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# NEXT STEP

## ARE YOU OLD ENOUGH TO BE HERE?

### CHRONICLES OF BEING THE YOUNG ONE AT WORK

"What do people do in offices?" a friend recently asked in a group chat. While the answer to this question seems obvious and one might think you'd have to be a precious Gen Z snowflake to have to ask something like this, my friend is what people would call a Gen Z snowflake. I am too, but because of a combination of good luck, opportunism, and the coincidence of being in the right place at the right time, I happen to have a job and consequently, the answer to my friend's simple-minded question. "We work," I told her. "For the most part," I added.

I may not have thought much about it, but in retrospect, what I meant with the appendage to my answer has certain significance. It is significant to me because despite 'doing the work' being the most important thing about having a job, trying to look in control when quite often I feel like I've been thrown in the deep end, and trying to make myself feel like I belong to an office environment that has been shaped by personalities much older than me takes up a good chunk of effort. These small troubles manifest themselves over the cafeteria table when someone says Wasim Akram was the best fast bowler they've ever seen live. Wasim Akram is old. You'd have to be old to have seen him live.

These conversations are harmless, to be honest, and they mostly end in an inquiry of one's birth year, and an incredulous roll of the eyes. What causes a tad more discomfort is when colleagues fail to take into account how the nature of problems change at different points of a person's life. For example, getting home before 8 PM is something that is generally more important for a younger person than for someone who's older. Being aware of that is vital if you are the person responsible for maintaining a schedule, and also older.

Everyone tends to think life used to be easier five or ten years ago, but you didn't know this when it mattered, which was five or ten years ago. I'd be lying if I said that over the years, I haven't been telling my juniors at school and college that their SSC grades, and then their HSC grades, and then the university they get admitted to doesn't really matter in the long run. Yet, at the workplace, when someone tells me life is about to throw me curve balls much worse than the ones I faced in my latest final exams, it is not reassuring. I think this is a human condition, a type of long term amnesia that disables our ability to empathise, something that we'd all be better off without.

On the flipside, you can be overly aware of someone's age at the workplace as well. Most late teens and twenty-somethings will attest to having had to deal with



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

overbearing parents and for the ones who get an early taste of the real world at a workplace, the freedom to make some choices by themselves for the first time ever is everything. At a workplace, you are asked to make impactful decisions, and it takes a fair bit of mental acrobatics to convince yourself that you can make these decisions. Yet, undue suggestions for a decision that should be solo, or simply bypassing a young colleague in decisions that'd require collective input can leave a terrible mental mark. When you're the young person at work being asked for the fifth time whether you're sure you can do something (that you're supposed to do yourself) by yourself, you have to pinch yourself to not shout, 'I'M OLD

ENOUGH TO MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS, DAD!', because an outburst like that may lead to never ending taunts, and for the unlucky, to workplace bullying. Which brings me to my final point.

Banter at the workplace is an inseparable part of that particular workplace. It's how colleagues develop a good rapport because you seldom have the time or openness to just sit down and talk about each other. But what's banter to one person could be bullying to another, especially if it's a person whose personality does not dictate them to come up with replies on the spot. A person may feel insulted simply due to a lack of understanding about the tone of a comment. This problem is definitely not limited to people of a younger age, but

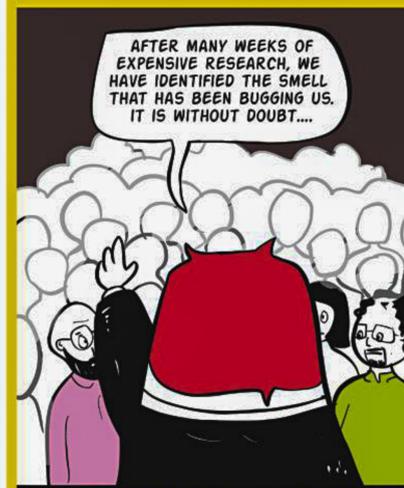
if someone is already feeling intimidated because of some other factor, age being one of them, they're far more likely to come out feeling humiliated in situations like these.

The nature of most industries has become such that more and more university students, maybe even freshmen, are starting to enter workforces. These people enter workplaces where almost everyone is older, and it's important for these older people, when the situation arises, to not raise the eyebrow that asks, "Are you old enough to be here?" but to do their best to accommodate someone who's probably feeling hopelessly out of place.

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## THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



NOT SHOWERING EVER ALSO HELPS.

## New year's resolutions for professionals

At this point, we are all making new year's resolutions simply because we have to. We stand in our balconies on new year's eve, look at the fireworks, and then promise ourselves to lose 32 KGs, quit junk food and learn French in the coming year.

Then by the time it's February, you give up on every resolution you made and wait for the next year. Thus begins the vicious cycle of making unattainable resolutions and never being able to keep them.

Like all other goals in life and work, your resolutions should also be SMART - as cliched as that may sound. This means they have to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely. So don't bite off more than you can chew, and make some easier resolutions.

### 1. LEARN A SKILL RELEVANT TO YOUR JOB:

Knowing how to use Adobe softwares or speaking another language may make your job easier - you will no longer need a designer for every little tweak on visuals, and you may understand your foreign clients without requiring a translator. So make some time to learn a skill or enrol in a post-graduate degree. Your schedule will be tiresome, but it will be great for your career in the long run.

### 2. FIX YOUR SLEEP CYCLE:

If you wake up tired every morning before work, then your productivity will keep decreasing and you'll burn yourself out. Try to get six to eight hours of sleep every night. First step for this would be to get as much distance between you and your phone, computer, and television as possible before getting into bed. Cut down on caffeine after 8 PM as well.

### 3. AVOID OFFICE GOSSIP:

As tempting as gossip may be, it almost always has a negative effect on office environment and the camaraderie between co-workers. So it's better to keep your slate clean. Do not engage in gossip, even if the people around you constantly complain about their bosses.

### 4. EAT HEALTHY AT WORK:

Your stomach, and health in the long term, will thank you for avoiding junk food. If you don't have the self-control to refrain from it while at work, have a heavy breakfast before going out every day or carry lunch from home.



### 5. AIM FOR BETTER WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

The best way to achieve work-life balance is by prioritising and getting things done on time. If you feel too stressed out by work, and your mental health and personal life start to deteriorate, then talk to your supervisor and decrease the workload if possible. At the end of the day, unhappy employees cannot remain productive in the long run.

ESHANEE SADHUKHAN

## 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.

## PROFESSIONALISM FOR FREELANCERS

I have been working as a freelance contributor for a little over a year now. In this time, I've picked up on a few unprofessional things freelancers tend to do. Based on said learning, here are a few ways to maintain professionalism even if you're only a freelancer.

### ALWAYS MAINTAIN DEADLINES

This is perhaps the most common issue I've noticed among freelancers - we don't stick to deadlines. This reflects poorly on our work ethics. All work should be taken seriously and done on time, even if one is not a full time employee.

### CHOOSE QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

The quality of my work is often subpar if I procrastinate until the last minute and prepare something in a hurry just to make it within a deadline. Quality always matters, and poor quality work only adds incompetence and sloppiness to a freelancer's reputation.

### KEEP YOUR COMMITMENTS

As freelancers, many of us tend to be irresponsible with commitments. Not showing up to monthly meetings is a common example of this. Promising to

deliver something and neither delivering that output nor giving a heads up to your employer is another unprofessional thing to do, and it basically tells your employer that s/he cannot rely on you in times of need.

### BE AVAILABLE FOR FEEDBACK

This is a less common issue, but problematic nonetheless. Sometimes I'll write an article that needs a few edits before it can go to print. If I choose to not respond

to my employer's calls and texts in such a situation, the work either gets delayed or has to be done by someone else. It's true that we're not personally inconvenienced by such events, but it's also true that reputation and trust are important in getting freelance work. Hence, try to be available when there's a chance of receiving feedback.

TASMIAH HAQUE

