

Structured process needed to stay competitive in crisis

DHL Express Bangladesh's Managing Director Md Miarul Haque says at The Daily Star's The Chief Executive Show powered by Marico

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

The coronavirus pandemic began a few months after DHL, the world's largest courier, parcel, and express mail service, celebrated its golden jubilee on September 25, 2019.

However, the leading logistics company, which operates in more than 220 countries and territories, did not suspend their services for even a day amid the Covid-19 fallout.

According to Md Miarul Haque, managing director of DHL Express Bangladesh, maintaining a structured business process is key to remaining competitive even during times of crisis.

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, the last pandemic took place in 1918, when the H1N1 virus caused the deadliest health crisis in human history.

Given the century wide-gap, the world was underprepared for the Covid-19 but people still learned how to cope with the situation and most companies like DHL Express prioritised the safety of its workers.

Since international companies are usually the first to know about any major development worldwide, DHL Express was prepared for the fallout in early March.

"That's the advantage of working with a global company," Haque said.

Although remaining optimistic

in times like this is hard, leaders like Haque prefer to keep a stiff upper lip.

The managing director successfully motivated his colleagues by asking them to prove that the DHL motto -- Connecting People, Improving Lives -- is more than just words.

And so, the DHL management regularly contacts the company's employees to hear their problems and conduct contact-tracing of the infected.

"But this was never just for business since it helped save many lives as well," he added.

Haque believes that a structured process is vital for an organisation's development.

"To transform a company from good to great, a structured process can efficiently and effectively control the expected output," he said.

A person can learn plenty inside a classroom but that is only 10 per cent of the total process since that knowledge needs to be properly implemented.

Therefore, providing a structured learning framework could benefit an organisation as well. For example, many companies have tried to train their employees in sessions but failed due to the lack of a structured learning process.

The managing director went on to say that in any business, results are vital and even the most charismatic



Md Miarul Haque

leaders cannot control everything.

"So, I must trust my colleagues and gain their trust by showing respect. When they are engaged, they deliver better results and that eventually creates loyal customers," Haque said, adding that maintaining this cycle ensures sustainability.

Thinking empathically, providing support and showing credibility will create a moral obligation among the employees to do better, he said.

To move a company forward, seeing the bigger picture while keeping everything aligned with that vision is vital.

To do so, a leader must know the industry, competition and global trends to plan accordingly for his business.

"World leaders set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and as corporations and even citizens, it is our responsibility to contribute to these," Haque said.

Unlike the past, companies are now concerned with sustainability, environmental protection and social

responsibility, good governance because of the SDGs.

Shareholders also now expect their respective companies to maintain ethical business practices by keeping good governance.

"A leader must understand it first and then make his colleagues understand. Until every employee comprehends the organisation's shared purpose and direction, the cumulative acceleration can't be achieved," Haque said.

DHL Express has been operating in Bangladesh since 1979. Initially, it ran through agent operations before opening a full-fledged subsidiary in 2008, in an endorsement to the country's growing importance.

It handles around 70 per cent of all inbound shipments, thus becoming the largest international air courier in the country. The rest is handled by two other international companies represented by local agents and about 30 to 40 local companies.

DHL Express Bangladesh delivers time-sensitive and high value



but impactful small parcels and documents within a short time, which support trade facilitation and manufacturing. Currently, it employs more than 550 people.

Haque joined DHL Express Bangladesh in 2001 and after serving in various capacities until July 2017, he replaced the company's 27-year-long Country Manager Desmond Quiah.

In September last year, he became vice-president and managing director of the company.

Like most other success stories, Haque never dreamt of becoming a managing director during his time as a student.

"I credit my educational base to my mother and sporting zeal to my father. There was always a conflict of education and sports in my life until I got admitted to the cadet college," he said.

Thinking empathically, providing support and showing credibility will create a moral obligation among employees to do better

Taking part in debate contest, public speaking and various sports at Pabna Cadet College helped shape his future more than regular education did.

"Dream grows slowly while the radius grows bigger," he added.

His journey has not been a smooth one though as Haque suffered a brain injury in the final of a boxing competition at the Military Academy in 1989.

Although he won the championship, he was made medically boarded out after 14 months on the training as continuing the long course would have been riskier for him.

He believes that life could have gone very differently has he not returned from the academy.

"At the academy, I learned the process a person goes through. It made me confident. Since then, I feel like there's nothing impossible for me or any other human being," Haque said.

He also considers himself fortunate to have started his career with British American Tobacco, where he applied his learnings before DHL Express changed his whole life.

Haque, who studied MBA at the Institute of Business Administration under the Dhaka University, also shared a brilliant philosophy of Jack Ma, which the Alibaba founder disclosed in an interview at the World Economic Forum.

The advice is two-fold: First, hire people who are smarter than you and second, get them to work together.

Haque also believes that foolish people can be made to work together easily as they do not have individual visions whereas smart people are just the opposite.

"A leader's work is to make these powerful resources work together effectively," he said.

READ MORE ON B2

Since international companies are usually the first to know about any major development worldwide, DHL Express was prepared for the fallout in early March.

Govt to build more food grain warehouses: Razzaque

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government will build more food grain storages in order to help farmers store their produces during peak harvesting season such that they can reap benefit of fair prices and contribute to food security, said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque yesterday.

He unveiled the plan at an event where the Department of Agriculture Marketing (DAM) took over all 81 food grain warehouses from the Local Government Engineering Department.

Running a loan-against-storage programme, the warehouses, each of 250-tonne capacity, offer loans to farmers against storage of their grain. Farmers can avail a maximum 80 per cent of the price of the stored grain as a bank loan.

Farmers can sell the stored crop when prices rise to pay off the bank loan alongside a warehouse rent. The monthly rent is Tk 10 per 100 kilogrammes of food grain. This rent covers operational costs while the surplus is collected in a fund.

Loans amounting to Tk 804.91 lakh have been disbursed among 4,365 farmers against an annual deposit of 4,921 tonnes of food grain.

According to the DAM, the

loan recovery rate is 98 per cent.

The DAM had owned 12 of the warehouses while the rest were being run by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). They are spread across 56 upazilas of 26 districts in the Rangpur, Sherpur,

Magura and Barishal regions.

The DAM had sent a proposal to take ownership of the remaining 69 warehouses and the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives agreed.

The transfer was made through

the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Local Government Division (LGD) and the Ministry of Agriculture at the latter's premises yesterday.

A separate MoU was also signed for the construction of

training centres for farmers in 106 upazilas in 47 districts under eight divisions.

The DAM said these centres would be constructed within 2022 under a farmer training (phase-3) project for technology transfer at the upazila level of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

It also said the centres would give an institutional shape to training for farmers and it would be easier for farmers to organise training on time.

This will facilitate the expansion of modern agricultural technology in the field at a faster pace, the DAM said.

Addressing the signing, the agriculture minister said food grain storages would be built across the country as the loan programme has attained success and gained popularity among farmers.

The training centres will also be expanded to develop the livelihoods of farmers, he said.

Local Government and Rural Development Minister Md Tajul Islam said the training centres would help modernise the agriculture sector, bring qualitative changes and enable the adoption of technology.

He believes this initiative will help farmers avail technology and enrich their knowledge.



STAR/FILE

Training centres will be set up under a farmer training project for technology transfer at the upazila level.

Tariff barriers should be removed for higher trade with Pakistan: DCCI

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The tariff and non-tariff trade barriers between Bangladesh and Pakistan should be removed to increase bilateral trade by utilising the opportunities between the two Saarc nations, according to Shams Mahmud, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

In fiscal 2019-20, bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Pakistan was \$543.90 million, of which Bangladesh exports to Pakistan amounted to \$50.54 million while imports accounted for the rest.

Mahmud made these comments during a meeting with Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Pakistan high commissioner to Bangladesh, at the DCCI office on Wednesday.

There are opportunities to expedite bilateral trade and explore new avenues of investment but to avail these benefits, the existing trade barriers need to be removed, Mahmud said.

The DCCI president also asked Pakistani buyers to import jute goods, IT and IT enabled services, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, garments, leather products and agro-food.

He went on to urge the Pakistani envoy to strengthen their chamber-to-chamber relations, regularly exchange trade missions, organise trade fairs, business-to-business meets and roadshows to boost trade between the two nations.

Easing business visa processes and removing tariff and non-tariff barriers will also facilitate more business-to-business interactions, Mahmud told the envoy.

Meanwhile, Siddiqui said Bangladesh recently achieved tremendous growth in the IT and IT enabled service sector.

Bangladeshi entrepreneurs should utilise

this capacity and skill to invest in Pakistan, he added.

The Pakistani high commissioner also urged all Bangladeshi industrialists to import the various raw materials and textiles they require from Pakistan.

Bangladeshi investors in Pakistan could enjoy the advantages of using the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to deliver their goods to China, central Asia and Russia easily at a cheaper rate, Siddiqui said.

He also emphasised on the need for joint collaboration, especially in research and technology and expertise transfer.

PriyoShop raises fresh funds from Singapore

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Local e-commerce platform PriyoShop recently raised an undisclosed amount through funding, which will be used to scale up the company's operations and encourage other micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to go digital.

The investment was made by various investors and business entities based in Singapore.

This includes Shoko Suzuki, managing director of Habourfront Venture; James Ang, chief partner officer of Dropbox; the Business Angel Network of Southeast Asia (BANSEA), a leading angel network in the region, and Accelerating Asia, a regional network of startup programmes.



"Now, our focus is on improving the e-commerce ecosystem in rural areas, creating new entrepreneurs and bringing the existing ones online so that they flourish further," Asikul Alam Khan, founder and CEO of PriyoShop, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"The fund will also be utilised to improve e-commerce supply chain management," he added.

Many people in Bangladesh, especially those living in rural areas, need assistance to access the internet.

And so, PriyoShop will use this money to undertake certain initiatives, such as facilitating the shift online for handloom sari weavers in Tangail.

READ MORE ON B3

Nagad brings down fund withdrawal fee

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Nagad yesterday brought down its fund withdrawal fee to Tk 9.99 for every Tk 1,000, making it the lowest rate to be charged by the country's mobile financial service (MFS) providers.

The charge will be Tk 12.99 for the customers who rely on short codes rather than using mobile application of the mobile financial arm of the Postal Department for cash-out. Fifteen per cent value added tax will be applicable on both the charges.

"After launching the cheapest charge, MFS transaction rose by 62 per cent in a month," said Tanvir A Mishuk, managing director of Nagad, at a press meet at Hotel InterContinental Dhaka.

"We have come to a conclusion that if you provide the cheapest rate, it prompts financial inclusion. So, we have launched the new charge rate."

Nagad has removed all the conditions and made the offer available for all sizes of the fund, making the cost of using Nagad more affordable than ever before and to accelerate the digitalisation of financial transactions in Bangladesh, he said.

"We have always been against high cash-out charges. We think that the cash-out charge of Tk 20 per Tk 1,000, which has been prevalent for the last decade, is an injustice to customers."

READ MORE ON B3