farzana Chowdhury, proposed that curriculums need to be designed in a way that encourages the youth to join the insurance industry, rather than disregard it as not as "glamorous" as the biggies. "Do we have enough actuaries or

enough insurance specialists? This could be achieved if all institutions co-ordinated to develop the youth," she said.

Developing soft skills

Situational leadership and entrepreneurial skills also need to be inculcated in the youth. Asadul Islam, Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, put forward some critical flaws in the system, including the existence of sufficient policies, but not enough resources. He emphasised the need to develop soft skills of the youth, especially the less privileged who do not always have the scope to learn or get training.

Leonie Cuelenaere, Ambassador to Bangladesh at the Embassy of the Netherlands, suggested that leadership and analytical skills need to improve among Bangladeshi youth for them to be able to compete in the international job market.

Towards the very end, Sudipto Mukerjee, Country Director of UNDP, provided some valuable insight, saying that the country must not get trapped in jobless growth. The need to innovate is more vital than ever if one wants to stay relevant. "Start internship programmes and do a lot of advocacy to inject this mindset. Inequality too needs to be eradicated for the country to keep moving forward with its young, talented minds," he concluded most aptly.

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The Bossman BY E. RAZA RONNY



What kind of communicator are you?



You're probably sick and tired of reading about mindfulness—the miracle trait that all successful people purportedly have in common. Mindfulness—or awareness of yourself and those around you—isn't necessarily something you're born with or you're not. Reading people (and yourself) may not be a proven science, but DISC (Dominance, Inducement, Submission, and Compliance) profiles is one way of better understanding communication styles.

Based on the four dimensions that most influence people's emotional behaviour that psychologist William Marston laid down in 1928, DISC assessments are now used by organisations for high-potential employees and high-performance teams to help them identify and maximise their strengths. By figuring out how you and those around you communicate, you can say just the right things and have more fruitful discussions.

Dominant/Driver

Drivers speak fast, move fast, and want results pronto. They will do whatever it takes to get around

obstacles (and in some cases, right through them). While this communicator might seem pushy, drivers are your go-to guy to get things done.

Influencer/Interactive

Like dominants, influencers also speak fast and move fast, but they are gifted storytellers. They are engaging, upbeat, great talkers, and their language is nuanced. If you want somebody to promote your idea, you can rely on interactives.

Stable/Steady

Steady types are slower, sensitive, thoughtful, and great listeners. They're often the rock in the team, the glue that keeps everyone together. They don't perform well in conflicts, but count on them to co-ordinate and connect you to the right people in his/her network.

Compliant/Cautious

Like their name foretells, compliant types value order, precision, and accuracy. They are slower moving and take their time with words, but when they're done, they go straight to the point. Compliant types are natural problem solvers, effective planners, and will invent their own

processes. Want something done right? Reach out to the compliant in your team.

If you don't feel like you fit into any of the four communicator personas or if you think they're just overly simplified, it's not unusual. Our repertoire usually has a bit of this and a bit of that, depending on the situation. Research, however, says we tend to rely on one or two primary styles—one when we are under stress, and the other when we are actively managing our communication.

The best lesson you can take away from this model is to quickly characterise those around you so that you can mould your communication into a style that is more comfortable for them. It's a great way to approach new colleagues, higher-ups, clients or collaborators. And even if you've known someone for years now, it can still help you communicate better with him or her.

AMIYA HALDER

The writer is In-charge of the career 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.

THREE STEPS TO BECOMING INDISPENSABLE CAPTAIN AWESOME

Captain Awesome is that person in an organisation who finds ways to improve and become valuable to everyone. He or she finds ways to be the first name to come to mind when bosses think of things to get done. Captain Awesome is like a modern smartphone which is not just for making calls. No one wants just that. Most of us are looking for a phone that can take pictures, set up appointments, play music, track our finances, hide multiple romantic relationships with multiple unwary partners, and ensure the cat doesn't poop under the shoe rack.



You want a raise? Become indispensable with your ever developing skill set.

First, ask

Opportunity doesn't always knock. Sometimes it is like the lazy courier delivery guy that presses the bell during a power outage and then walks away with the parcel while picking his teeth. You need to be on the lookout because most courier services here prefer not to wait. More relevant to this: you need to be on the lookout for ways to improve your skill set. Ask what else needs doing.

Identify bottlenecks

Evaluate your work flow. Somewhere, something is not moving as fast as it should. Can you contribute? You may need to learn new skills or find new ways to work with existing colleagues. While interning at Grey

Advertising, I noticed all the ideas for TV spots went ahead in the initial pitch as written material. It was all very descriptive material. But a picture could do so much more. So instead of doodling funny pictures of my team mates, I offered to draw some story boards in a comic book style minus the heavy text. Eventually it got one of the bosses thinking. "You got me in a bit of a spot. I have to figure out whether to pay you for writing or for drawing." It's cool. He figured out how to merge both.

Learn new tricks

When I started Next Step a few years ago, my team mate and I would run out of time and patience waiting for other people to tweak the graphics. I learned how to change layout on Corel, our strangely chosen yet complicated graphics programme. But the tale isn't about my awesomeness.

My current page in-charge Amiya Halder, picked up on the same trick: if you want something to look good, do it yourself. Same goes for the guys running my other pages. Can I fire them? I can't, no matter how terrible their jokes may be at times. Do I owe them a raise? Yes. They do what others cannot. They added to their skill sets so they are worth two more people.

When all of it fails to move you ahead or noticed, either try something new, or try someplace new.

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The writer is Editor of the career, tech and automobile publications of The Daily Star. He is also an entrepreneur of a baby clothing business and previously worked in advertising as a Senior Copywriter.