

Take your next step to connect to us. Email us if you have an interesting story to share related to career.

facebook.com/
thedailystar.nextstep
Email: nextstep@thedailystar.net

The Daily Star

DHAKA, FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2019

CHAITRA 1, 1425 BS

e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

NEXT STEP

BANGLADESH: A COUNTRY WITH TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL

In conversation with Guy Meldrum, Regional Director of Asia-Pacific and Middle East, British American Tobacco PLC

You've had an illustrious career for over 20 years. Tell us a bit about your journey with BAT.

My journey started in BAT Australia in 1994 as a Marketing Management Trainee in Trade Marketing, so you can say I started at the very bottom and worked my way up the ladder. In the earlier days, I served in various positions including global travel retail and brand management in Australia. I left BAT to work for Kellogg, but re-joined BAT London and then Switzerland once I moved overseas. I then came back to Australia where I worked as the Head of Trade. Thereafter, I was made the Asia Pacific Regional Head of Trade Marketing based in Hong Kong. Afterwards, I assumed the role of Marketing Director in South Korea and then in Russia. I came back to Korea as the Area Director for North Asia and later became the Area Director of Australasia.

From Russia to Korea to Australasia, you have worked in completely different countries. Where would you say you had the most challenging experience?

I would definitely say it was Korea with respect to the intensity of the business challenges we faced there. However, in terms of cultural differences, I think Russia would be the country that presented me with the biggest challenge. The ways and modes of doing business in Russia were very different from what I was used to being around in Australia. The approach to problems by the Russians, both in personal and professional terms, was unforeseen and needed getting accustomed to.

Despite cultural difference across countries, what is the one element behind a successful company that you think remains uniform throughout?

From my point of view, it's really all about the employees' attitudes, abilities, and positive mindset about overcoming challenges. I believe that we can always get the output we strive for, once we put in our complete dedication behind doing things. Besides, the sheer level of determination, perseverance, and resilience in these people I've worked with were remarkable. This may be due to the fact that the work culture, challenges, and the utmost competitiveness in BAT, bring out the best in them. Lastly, the warm feeling of being a tight knit community is what I have found to be constant in these people, regardless of

their nationality.

By now, you have gained familiarity with Bangladesh, its people and culture. How do you perceive Bangladesh and our future talents?

I am firmly of the opinion that Bangladesh is a country with tremendous potential and will go a long way into becoming a powerhouse in the global stage. It has already made a strong foundation in the global BAT family; we now have two Bangladeshis in the Asia Pacific Middle East leadership teams. There are also about 32 Bangladeshis appointed in different nations in various roles at BAT across the

Forum and its progress is truly remarkable. The huge investments that are already underway are testaments that Bangladesh is on the right track. With the government also maintaining a positive mindset towards private & international businesses, I believe exciting times lie ahead for the private sector being a part of this dynamic country.

Considering the FastTrack growth of the country, how do you see BAT Bangladesh as a development partner?

BAT Bangladesh's motto has always been to contribute towards the development of the country. Every initiative taken has been



world. I see a lot of young minds of this country developing and possessing the right skills needed for the future. Hence, the constant economic growth and the government's can-do attitude to cultivate a better nation, is paving the way towards an optimistic path ahead for this nation and we look forward to playing a part in that.

What is your take on the Bangladesh market and its 'Asian Tiger' Economy?

The constant 6%+ economic growth rate for the past few years reflects the country's energy, persistence & agility. Bangladesh has been acknowledged as the 9th fastest growing country by the World Economic

aligned with this vision & in collaboration with various offices of the government. Our initiatives in the farming community to promote good agricultural practices, our challenging recruitment platform Battle of Minds, Women Leadership platforms empowering women across the organisation and adapting eco-friendly processes throughout our value chain- all actions are in line with the government's national goals & UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through these initiatives and our 3 CSR programmes - Afforestation, Water Filtration Plants & Solar Home Systems - we contribute towards 11 out of the 17 UN SDGs & 4 out

of 10 National Goals. These tools are imperative for the country to achieve its middle-income nation status & we aim to continue to contribute towards building a better Bangladesh together.

As a well-known 'Inspirational People Leader', what advice would you give to the future talents of our country?

I've realised over the years that leadership is all about learning and practicing every day. You need to learn throughout your life and have the zeal to do so at the same time. It can be from books, the internet, other people, and just about any other experience. I would suggest the people of this country to be bold & courageous, to step up, continuously learn, and learn to lead. They should boldly demonstrate their skills. There will be good paths as there will be bad, but it will be a continuous journey of learning. Coupling that with believing in self, identifying personal leadership style and establishing leadership stance is essential.

What would you say is your source of motivation and continuous energy?

That is mostly my upbringing. My family and surroundings have been big influencers in making me who I am today. My formative days in the company have motivated me to learn about teamwork. What motivates me now, is seeing the development and growth of the people I deal with. All around the Asia-Pacific and Middle East, my job requires me to facilitate and encourage leaders to become better leaders and to help grow the next generation of leaders, along with curating the current ones. Thus, their encouragement and growth in turn becomes mine as well.

How would you define yourself outside of work and balance your demanding work life?

Realistically speaking, the world has moved away from work-life balance in a way that it's now time to think in the lines of what entitles happiness at work. My personal philosophy is less about juggling work and more about making sure that the moments I have with my loved ones are quality moments where I'm really present in them. That's not going to be easy when you are in a senior leadership role where you're expected to set the example. So I try to remind myself that mental and physical well-being is a part of my job description too.

THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



Making ideas investment-ready with Startup Dhaka Incubator

Startup Dhaka has been promoting the startup ecosystem in Bangladesh for more than five years now. Since its inception, Startup Dhaka has been at the front lines, running accelerator programs, startup workshops, and online and offline courses. Startup Dhaka has worked with 1500+ startups, facilitated 68 investments, arranged over 35 startup events, and has published over 78 online courses. In line with these contributions, Startup Dhaka is set to launch a 3-month incubator program. The Startup Dhaka Incubator is an intensive, result-oriented program, tailored to making business ideas market-ready and investment-ready. Be it a tech company or a conventional one, Startup Dhaka Incubator will work with any idea that addresses a concrete problem and has the potential for changing lives.

Shohoz, one of the fastest growing ride-sharing platforms in Bangladesh is the supporting partner of Startup Dhaka Incubator. Facebook, Amazon Web Services, Edge Research & Consultancy, University of Liberal Arts, and Startup Bangladesh have also joined the incubator as partners, to help startups transition into the real world of business from just a cool idea.

Applications are now open, and in the coming days, Startup Dhaka will host several info sessions to orient the participants with the incubator. The first info session was held on 13th March 2019. After all the info sessions, teams will have a clearer sense of expectations for the next three months with the scope to interact with the program partners.

Startup Dhaka Incubator is a combination of online sessions and one-on-one KPI mentorship during office hours. Participants can take lessons from the convenience of their own homes or offices. They will meet mentors for one-on-one sessions once every week to discuss

exclusively their business problems. The KPI session will additionally assess business performance through tasks assigned to them after attending online learning sessions. At the end of three months, Startup Dhaka Incubator will host a Demo Day for the companies with investors to pitch their respective products.

The incubation program is designed to help early-stage startups turn their ideas into a minimum viable product (MVP) in 90 days. Startups will not have to give up their equity but the program will cost BDT 50,000 after acceptance into the incubator, and will receive BDT 20,000 scholarship sponsored by Shohoz. The total value of the incubator program is over BDT 8,00,000 where program benefits are measured in monetary value. The three months of intense learning will help founders be investment-ready. Accepted teams will additionally get office space and grants option from Startup Bangladesh, FbStart package from Facebook, AWS credit from Amazon, investment counseling

from fund managers of IDLC VC fund, investment linkage and exclusive fundraising mentorship from Edge Research & Consulting, and the chance to be featured in Tiger Cage, the country's first Startup Funding reality show.

Excited about the new project, Mustafizur Rahman, CEO & Founder of Startup Dhaka said, "We are very excited about Startup Dhaka Incubator. We have seen many startups struggling to validate their ideas in the market for lack of right mentorship. Our experience in investing and mentoring early stage companies has given us real advantage in providing practical insights that founders can readily apply in their businesses."

Startup Dhaka Incubator would not have come to fruition without Shohoz, Facebook, Amazon Web Services, Edge Research & Consultancy, University of Liberal Arts, and Startup Bangladesh coming forward with a mutual goal of growing the startup ecosystem of Bangladesh. For more information about the program, contact nahid.sdasia@gmail.com.

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 WOMEN MAKE GREAT LEADERS

Women in the past weren't prevalent in leadership roles, but today many women are breaking every glass ceiling imaginable. Despite varied resistances from family and the wider society in general, they now reflect sheer determination across all walks of life. There are countless examples of women absolutely acing various leadership roles at their workplaces. So what gives them this edge and makes them adept as leaders in their professions?

Women listen and understand: For obvious reasons, this is an excellent quality in a leader which women particularly possess and actively practice. It's for their listening and understanding that they know what to say in which condition and how to get things done. Sabah Sarwar Pushpa, Assistant Engineer at Bangladesh University of Professionals says, "I think women make great leaders because we are in-built to balance professional and personal leadership skills. The empathy, listening skills and emotional intelligence that a woman leader portrays make it easier for an employee under her to approach her with a

request, a grievance, or a sensitive question. It also helps that they are naturally nurturing, which in the best scenarios can translate to helping others succeed."

They're strong communicators: Communication skill, a prerequisite for success in most fields, is said to be a woman's strong suit. As leaders, they know how to exercise it well. Be it for communicating with employers, co-workers, or partners, an open communication stream allows for transparency in executing roles and responsibilities.

Women defy the odds: Along with being able to handle crisis situations with patience, women know how to make things work in their favour. They have had the odds stacked against them that they had to overcome to get to the top. The fighters who survive, thus automatically become the better of the lot.

Women are assertive team players: Because of having developed a stealth against the myriad of issues of discrepancies they have to face in the professional realm, women tend to be strong about what they believe in and

assert their grounds. While they consistently demonstrate passion, women know now how to make bold and wise decisions as leaders, while relying on others to be a part of their team.

They are the motivated motivators: A woman is generally enthusiastic and motivated by nature, thus they are also inclined to discovering what motivates people into action. As such, they hand out words of encouragement and constructive feedback.

Women are deft multi-taskers: Women make the house, go to the office, look after the children, make time for themselves, and still somehow have it all figured out at the end of the day. They do not sacrifice their personal growth in the process, and maybe thus still proves to be a great leader in times of need. This agility and flexibility gives them proper direction and focus on whatever task they partake in.

ESHANEE SADHUKHAN

Eshanee is a student at IBA, University of Dhaka. Send her good vibes at eshanee333@gmail.com.