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# NEXT STEP

## THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE MID-LEVEL JERK MANAGER

*Why do companies have so many jerks and egomaniacs? This is the question I keep asking myself as I hear the colourful stories shared by friends who are part of Dhaka's corporate world. Having started a business right after graduation, I've never had the chance to work in the corporate sector myself. But when I hear some of their encounters with terribly misbehaving supervisors, I feel glad I'm not in their shoes. Who would want to be? There is one story where a supervisor kept screaming at a female batch-mate of mine so loudly in front of all their co-workers that she was reduced to tears. And this was one of the "leading" multinationals of the country. What kind of a company not only keeps such terrible supervisors, but also promotes them further up the management?*

IBA graduates are notorious for job-hopping. They say we switch jobs for merely a few thousand bucks. However, interestingly, amongst all the job switches I have seen so far amongst my friends, most of them happened not because the new place offered better salary, but because the earlier company had a terrible supervisor. To put it simply, the person was tired of being mistreated by his boss. This phenomenon keeps repeating so often amongst my peers that by now I've become a strong believer of the adage "People don't leave companies, they leave bosses". Unsurprisingly, global studies have shown bad managers to be the number one reason for people quitting.

And what is most interesting is that these people behave terribly not just with their direct reports, but with stakeholders too. This is where I speak from first-hand experience. I run a catering company called Alpha Catering, and over our 2-year journey, we've had to interact with managers of all sorts of companies - local, multinational, big, small - for the purpose of providing our services. In most cases, I brace myself to be treated as a "lowly vendor", to be made to wait for an hour or two when I arrived clearly on time, to be talked to in very rude, condescending tones, as if the future of my business depended on their order. Again, it's not just first-hand experience I talk from. Many other entrepreneurs I know lament how they are treated like refugees by companies, and that such treatment of vendor is universal in this country. So what exactly is going on? How has good behavior suddenly become such a scarce currency?

Unfortunately, such issues can also bring a bad reflection on the company's owners or CEO. If you as the owner promote jerks to higher management, what does it say about you? That might be the first question we ask in such a situation. However, an insinuation that the owner or CEO is a jerk himself because some of his managers have such negative traits, may not always be correct. This is where I want to bring to light another set of very different experiences



I've had in running my company. At Alpha, aside from dealing with terrible company managers, we've also had the good fortune of interacting with some highly successful people, like CEOs of multinationals, chairmen of local conglomerates, celebrities, sports icons, high government officials, etc. For us, the experience has been totally opposite when meeting the successful individuals. More often than not, they seem like the nicest people you'd meet. Despite being so obviously powerful and wealthy, they will always treat you very courteously, show you respect, pay attention when you speak, etc. If you meet them, they won't let you go without at least some tea and refreshments. If they give you an appointment, they won't leave you waiting for ages. They are very respectful of other people's time.

Again, many people I know, especially entrepreneurs, have corroborated this experience of mine. So the first question that comes to mind is that, if these people are not jerks, why do they promote jerks? One reason is because jerks are only so to people they are powerful over; their behavior instantly shifts when dealing with higher authorities. Jerks often cozy and butter people up on their way to the top. So the big boss often fails to notice the jerk in his usual behavior. Another reason is because, like it or not, many of these jerks tend to be great individual performers. When a boss sees an employee exceeding in his individual role, many make the mistake of assuming this person will be similarly effective in a managerial role. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case, and the new jerk manager ends up frustrating his juniors, who wind up leaving the firm.

In the end, I'm a firm believer of the fact that bad behavior does not pay. It seems that if you're a rude and arrogant individual, you will one day become a mid-manager, or even a department head. But if you treat people nicely, with respect, you can expect to become a CEO or own your own flourishing business! And at the same time, bosses should also be careful about who they are promoting to higher management, especially if they don't want their best talents jumping to rival firms.

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### THE BOSSMAN

BY E. RAZA RONNY



## Why you should take management courses as a non-business major

Companies and firms nowadays prefer students with interdisciplinary course arrangements. Studies show that students with a more diverse order of courses perform better in corporate culture as they are better equipped to handle different crises at once. As a STEM, social science or arts major, having management courses in your transcript can change the way an employer looks at your résumé. Foreign universities with graduate programs also prefer applicants who can display their strength in organisational behavior. Here are a few reasons why:

### TEAM WORK AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

If you are some one who is good at organising group activities, from a friend's farewell party to the semester-final presentation, your grade in a management course will be the proof of this skill. If you are not, the course will be a great place to cultivate these important skills. Companies like hiring professionals who know how to work with big groups that house a variety of individuals from different backgrounds.

### RESOLUTION OF WORK PLACE CONFLICT

It is very common to come across personalities that don't match with your ideals and values in workplace. Even if it's not a personal clash, a clash between two workers working under your program can also create a tough situation. A course in human resource management can help in solving a situation like this. Learning about how to handle icky situations is not limited to those who work in human resource exclusively.



### DESIGNING PROGRAMS

Research incubators and non-profits often require employees to both lead and design programs with specific initiatives. Professionals who come from academically strong backgrounds, although affluent in creating content for the program, lack the skills to designate tasks to coworkers. Understanding strengths and weaknesses of your coworkers is key here and management courses shed light on how to effectively accomplish that. Furthermore, you can utilise everyone's unique set of skills to its optimum level.

### REDUCING COSTS

Managing finances is an issue anyone working for research firms will face. Sources of funding for different programs and studies will be limited and optimising the resources available can help you immensely in the longer run. Management courses can help you develop the skills to find areas where costs can be managed, ultimately increasing your output by many folds. This skill can also come in handy if you are looking to allocate resources effectively to each

person working with you under a specific program.

### CHANGING CAREER TRACK

A huge number of STEM majors tend to join the academic world right after graduation to pursue the independent research they started back in undergraduate life. Those who work in corporate settings often move back to the academia to pursue higher degrees like doctorate or masters. Joining an office after a hiatus or many years after your undergraduate experience can be tough. Learning about workplace culture in a course can help you adjust to new situations faster. It will help you establish your presence in your workplace and help you navigate the common problems any professional may face after a change in their career track.

NOSHIN SAIYARA

Noshin Saiyara is an aspiring conservationist who is deluded into thinking that she can actually save our planet from dying. Reach out to her at [n Saiyara12@gmail.com](mailto:n Saiyara12@gmail.com) to bring her back to reality.

## 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 giving back pays off

Students often complain about how academic work is stripping off meaning from their lives. Finding meaning in things is tough, but while we are at it, compassionately working for others without any expectations of payback can be a great way to find direction in life. In that context, a good community service experience helps you create a positive influence in other people's lives and gives you an opportunity to create impact. It satisfies and reshapes your inherent instincts. It diversifies your experiences and prepares you for the battle afterwards.

Students participate in volunteering activities to gain experience, develop skills and give back to the society. Volunteering for different social service organisation, corporate or NGOs helps you develop a plethora of skills such as leadership, time management, communication, teamwork & networking. There is a clear connection between volunteering and finding employment. If you are looking for your first job, volunteering is a great way to evade gaps in your CV. It shows your prospective employer that you're dedicated to your community and seek different chances even when you are not working. With careful



choices, students can gain highly valued workplace skills. The Corporation for National and Community Service has delivered a report that found that volunteers have a 27 percent higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers (Timebank Survey, 2006). It not only gives people a sense of accomplishment, enhanced confidence level, power of self-expression, academic prowess, but also untamable energy and eagerness which ignites the engine within. Vol-

unteers are creating, calibrating and learning on their own. So no matter what you're pursuing, working for other people will always give you an incentive to go on with your life. When you meaningfully volunteer, you make the world a better place.

SAJID BIN HASNAT

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