

# Maximise the Value of Your New Career

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So you just donned your shiny new shoes and you are ready to kick-start your career after the gruelling years of university. Let's go through a few things you'll need to keep in mind.

## INTERACTION IS KEY

When you join a new company, your objective should be to make as many meaningful relationships with your co-workers as possible, especially your important stakeholders. The best way to go about this is to engage with your immediate team members and ask them questions about their regular day-to-day activities in between your own work. Don't restrict your conversations to just work topics, though. Find common grounds to build a proper rapport with them. This goes for other people in your organisation as well. Chances are, you'll be working with multiple departments for your own work, so knowing someone on a deeper level can allow you access to seeking help from them whenever you need it without having to go through an awkward formal process. Ask questions all the time, even "stupid" ones. It's better to admit that you don't know something rather than facing the embarrassment of being put on the spot.

A lot of us shy away from small talk or simply dismiss it as "unproductive". Remember, no one likes a person who only talks about work. We're social beings and genuine interactions are key to building proper connections with your co-workers.

If you manage to stumble upon an Excel wizard, become their apprentice. Their magical formulas and quick macros will end up saving your life more often than not.

## SET A WEEKLY CATCH-UP SESSION WITH YOUR MANAGER

Your immediate environment will always nudge you towards a vicious cycle of avoiding your manager as if it's the right thing to do. It is absolutely NOT the right thing to do. Rather, your manager should have a complete view of your activities and what you are doing.

This is why you should approach your manager and ask them for weekly catch-up sessions.

When you first interact with them, make sure you properly outline your expectations and development plan. If you're working in a Marketing role, maybe you want to slowly get to grips with how the company develops brand guidelines and initiates processes for marketing content to be created before you move on to actually managing a sub-brand of the company. Keep open lines of communication and express these interests and wishes to your manager.

Something that many people don't do is that



they don't ask their manager what they expect from them. They sit idly by waiting for orders. Your approach to your career and job description should always be proactive. Figure out what they want from you in terms of your work and impact, then align your goals to reach a middle ground. This will ensure a healthy dynamic between you two and allow minimal room for misunderstandings.

During subsequent catch-ups, outline your activities for the week and what you will do in the following week. Ask for feedback and guidance all the time.

## LEARN TO ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES

What I'm about to say is bound to furl some eyebrows but it is for your own good. You should always set boundaries regarding your work. You will have to tactfully allocate your time and effort towards the myriad activities you will be engaged in.

A lot of us are taught to be submissive and follow orders. This can lead to extremely unhealthy habits in your work. Contrary to popular belief, a non-existent work-life balance is not a flex. It can literally cripple your career before you even start running.

Burnout is not a myth. You will lose your intrinsic motivation, your energy levels will be down, and your creativity will fizzle as you enter the world of stress and depression. This will have severe ramifications in your work quality and if you are an ambitious person, this will perpetuate your frustration with yourself.

Address problematic concerns and be stringent about maintaining a balance. Many trainers/coaches will tell you to keep taking up work until you can't anymore. Don't give in to ruining what should be a rewarding and mutually beneficial experience between you and your employer. This is why keeping open lines of communication with your manager is so important. If they understand what you are going through, they will be more willing to address your concerns.

Of course, there will be days when you'll have to stay late or work on weekends but make sure they are for

projects that are worth it, which brings me to my next point.

## BECOME FUTURE-ORIENTED

Being in a company, especially a successful one, nets you access to one of the richest learning opportunities you will ever get. When you start off, make yearly goals for yourself to serve as loose guidelines to navigate yourself through the rungs of the corporate ladder.

Always ask yourself if a big project is worth your time and if it's sellable when you transition to a new or upgraded role. I've seen so many people taking up irrelevant projects that added no value to their growth within the organisation, it's not even funny. However, if you do actively search for them, opportunities will present themselves. It will then be up to you to capitalise on it. If you find a good project that is relevant for you, make sure you soak everything up like a sponge. Do not just do the bare minimum, go beyond to truly understand and pick up new skills along the way.

Find skills that are needed in your desired future roles and ask the company to teach you those skills. Good organisations have employee learning opportunities just waiting to be availed. Don't skip out on these as they will truly increase your value as an employee in the future.

A new career can be a daunting prospect, but it really does not have to be. If your work is aligned with your goals and you create a healthy environment for yourself, you will be able to excel and maintain a proper balance.

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# INTERNET SAFETY FOR PARENTS

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April 2020. The whole world is struggling to deal with the Covid-19 and the pandemic that resulted from it. Nationwide lockdowns are in session to prevent the spread of the virus. Flights have been grounded, the streets are empty, and the global economy is collapsing fast. At the same time, scientists and researchers are working day and night to learn more about the Covid-19, and find a possible cure for it.

It's a worldwide effort; people are collaborating across borders to find a solution to the problem at hand. No one knows how long it will take to find one. And yet, while scientists, researchers, doctors, and other experts of the field are struggling to provide an answer, my respected father, a commercial manager in his late fifties, is confident of a certain "medicine" for the disease. How did he learn about it? From the internet, of course. More specifically, he came across a post on Facebook talking about this particular medicine and how it's a guaranteed lifesaver.

But this isn't anything new. Many parents have fallen prey to online advertisements, scams, chain mails, fake news posts and more for quite some time now. And this will go on until they're made aware of the dangers of the internet, and how they can keep themselves safe from them.

## HOW ARE OUR PARENTS BEING EXPOSED TO THESE ADS, SCAMS, AND FAKE NEWS?

Unlike our parents, our generation grew up with the internet. It may have existed before we were born, but it became more accessible as we were growing up. We, therefore,

emails. She even replied to a few of those, in one of which she very clearly explained to the sender that she couldn't take a prince's money without a reason."

Thankfully, Taqbirul was able to handle the situation before it caused any severe damage. But this is indeed a problem. The sudden exposure to the features of the internet can be quite overwhelming for our parents. After all, not all of them are aware of how many websites and platforms work, and how they're able to manipulate people through scams.

## SHOULDN'T PARENTS KNOW BETTER THAN TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING ON THE INTERNET?

The internet does a pretty good job of making fake news seem legitimate. The real problem, however, starts when these posts are shared by people you actually trust. Take the case of Rameesa Jameel, a senior at North South University, for example. Her father became obsessed with the idea that *kalo jeera* (black cumin) oil can work as a cure for the coronavirus after this was shared with him by one of his siblings. "He started to believe that this was the *only* cure for the disease," says Rameesa. "He even refused to get vaccinated until I intervened and convinced him into doing so."

Rameesa's father fell victim to a WhatsApp chain message that was being spread around at that time; a common way of circulating misinformation. And we're not saying *kalo jeera* does not have healing properties. But perhaps this wouldn't have had such a big effect on her father had it not been shared by one of his close ones.

The chain message takes over the inter-

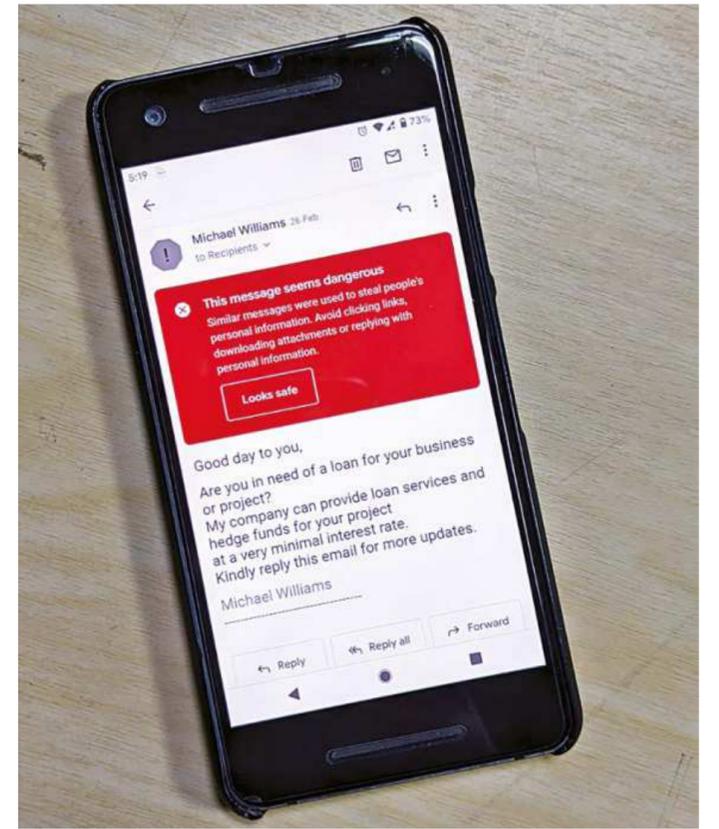


PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

story they read online, ask them to cross-examine it with multiple and verified news sources.

Also, ask them not to judge a news piece by its headline. Tell them to read the whole article. Beyond satire, there are many articles out there intended to sound absurd but are in no way real. It's also mentioned in these articles that they're not to be taken seriously. Besides, many news stories are basically click baits. They have a weird title just to grab the attention of the general audience. Once you open the article though, it's an entirely different perspective.

In all fairness, there's only so much that concerned authorities can do in this regard. Facebook and Twitter use AI-driven algorithms to detect and alert users of fake news or scams. They're yet to implement this system in Bangladesh and for the Bangla language. As a result, the stories in our country, especially those written in Bangla, slip past these detection programmes and reach our feeds without being flagged in any way.

## EDUCATING OUR PARENTS REGARDING SAFE USAGE OF THE INTERNET

Going back to my dad and his internet-inspired Covid-19 medicine. I was quick to realise that this is just one of the many things that he shouldn't put his faith in. Apart from fake science and medical posts, he would also devote a great deal of his time listening to people talk about their faiths, reading conspiracy theories, and "almost" buying things online. On top of that, he would download apps or software on his phone and computer from various third-party websites, and then complain to

me as to why he was seeing so many ads and pop-ups, and why a cloned version of Google Chrome was set as his default browser.

So, in a way, I knew what I was dealing with, and approached it accordingly.

Firstly, I asked him to unfollow news pages that were not trustworthy, and suggested he verified news outlets to get his daily news. Then, I taught him how to crosscheck facts by simply looking them up online. I also asked him to avoid clicking on any sponsored posts that popped up on his feed. I showed him how to install and uninstall software, and how he can avoid agreeing to certain terms and conditions by simply unchecking a couple of boxes. And I told him he shouldn't share personal information on messaging apps or forms.

Last but not the least, I specifically explained to him why he shouldn't let the internet manipulate him into believing certain things, and that if he needed, he could ask me about the legitimacy of a story and I'd be happy to help him out. It's the least I can do from my end. And this is probably the only way right now to help them understand and deal with the dangers of the internet. Formal training isn't always the right way to go. They'll have to learn about some of these dangers to know and understand the consequences.

\*Name has been changed for privacy

Faisal wants to be the very best, like no one ever was. To stay home is his real test, to survive the pandemic is the cause. Write to him at abir.afc@gmail.com



had the opportunity to explore whatever the internet had to offer, have seen it evolve, and were made cautious of such ads or scams from a young age.

Parents, on the other hand, were using the internet in a very limited capacity, until smartphones came along and access to the World Wide Web was made easier. Unlike us, they weren't allowed to ease into the wonders of the internet and instead, were straight-up pushed into it. They had to adapt. As a result, it's taking a long time for them to realise its dangers.

Taqbirul Islam\*, a consultant at an NGO based in Bangladesh, recalls the time when his mother opened her first Gmail account. "She wasn't new to the internet," says Taqbirul. "But this was her first experience with an email account of her own. And once she started signing up for different social media platforms, she started receiving spam

net when your parents see their friends, relatives, and colleagues are sharing the same thing, they too start to believe in it. They fall victim to a kind of emotional manipulation, and in trying to do good, end up doing the opposite.

## MY PARENTS BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY SEE ONLINE. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If your parents tend to believe everything that's on the internet, you should question them regarding the source. You could also ask them to Google whatever the post is about, and see the results. Usually, if it's a fake news story, the top results will make it clear to them.

You don't have to directly challenge them or point out that they're wrong. Do it in a subtle manner and in a way that will help them learn about these dangers. If they're more inclined to whatever news