

Understanding how and why British American Tobacco is the top employer in Bangladesh

Saad Jashim, Head of Human Resources at BAT Bangladesh speaks with The Daily Star on managing one of the biggest workforces in Bangladesh; how they are keeping things moving at a brisk pace and what is helping them in adapting to the 21st century HR tactics.

How did BAT Bangladesh evolve over the years to become the top employer and what has the company done to uphold this title? Becoming the top employer is not just about the certification. Organisations go through a process that looks at people practices based on pieces of evidence on 6 HR domains of competence focusing on aspects like strategies, the role of (executive) management, employee involvement, training, communication, measurement and the use of (HR) technology, which gets validated by an independent audit of the certification process. A great thing about Top Employer Institute is that it's not based on voting; it's based on very stringent criteria set by the Top Employer Institute with a common benchmark existing for the entire world. This is why we take so much pride in this award.

In practice, BAT Bangladesh has always been a top employer, setting the benchmark in terms of creating superior employee experiences. However, with time we had to evolve to beat our own bests and stay relevant. The achievement boils down to our people and our culture. We take in the best people in the organisation. We grow and develop them from day one by giving them massive responsibilities, accountabilities and empowerment. We nurture them in an environment where everybody respects each other, celebrates together, and bonds as a team. We have great pay policies in place to keep employees motivated. But even outside monetary factors, we recognise and reward our talents, we ensure their voices are heard and we set them up for success. Year on year, we ensure that this ecosystem evolves to best

cater to our employees, and that's what keeps us at the top.

What are the principles upon which employee experiences are created?

It starts with getting the best people. When hiring new people, our senior managers commit a lot of time to ensure that the quality of intake is top-notch. Once in, people get both the feeling of support and stretch. It's about creating a high-performance organisation. When you create a high-performance organisation, the inherent commitment is that an individual delivers high results, an individual gets high recognition and high career progression, all this while surrounded by other high performing

who are working in different countries around the world. To ensure that this is a continuous process of talent development, we make sure that the leadership teams consistently sit with their teams and provide constructive feedback on the what's as well as the how's of delivering results. All these refine employee experiences.

Where does this people aspect land when you're crafting the company's strategy? How is the strategy built around your employees?

First of all, our employees are not an afterthought in our strategy, they are the central and core figures of it. Maintaining the workplace culture is not just HR's or

going beyond just delivering results to delivering results in a way that's aligned with our strategy.

What policies does BATB have to ensure a diverse and inclusive work environment?

It's a great thing that diversity is something that's been talked about a lot in the current days around the world. For BAT Bangladesh, this journey started about 15 years ago. We were the first to bring the maternity policy that covers 6 months of maternity leave. We have improved this policy to cover 9 months in 2019, recognising the needs of the working mothers within our organisation. We make sure everyone has the same opportunity, treatment and growth. In the same year, we partnered with 6 other organisations to launch Inspirit to inspire leadership development and cross-industry mentoring. As the needs of women evolve, our D&I platforms evolve as well to stay relevant. Recently we've launched Supernova, a grooming platform for undergrad female students in STEM, where our managers mentor them to help ease their transition from campus to corporate.

Besides gender diversity, we also look at other matrices such as the educational background. One thing that we are very proud of is that even beyond our managers, our factory workforce is also getting the opportunity to travel around different countries in the world to conduct training for their employees.

How do you, as an organisation, create a good culture and how do you evolve to stay relevant to the top talents of the nation?

You have to create an environment, where the people are looking at delivering the best that they can while enjoying what they're doing. This is where we have our five ethos – Bold, Fast, Empowered, Diverse and Responsible. With our guiding principles in place, our senior leaders' role model the components of Ethos and lead from the top to demonstrate to the organisation how to truly embody this Ethos and induct the same culture into the wider organisation. We create a conducive environment where we frequently reward our people for the good work they put in and celebrate each other's feats and achievements. Most importantly, we empower the younger generation and bring them into the conversation so that they get to give us the feedback that we need to stay relevant to the top talents of the nation.



individuals. At BAT Bangladesh, we grow our people, which leads to a vast majority of our senior leadership being homegrown within the organisation itself. If you look at the leading corporate houses in the country, each of them has BAT alumni in their senior leadership team. At any given point in time, we have around 50 people from Bangladesh

one specific person's responsibility, rather the onus lies on the entire organisation. When we formulate strategies, we involve people and we capture their ideas and thoughts from the bottom up. We invest a lot of time and effort to ensure that our people are aligned with and energized by the strategy. We recognize initiatives and actions taken by our people who are

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