

Battle of Minds 2017

THE EVER-EVOLVING TALENT ACQUISITION PLATFORM



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The name Battle of Minds (BOM) sparks a fire within the most talented minds of Bangladesh. It is one of the most prestigious platforms in the country, which consistently hosts the most explosive ideas and innovative strategies ever conceived. For 14 years, BOM has been associated with prestige, class, and eminence. Last year's rendition was definitely no different.

Battle of Minds 2017 paid homage to the late Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, Annisul Huq. He was the chief guest at Battle of Minds 2016 and during a conversation with the organisers, him being the forward-thinking pioneer he was, had wished for the competition to look into utilising the bright minds to contribute towards the greater good of society — to channel their talent into making Bangladesh a better place to live in. Thus, the finale of Battle of Minds 2017 poised a new and unique challenge for the participants. They were tasked with pitching solutions for Dhaka's infamous traffic jam.

Firstly, the BOM alumni along with several BATB employees conducted roadshows at some of the top universities across the country. During these roadshows, the BOM alumni took to the stages and shared inspirational stories of how the competition and its different rounds pushed them to their limits in the pursuit of excellence. They also highlighted how they've incorporated their learnings into their

professional lives. After this, students were instructed on how to apply. There were 2300+ applicants in the first round, out of which 500 got selected for the video round. They were asked to make a video on how they, as average Bangladeshi citizens, can change the city. Many amazing solutions were pitched and the best 175 participants were invited to the daylong bootcamp.

The bootcamp was an exceptional experience that is still, to this day, exclusive to BOM. No other competition engages their participants in such an interactive session. The day began with an ice-breaking activity that saw the 175 candidates taking part in a fun Zumba session. Afterwards, they participated in sessions facilitated by senior managers and high achievers of Bangladesh, who inspired the candidates. The next step of the process saw those leaders sharing their insights on how successful businesses craft effective stories out of raw data. The impartment of quintessential knowledge by these illustrious individuals was very important for the candidates for the next step — the group discussion phase. Here, the candidates were divided into groups and their ability to influence the entire group's thinking process was tested.

All in all, the bootcamp was a transformative journey as Afnan Bin Ashraf, student of IBA, DU said, "When we arrived at the venue, the first thing we saw was a message: 'A day full of surprises is waiting for you,' and the ice-breaking session was definitely a welcome surprise. The day

was long and tiring but the speaker sessions turned out to be really helpful, as they were a blend of theoretical learning and visualisation of practical solutions. The group discussions were also very intense as we were pressed for time but we still pulled through and that experience itself was exhilarating."

From this group, the top 40 were selected for the ultimate challenge: possible solutions for Dhaka city's traffic congestion. They were asked to come up with a creative solution to the problem and were mentored throughout every step of the process. The participants were even taken to meet the Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police to gather valuable information regarding the traffic situation of Dhaka. Ten teams, consisting of 4 members each, were then to present their ideas in front of a panel of judges. After the presentations, 6 teams were selected to be the finalists of BOM 2017. These 6 teams were given the grueling task of actually implementing their ideas in real life and bringing positive results from it. On the final day, all 6 teams presented their ideas on the big stage. At the end of it all, team 360 Degree from BUET took the trophy home.

For BUET, it is a crowning achievement that sits proudly amongst the plethora of awards the university has won over its distinguished history. Teams from the prestigious university had reached the finals of BOM on previous occasions but have never been able to clinch the title. It took sheer grit and determination from the talented students of BUET to

finally become champions in 2017. Traffic congestion in Dhaka is a problem that has had experts going back to the drawing boards. Thus, the fact that BUET students could come up with a strategy to alleviate this massive problem is a testament to their aptitude.

When asked about how they formulated the winning idea, Murtaza Wasi, a member of the winning team, said, "We went out and did extensive surveys in multiple parts of the city and our findings presented us with many reasons as to why traffic jam is so rampant. Out of these reasons, we methodically selected 'illegal parking' as the problem to tackle with our app. Our idea stems from the fact that during different times of the day, parking spaces of apartments are empty as the residents take their vehicles out for their daily commutes. The app can facilitate other vehicles to park in those empty spaces so that they do not have to leave their vehicles on the streets. We asked a lot of car owners in the city and they were very enthusiastic about our idea too."

This is the level of innovation that is required to be a successful competitor in BOM. Maisha Feroz, another member of 360 Degree, recalls the nerve-wracking moments of the final day, "We had to report to the venue early in the morning. When we got there, we realised the scale of what was going to happen later in the day. We were practicing our dry runs on stage and the thought of the entire hall being filled with people who are pioneers in their respective field made us even more nervous. Once we got on stage to pres-

ent, time just stopped and I only focused on what my teammates and I were doing. After the presentation we were asked only one question, so we were perplexed about whether the judges really liked our idea or not. Of course, after the results were announced, we were ecstatic that it was the former."

Regarding his overall experience in BOM 2017, Murtaza had this to say: "I never truly knew how far I could push my limits. Battle of Minds brought me out of my comfort zone and showed me that I am capable of much more than I usually thought. It made me rediscover myself and helped me unearth my hidden talent."

Maisha added, "BUET has never won Battle of Minds till now, even though we did make it to the finals before, primarily because of it being a business-centric competition. However, this year, we were actually asking ourselves, 'What if we could actually win?' Now that we did win, it feels surreal and we are very proud to bring this one home for our university."

"Our faculties, students, and alumni are very proud of our achievement as evidenced by the hundreds of shares of the news that we've won, on social media. I study in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, so it was a great experience to channel the knowledge I've gained from my studies into solving a problem that each and every one of us face every day," said Saraf Disha, a member of the winning team.

BOM is valued highly by the teachers of the top universities of the country as well. Farhana Zahir, Director of NSU Career Placement Center (CPC) stated, "BOM is a real-life simulation of actual business activities which are far different from academic studies. Students get things done and it gives them a whole new perspective on how businesses run and how various problems are solved. It adds a tremendous value to the students who participate."

For the top performers of BOM, the accolades and bragging rights are not the only rewards. Since only senior year university students apply to participate, they are driven, talented minds who will look to find their place in the world and make a name for themselves. For these forward-thinking individuals, BOM serves as the perfect platform from which they can launch their careers.

Battle of Minds has become not only one of the best recruitment platforms, but more. It is a trial — one that tests the mettle of the best students of the country. Those who are daring enough to take up the challenges posed by BOM are surely the ones who will make it to the top in their respective fields. More organisations and national associations should create such platforms that bridge the gap between academic and professional lives. This in turn, contributes towards the national agenda of human resources development of Bangladesh.



In my point of view, Battle of Minds (BOM) is organised in order to bring out the creative differences that any MNC such as BATB has been prioritising over the years while recruiting fresh graduates. BOM is not only a platform for business case competitions, it also provides real life experiences to develop abilities and professional skills before entering corporate life. BUET, being the centre of excellence in engineering education of our country, is a strong participant in BOM every year. BUET's first victory at BOM represented all the hard work our team put in during the competition. It was a phenomenal team that beat other contestant teams in a business case competition with their brainstorming, problem-solving skills, and presentation skills. BUET is very proud of its victory and hopes its future teams will continue the legacy.

As BOM offers our students an experience of the excellent environment of practicing their knowledge and skills, BUET also has some interests in such events as a leading university.

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