

DELIVERING IMPACT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Aziz Ahmad is a veteran network architect and business leader with extensive experience in core networking infrastructure in the late 90s. As the lead architect of AT&T's 21st century networks, he made his first million back in 1997. Aziz is the Co-founder of a Bangladesh-based IT training academy called CodersTrust and the President and CEO of a leading systems integration & technology consulting company called UTC Associates. Prior to entering his own business, Aziz directed AT&T's Next Generation Internet (NGI) Team. He has been recognised by both New York Stock Exchange & NASDAQ, not only for his business success but also for his many philanthropic endeavours. As an Electrical Engineering graduate of City College University of New York (CUNY) and a Business Management graduate of Dartmouth, this Bangladeshi-American has 25+ years of network infrastructure management and leadership experience.



CodersTrust, a global IT-based skill development organisation, was founded with only one goal in mind – to create an impact through IT amongst the next millions of the country. That's what has been reiterated in the recent conversation that I had with Aziz Ahmad. The former engineer and networking wiz wants to train and guide the youngsters to become professional developers, designers, digital marketers and more, giving them a chance to radically change their lifestyle and career. With a demure smile he said, 'With CodersTrust we wanted to harness the power of technology to change lives and provide the youth with an opportunity of a lifetime. We must understand digital values to consider how CodersTrust's presence can create change.' He added, 'Delivering impact has been the single driving principle behind CodersTrust. With digital resources and appropriate training, we focus on introducing both a mechanism and a way of thinking for men and women; it's benefits can easily extend to impact.'

When asked how CodersTrust differs from the other training academies, Aziz said, 'To begin with, we don't have any teachers. Rather, we have mentors who are the best in their fields and experts in bringing out the best in our students. There's a subtle but important difference that distinguishes mentors and teachers- a teacher has greater knowledge than a student; a mentor has greater perspective.'

When asked if CodersTrust has been able to create a long-term impact in the last five years, Aziz took a brief pause and said, 'We are giving people new hope for

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life, creating inspiring stories, and breaking traditional career beliefs. People from every background are joining us - from housewives to jobholders and even those who are underemployed. Our operation has gone three times bigger than our projection; we have opened five campuses, trained thousands of people. I won't say we are where we want to be yet but we are certainly on the right track. We don't worry about the revenue here at CodersTrust. As long as we are creating an impact, we will keep on moving.'

Aziz also has high hopes for

the local IT scene. 'Being a core networking engineering person, I always believed that Bangladesh should have opened up the voice over internet protocol (VoIP) technology, focusing on the private sector to extend affordable services to the mass. Fortunately, to some extent, we have been able to do that. There are countless other instances where I believe the same can be done,' he said.

Terming the e-government as the right approach to delivering service to the masses, Aziz believes that, with the right private-public collaboration, Bangladesh will be able to radicalise the way a citizen can access services. 'We are halfway there in having the right infrastructure, technology, roads and highways, as all are related to attaining a Digital Bangladesh. The government already has the right vision. With the right policies and the right focus, we will be able to deliver the right kind of impact in no time.'

When asked what his take on entrepreneurship is, Aziz laughed and said, 'While many success stories exist, a number of obstacles to reach the scale of entrepreneurial growth desired in Bangladesh remains. That's why at CodersTrust, we try to instil entrepreneurial thinking into our students. Aspiring entrepreneurs will be contending with challenges such as insufficient access to financing and stiff competition. But with the right kind of vision and right kind of perseverance, success will come. Maybe not today, but tomorrow for sure.'

ZAHRA MAHBUB

Startup Dhaka conducted the first of its kind "Wealth Management Forum" in Bangladesh

Startup Dhaka organised a wealth management forum on 9th September, in partnership with IDLC Finance Limited, LightCastle Partners, and Upskill. The event was packed with 16 speakers, 8 presentations, 2 panel discussions as well as some insightful Bangladesh market forecast. Participants can learn in detail about managing money and investment opportunities. The event was designed to break the misunderstandings related to financial planning and show various investment and tax saving schemes that everyone can apply to grow their savings.

Following the success of the alternate investment forum hosted on April 2019, Startup Dhaka believed that a wealth management forum is of high relevance. The wealth management conference from Startup Dhaka had explored core themes impacting personal financial sector, including how various investment products can offer solutions and gain greater savings. The event was an opportunity to share ideas, discover trends and network with peers across the wealth industry. The event had brought thought leadership from brands like IDLC, IFC, MetLife, Ace Advisory, Huda Vasi Chowdhury & Co, Pegasus Tech Ventures, Edge AMC Ltd., Build Bangladesh, Light Castle Partners, The Legal Circle, Bangladesh Angels, and Startup Dhaka.

The 16 different influential speakers at the event who have mastered wealth management in their professional and personal life are Bijon Islam, the CEO of LightCastle Partners; Asif Khan, managing partner of Edge AMC; Ahmed Abdullah-Al-Tamjeed, head of marketing and sales, IDLC Asset Management Ltd.; Anita Ghazi, advocate, supreme court of Bangladesh; founder & partner, The Legal Circle; publisher & co-Editor, LCLR & Think Legal BD; Seezan M. Choudhury, partner, ACE Advisory; Mohammad Kamruzzaman, director, Employee



Benefits, MetLife; Nirjhor Rahman, CEO, Bangladesh Angels, former country director, YGAP; Nuzhat Anwar, senior country officer at International Finance Corporation; Arastoo Khan, chairman, Build Bangladesh Advisory Board; Arif Khan, CEO & managing director, IDLC Finance Limited; Javed Noor, general manager, IDLC; Shameem Ahsan, general partner of Pegasus Tech Ventures and Samad Miraly, co-founder, Startup Dhaka.

Shameem Ahsan, general partner of Pegasus Tech Ventures stated, 'I think globally the venture capital companies have a lot of contribution in building companies like Google and Facebook. Sequoia was instrumental in supporting Google. There were Accel Partners and Greylock Ventures who helped Facebook to be a multi-billion dollar company. I think the members of venture capital and private equity associations in Bangladesh will equally contribute in developing the startup ecosystem of Bangladesh and building a few unicorns from within.'

Shawkat Hossain, consultant, Huda Vasi Chowdhury & Co and

ex-CEO of BD Venture stated, 'There is a general lack of awareness among people, even those who have money. They don't have a lot of idea about the money growth instruments in the market. People know about one or two investment instruments but there are many other investment opportunities that needs to be highlighted.'

Panel discussion on 'Impact Investment, Changing Bangladesh' took place under Bijon Islam as the moderator. Another panel discussion took place on 'Alternative Investment in Bangladesh - the way of the future' moderated by Samad Miraly, co-founder of Startup Dhaka.

After the panel discussion ended, the networking session started.

Dr. Ismail Sayeed, CEO and founder, VIOS Health care said, 'A doctor will say health is wealth. An entrepreneur knows that wealth gives health. By making the right financial decisions as I learned here at the wealth management forum by Startup Dhaka, people like you and me can lead a life with purpose and freedom as we always wanted.'

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.

Life lessons for fresh graduates

Life has a way of opening your eyes, especially once you leave the comfort of your classroom, say goodbye to friends and embark on your own path in life. Once you complete your graduation, you are one step closer to your goals and dreams and what was once the future but is now the present. With the time now ripe, it is necessary to master some life lessons so that even if mistakes are made, we can learn from those.

Firstly, continuous learning is the way to continue absorbing all knowledge and wisdom. One should be open to learning even when they are done with their graduation. Life has more lessons to offer beyond typical textbook learnings.

Secondly, college and university professors are going to be nothing like bosses. While professors mainly focus on teaching you and making you learn, bosses will expect nothing but the best results.

Thirdly, experiences usually trump material learnings. Material things like your expensive watch or smartphone will wear out one day. So, opt for investing in travelling



and gathering timeless experiences. Fourthly, it is never too early to start saving. It is very much possible to easily splurge the first paycheck and nothing is more embarrassing than asking parents for an allowance.

Friends are your wealth. Try not to lose touch with your clique; they are not only your vital support system but are also great sources of potential job opportunities.

Our 20s are going to be a roller

coaster journey filled with a mixture of heartaches, enjoyment and wonder. We will never be this young again. So try new things, accept challenges and ultimately be open to learning more about yourself.

NABILA HOSSAIN

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