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# NEXT STEP

## WHEN YOU'RE NOT THE BOSS'S FAVOURITE

You submit your papers on due time, sometimes even hours before the deadline. Your etiquettes are flawless. There's not one complaint against you. Yet your boss has a favourite go-to employee: your cube-mate, not you.

The above isn't an uncommon situation in workplaces, organisations, or even in regular classroom settings. Favouritism—perceived or otherwise—by bosses, managers, higher-ups, is real and all the more difficult to deal with when you're on the victim end of it. Besides brewing a climate of bitterness among colleagues, staffers, and friends, employees who feel they're working in such an inequitable environment soon experience resentment, low job satisfaction and low morale. This in turn may lead to their seeking jobs elsewhere or declining productivity.

If you are in this situation, you may find no easy way out of this loop in sight. But rather than let your nemeses whom you so badly want to outperform have their ways, it's worth a shot for you to navigate your way through this by trying some basics:

### RECONSIDER AND REASSESS

In the heat of the demanding moments, it's normal for you to construe your boss's treatment of you or others as something it's not. To ensure you're not unnecessarily playing the victim, it's essential to analyse the situation and ask yourself again. Is the boss really being biased? Or are you being overshadowed because your performance is sub-par?

### SEARCH FOR THE LOOPHOLES

Try to understand why your colleague is getting a pat on the back for that sales pitch whereas you're ending up with a "meh" look from the boss even after delivering almost the same content. Is the reason friendship or relationship or shared history with the boss? Or is it simply professional? Knowing the cause will help you not only feel less bad about yourself, but also to focus on the right things for developing yourself.

### BETTER YOUR WORK AND SKILLS

Where and how exactly can you improve your performance? Learn properly what your boss's expectations are. If possible, emulate what s/he does and maintain feedback regularly. Show that you're never compromising on your part and on the organisational requirements, no matter what sort of treatment you may be receiving.

In this respect, Farhan Ishmam Sikder, currently a part-timer at an established



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

marketing agency says, "In the three places I've worked at till date, I have seen favouritism to come into the scenario from two angles. Firstly, it happens because your work is good. On the other hand, there are people who deliver sub-par work but become the boss's favourite by undertaking means that aren't all that transparent. But good news is, the second type never lasts very long. At the end of the day bosses will obviously have the welfare of the organisation in mind. That goal will only be met if the employees do their work well. Unless that happens, no matter how "favourite" one is, they will face consequences."

### DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONALISM AND OPTIMISM

As it's not exactly the employee's fault that they're receiving special treatment, it's only fair that you don't take out your disappointment on them. Difficult though it might be, stay positive, patient and neutral. Portray your manicured self in front of your peers and bosses. Let it not show in your behaviour that you understand favouritism is taking place, as bosses won't like that.

### PROTEST IN A MODEST WAY

Yet, you may take a leaf out of the diplomacy book and confront your boss about your feelings or suspicions - given you two have that sort of a relationship. If you do that, maintain utmost modesty while talking to the boss. Don't make it sound like you're accusing him/her. Begin in a way that goes along the lines of, "You must have your reasons for preferring Ahmed for handling the project, but I believe I may be better because..."

### THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN EFFECT

Human psychology studies reveal that if someone does you a favour, s/he is likely to feel more favourably towards you in later times. This is attributed to human brains' wanting to justify the actions one has performed, whereby it signals that they did the favour because they like you. Now, you know what to do. Go ask for and appropriate that easy-to-do favour from your boss.

### DON'T GIVE UP

Understand that you really cannot control the actions of your boss, but you definitely can control your reaction and impression in front of him/her. No one said that a boss

can't have more than one favourite, so it will be foolish to give up halfway through this journey. If necessary, talk to a mentor or a friend about your troubles in this regard, to get an impartial suggestion.

### CALL UPON HUMAN RESOURCES

It's in nobody's best interest to be the snitch in the organisation, but if you've tried everything else and nothing changes, then you can always reach out to the HR department to see what options are available. If there's blatant unprofessional behaviour at play in the office, keep track of related instances that bolster your case.

Before you discuss the situation with HR or the employee grievances department, think carefully and reconsider what's actually going on. See if it is possible to get candid feedback from your peers or people who aren't your competitors, then decide.

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## THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



## Should you apply for masters in spring semester?

Most universities abroad start their academic year during fall, that is, in early September. With most undergrad programs in Bangladesh ending around December, this means that you're bound to spend a little time just sitting around right after completing your bachelors. If you are the type who can't wait to get going with their master's, a spring semester, which starts in January, can seem very lucrative! However, in reality, starting off-season can come with its own set of hurdles. So, why not look at a few aspects that need to be considered before applying for a spring semester?

### AVAILABILITY

Many universities only take in students once each academic year and don't even offer master's programs during spring. Therefore programs available for spring are fewer than those during fall. If you do find your desired program, the courses offered are often limited since fewer people enrol during spring in the first place. In terms of sequential courses that depend on one another, you might still need to wait for the next fall to do those. This is because the first semester during masters consists of courses that are prerequisites for those offered in spring, and might only be offered during fall. Starting in spring is only handy if you need to find research groups for your project or if you want a head start with your thesis work.

### FINANCIAL AID

Financial aids are entirely dependent on the university and the level of funds available. Your best bet in this case is to look through the options at your target university.

Admission officers go through your entire profile while deciding whether to grant you financial aid or scholarships and the time of your application usually doesn't have any significance, provided it is within deadline. However, some aids are on a first come first serve basis, in which case, you might be at a disadvantage at spring given the academic year starts at fall.

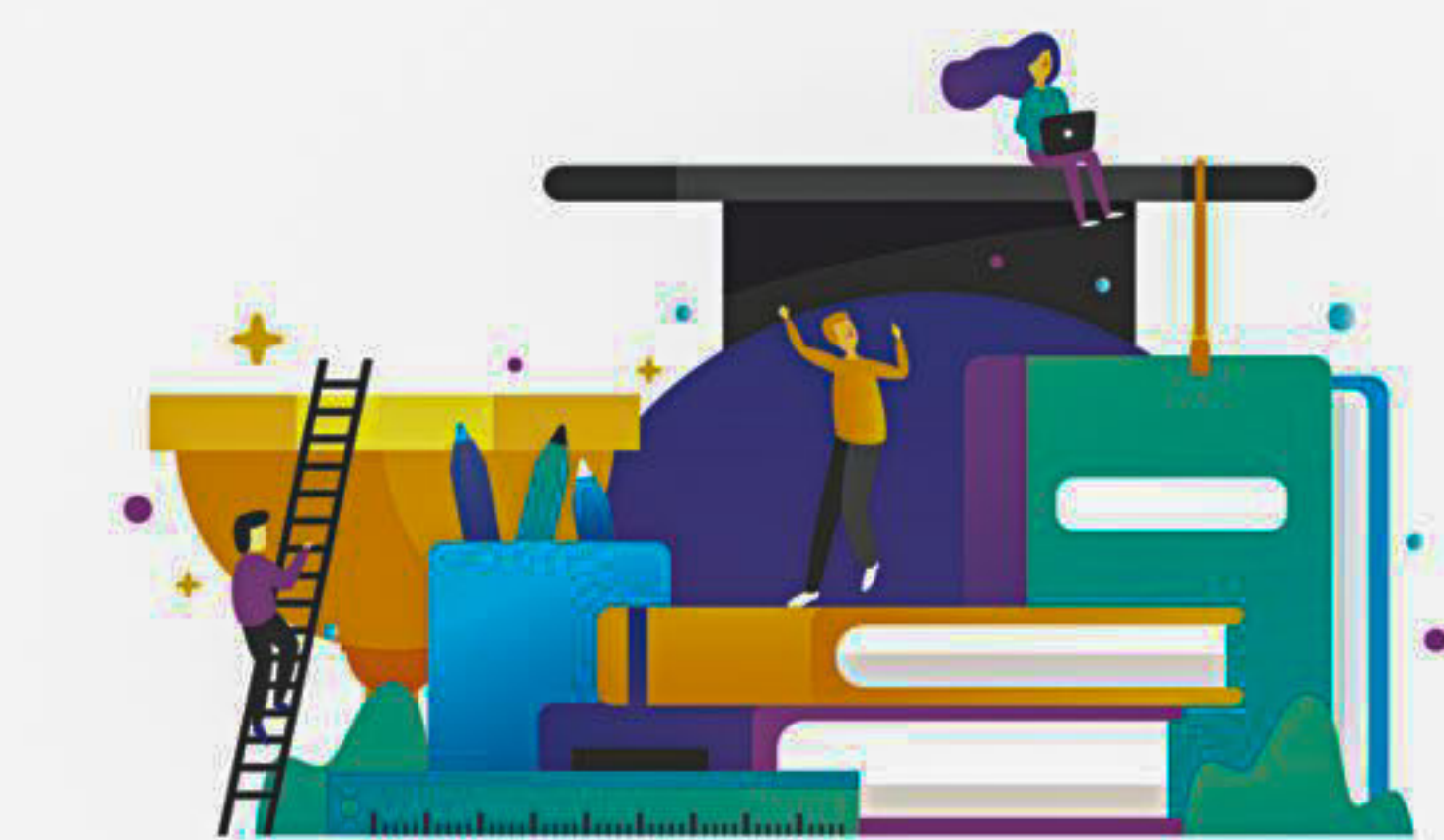
### VISA

Many people often speculate that those applying for spring have

during fall. However, there is a small bunch of students who do graduate in December and you could try opting for their positions. Since this is far less common and the positions are usually more competitive, your profile needs to be at least slightly above average to actually get the job.

### JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Job fairs usually happen after the summer semester. Those starting in fall usually get more time in campus to work on their resume, try out various opportunities and take up



higher chances of getting their visa turned down. However, there is no truth to it, visas are given out based on completely different criteria, and its best to carefully make the visa application according to the embassy's rules..

### ASSISTANTSHIPS

In-campus internships or assistantships are usually more available during fall since a lot of professors start their research at the beginning of the academic year. Also, most students graduate by the end of spring and so there are a lot more vacancies

more leadership roles. Therefore, joining in spring can have a bit of a disadvantage if you plan on working abroad after your master's. However, if you plan on coming back to Bangladesh, this should not be much of a factor.

Although there can be a few disadvantages to starting in spring, most of the cons aren't a deal breaker. It all depends on your future goals and whether you're comfortable taking a gap year or not.

ADIBA MAHBUB

## 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.

## THE SCIENCE OF TAKING BREAKS

*If you're the sort of person who likes to take 30-minute breaks after every 5 minutes of working, I must say that I understand why. 9 to 5 jobs can get quite monotonous after days of doing the same thing over and over again. But too many breaks will hinder your productivity, while too much work won't have a positive impact either. It's important to find the right balance.*

Some studies have shown that the best way to time your breaks is to take 17 minute breaks, every 52 minutes. Or you can use the Pomodoro technique and take a break every 25 minutes, but any less than that wouldn't allow you to get anything done at a stretch.

Now, what's the best way to use those breaks? If you're hungry, eat something that gives you energy instead of making you feel bloated. That means staying away from heavy carbs like rice and bread, and choosing healthier foods such as fresh fruits and granola bars.

Power naps will refresh and re-energise you. If you're studying, napping will enhance your memory, and you will find it easier to concentrate afterwards.

Too much work can cause anxiety and stress, so meditation can be an excellent tool to bring peace to your mind. There are many techniques, one that's easy and convenient is a breathing exercise. Empty your mind and focus only on inhaling and exhaling. Take 10 deep breaths and you might just feel less stressed.

