

4 SURVIVAL TIPS FOR CART BASED BUSINESSES

In more ways than one, running a cart business is like running a cartel. You'll always need to be on alert, always have to grease the wheels of the system with money, and be prepared for sudden encounters with local muscle. From the experiences of the carts Foodie: Just Eat in Uttara and Laham: World of Meat in Dhanmondi, here are a few tips.



Keep extra products handy for surprise visits from local troublemakers
You're operating in a country that would cease to function without the political 'big brothers' who roam the streets day and night for their cause. Sooner or later, they will pay a visit to assert their supposed authority in the area. They expect money and free merchandise, and threaten to vandalise your cart if you don't comply. "The bigger challenges that we face every day are the local collectors. They come every once in a while," says the owners of Foodie. Laham faces similar challenges, as witnessed by yours truly on a visit to the cart for their signature meatbox. If you are on good terms with local influentials, you can hopefully make a few calls to the right people who can ask these extorters to back off. But for carts without connections, the monthly payment to these exacters ranges from BDT 5,000 to 10,000.

You may have to appease the local authorities, for they are part of the problem

"At each step of seeking permission to operate our business, we had to pay additional charges on top of the actual legal amount," corroborates the source at Foodie. But the problem is not limited only to licensing and permission. The police at each area also needs to be paid a small but regular sum of money every month.

It was further shared that, "During the first two months after Foodie launched, police officers used to come and threaten to close down the cart every other day. Even after he was shown Foodie's legal papers including trade license, permission from the city corporation and permission from the sector welfare association, a police constable told us that the real power on the street belongs to the police, no matter what document we have."

Make things appear on short notice. Have a quick restocking plan.
In full – scale restaurants, you can easily set aside a room or space to stock inventory. A disadvantage of running shop in a cart is that there is very little storage space. You

have to estimate daily demand and keep the appropriate inventory quantity at the cart each day.

But, on some days, business booms and you find your existing inventory capacity far exceeded by demand. For example, on some days, Laham's inventory ran out even before closing time right after they launched. They remedied the issue by expanding their capacity. You don't want to turn away customers and leave them with a negative impression. So, what you should do is make sure you have a plan to replenish inventory in a small time window if needed. The shorter the chain that supplies inventory to your cart, the faster you can match your supply to demand.

Always have a plan to go on the run
Although a cart business may have a legitimate trade license, it may not have papers permitting business activity on the street. Streets are public locations, and therefore commercial establishments such as carts do not have a permanent claim on the spaces they occupy.

If you are currently operating at the best possible place and you have to relocate, you will be left in uncertainty about where to go next. Rather than waiting to plan until such disaster strikes, it's more practical to have multiple locations in mind as your plan B, C, D and so on.

You can also capitalise on seasonality in the cart business. If your cart is stationed near a school when classes are in session, you'll be able to extend your customer base to parents and school going students. In the holiday season, you can try stationing near recreational spots. If your planning is sound, mobility can become an advantage.

Starting that business your inner entrepreneur has always wanted is very much possible in a place like Dhaka. At a reasonably low monetary investment, you can launch a scalable venture on wheels that could thrive with the blessing of enough 10/ 10 reviews on Facebook.

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THE BOSSMAN

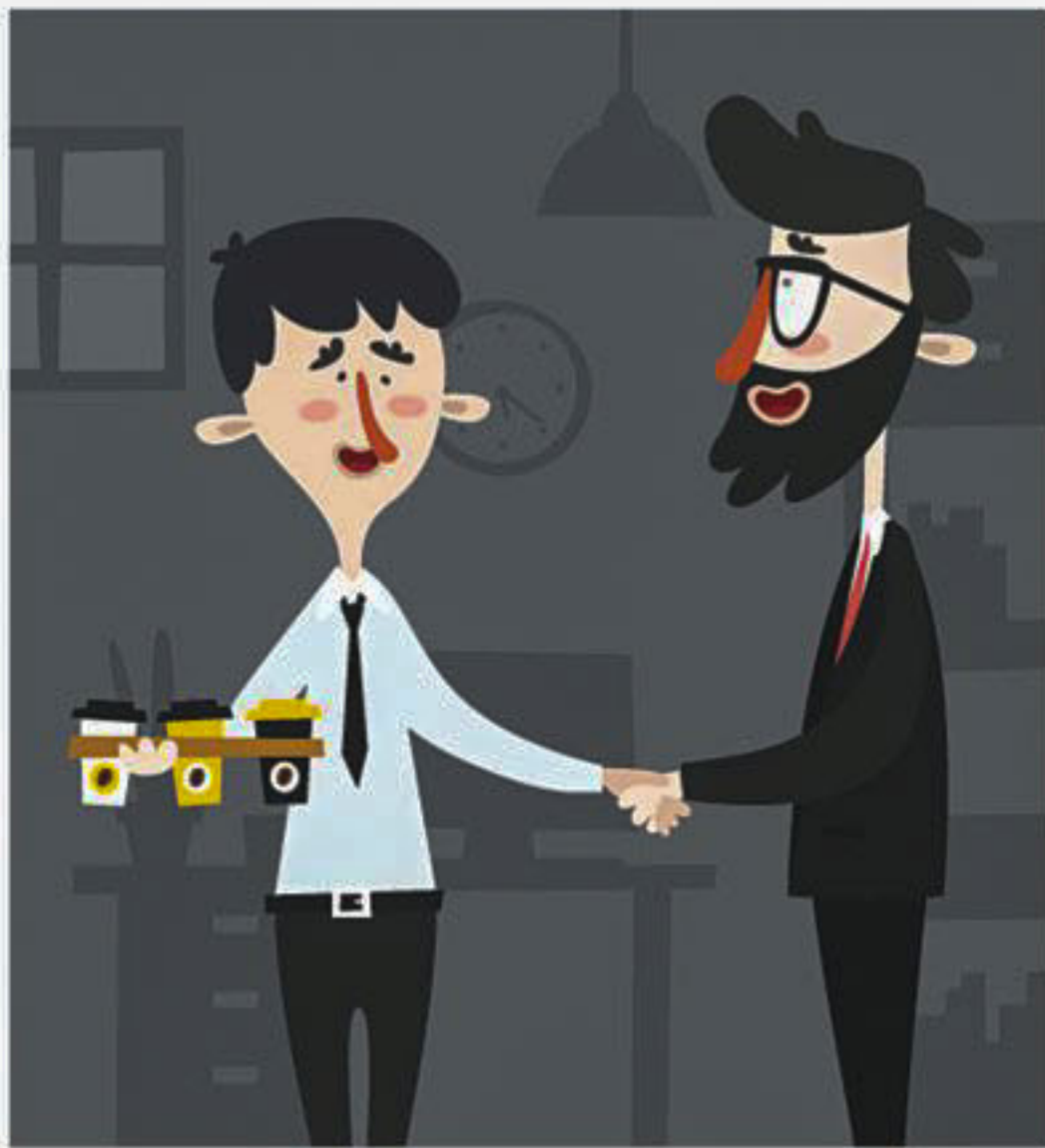
BY E. RAZA RONNY



Friendships in the workplace

Let's face it, 9 to 5 jobs are tiring and somewhat frustrating. The only other people who share this ordeal with you are your colleagues. Once you enter work life, you'll find yourself having to spend more time in the office than with your old friends. How you deal with people in your workplace ultimately creates a lasting image for you, so it's important to stay on the good side of your co-workers. But often times, balancing this friendship on a steady ground becomes difficult for either parties. Workplace friendships aren't really selfless, unconditional bonds. There will be many incidents that cause tension and miscommunication. There may not be many smack dab protocols as to how you can maintain a good, yet not too friendly relationship with your co-workers, but there sure are some basic guidelines you can follow.

IS SHARING THAT REALLY NECESSARY?
While it's always an added bonus to find work friends who make time at the office enjoyable, sharing with them information that are crucial work issues or company flaws may not be the best idea. "It is one thing to have light-hearted chitchats such as weekend plans or the recent Black Mirror episode, but venting about that horrible boss who never seems to give you a break, may constitute taking things too far entirely and stirring problems.", says Odrika Iqbal, a teacher of the EEE department, Canadian University of Bangladesh.



Hence, sharing common hobbies or a similar sense of humour should not be an indicator of the colleague-friend being your all-time confidant. In keeping with that, pressuring a work friend into disclosing some juicy office gossip or personal details with you will be uncalled for. So acknowledge the rapport with colleagues for what it really is: a friendly relationship at the office.

IT'S ALL ABOUT PRIORITIES

Understand that you and your colleagues have chiefly gotten together for work. Given the competitive nature

of any company, academia, or organisation, it's better to be safe than sorry by knowing that friends formed in these places may not be as loyal as regular friends outside of work. You cannot expect your work friends to not double cross you and give up an opportunity for the next promotion in-line, because they will. Because priorities in workplaces are just like that. In workplace dictionary, it's fair.

On the other hand, you can't let the making or breaking of a friendship hinder your work performance. It's essential to recognise early on when such interactions turn into a distraction, ultimately derailing your ability to accomplish your goals.

YOU DRAW YOUR OWN LINES

Clearly communicating whatever boundaries you may have will make it easier for everyone. You can be this super-approachable-all-walls-down person in the informal office get-togethers or picnics, but the business-as-usual person when back in the office; that's up to you. But normalising this behaviour from the beginning, so that nobody is unnecessarily hurt or mislead, falls under your imperative responsibilities too.

EMPHASIZE ON EQUALITY

This pointer is especially significant if you're the team leader, or are given responsibilities to manage others. Treating team members equally is the best way to avoid biased relationships and group-thinks. All co-workers, and not just your own friends, should be given the same opportunities and encouragement to voice their ideas.

Along with all of these, you may find it in your best interests to look up your company/workplace policies (if any) regarding workplace friendships and relationships and act accordingly. Because as a whole, friendship anywhere when allowed to grow can help support, inspire and motivate you to reach your goals.

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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.

WHY YOU NEED A MENTOR



Mentors provide knowledge and experience. Theoretical knowledge that we get from the classroom often end up being inapplicable in real life situations. But a mentor can help you solve problems using practical experience, and provide the much needed guidance and wisdom that newer people in the industry may need.

Mentors can help you improve. Often times, we fail to see our own faults. If you can find a good mentor who doesn't shy away from providing constructive criticism, then he will surely tell you what you might be doing wrong in your work, and help you overcome it.

They give you emotional support. Mentors aren't just there to help you work better,

It isn't easy to make the transition from laid-back student to hard-working job holder. Once you start working, you will face challenges that are a lot more complex and demanding than anything you've had to deal with before. It's perfectly normal to feel like a fish out of water in such situations. But whatever career you opt for, having a trustworthy mentor makes everything better.

they can also give you the moral boost that you might need after a failed project. The real world is competitive, and you will hardly be able to find true friends. But a good mentor would only want what's best for you, and they will be there for you always.

Mentoring can help newbies achieve tremendous personal and professional growth, if done right. But make sure that your mentor isn't a toxic or competitive person, because that will only hold you back.

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