

No more citizens, we are now netizens



SHAHNOOR WAHID

WHEN a fish gets caught in a net, it curses its luck and tries to free itself from the mesh. But the modern man volunteers to get caught in a net, an invisible yet more powerful net that keeps him entwined and entangled 24 hours. And, seemingly, he enjoys this entrapment—he is now a fully-fledged netizen.

This net, or the internet as it is known in its full form, exists in the virtual world and belittles us with its vast sources of information.

The internet determines how smart we are, or for that matter, how dumb we are. Elders tell kids that it's a nuisance. Kids think elders are dumb for not appreciating it. On the other hand, critics think it's a new form of slavery—a new form of colonisation. A corporate boss, a doctor, an engineer, a teacher or even a swindler cannot operate without the help of the internet. Many governments fell because of it.



Our lives revolve around the internet these days.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

We may call Bill Gates the champion who brought the internet commandments to the earthlings waiting below. An article written about him last year—found on the net—says that 26 years ago, Gates, who was still Microsoft's CEO, issued an office memo that he titled as "The Internet Tidal Wave."

He wrote: "The internet is a tidal wave. It changes the rules. It is an incredible opportunity as well as [an] incredible challenge." The point of the memo, according to the article, was that the internet was "fast becoming a force that was already changing the way people and businesses communicated with each other on a daily basis."

Bill Gates further said: "I have gone through several stages of increasing my views of [the internet's] importance. Now I assign the internet the highest level of importance. I want to make clear that our focus on the internet is crucial to every part of our business."

So, we can say that Bill Gates opened the floodgates of a unique communication technology which he himself termed "tidal wave." In some developed countries, it actually hit like a tsunami.

The internet is now a great source of information; one cannot pass a day without the net. Businessmen must have valuable information on their smartphones so they can run their office sitting in a hotel room in another continent. For a 10-year-old child or a 90-year-old man, internet connection on a computer or a smartphone is essential for the ladies in the house to keep their mental peace. Webinars on topics ranging from traffic congestion to questionable multiple marriages of sportsmen are getting popular these days. So, if the "net" is down, we see darkness even in the daytime.

Nowadays, the word "application" has a whole new connotation. It has been condensed to "app," and while smart people make the best use of them, they make the life of the not-so-smart ones

quite miserable. And it has made the job of investigative journalists quite easy as most of the background information is already there on the net.

The internet is a great source of entertainment. From playing online games, chatting and browsing, to listening to music and watching movies and dramas—all of these are now available on the net. And for those who are hungry for updates on world events,

Instead of sitting down with a fountain pen and a sky-blue letter pad, we lie down with our smartphones and type away a short letter using ridiculously condensed words like "luv," "rofl" or "btw," or even "ttyl"!

there are hundreds and thousands of news groups and services to keep them happy.

The internet is promoting digital literacy around the globe. It helps students to prepare a business related PowerPoint presentation and also to complete university assignments on time. Through the internet, we can teach a class full of students during pandemic situations. The days of studying at university libraries are long gone—almost all the books in the world are now available on the net. You just click, and the book appears before your eyes. You save it promising to yourself that you will read it tomorrow. You also buy books online while searching for stores offering discounts in clearing sales.

You are a bachelor, and you need to

cook a food dish pronto? No worries. You take the help of the net. Details about the dishes, their ingredients and the directions are all there. You follow every instruction. You love the look of it. But the food that you cook after a lot of heave-ho turns out to be unpalatable. Don't worry! Who's there to find out? Wait! You cannot kick a virtual being, can you? Now, against your doctor's advice, you have been ordering fancy food online. But, you are unhappy because you cannot digest the food that arrives!

To make life easy, virtual shops are here to exploit the rich and the gullible. You place the order—often for things that will be thrown away after a month—and goods will arrive at your doorsteps.

While the advantages of using the net are many, the disadvantages are just as numerous as well. Hackers believe computers and the internet came from God as a blessing for them. They can empty a local bank's coffers sitting in a faraway country—maybe in the Philippines or North Korea. And smart guys can also swindle thousands of gullible men by opening an online business.

Many people point out that spending a lot of time using the internet is not good for health. It leads to obesity and other non-communicable diseases. Some sexagenarians browse dating sites and go to the gym to look fit. They post pictures from their college days, but forget that their recent photos with a protruding tummy are on the net which may pop up any time.

The internet has robbed us of the joy of writing letters to our near and dear ones. This art has gone extinct with the sad demise of the postal service. Instead of sitting down with a fountain pen and a sky-blue letter pad, we lie down with our smartphones and type away a short letter using ridiculously condensed words like "luv," "rofl" or "btw," or even "ttyl"!

Many of us want to believe that had Agatha Christie been alive today, she

might have written a best-seller titled "Murder with the Help of Internet." Well, just a thought.

There is something sinister called the "internet addiction." The problem of remaining hooked onto the internet all day long has become pathological in nature for some people. The obsession makes them lazy; people, especially children, are suffering from eating and sleeping disorders. Temper tantrums among such children is common. The US government has ultimately recognised such compulsive addiction as a mental disorder, because it results in significant damage to an individual's ability to function normally in various situations.


Psychologists say that the young generation is particularly at risk of developing internet addiction disorder. Cases show that their academic performances plummet for spending long hours online, and many students have been found to suffer health consequences due to loss of sleep. Experts say the internet can foster various addictions, including addiction to pornography, game-playing, auction sites, social networking sites, and surfing of the Web.

A study of Chinese high school students in 2010 suggested that students with moderate to severe internet addiction are 2.5 times more likely to develop symptoms of depression than others. Another study shows that internet addiction is also associated with an increased risk of substance abuse, which means they remain prone to using drugs.

Just insert an x in the word "net," and it becomes "next." So, what is next? Will the net develop its own intelligence and control our life—our past, present and future—in the real sense of the term? Will the internet control our birth and death? When death will be imminent, will we receive a message from a supercomputer to make preparations for our funeral? Scary thought, indeed!

Shahnoor Wahid is a freelance journalist.

In light of Covid, companies should adjust their salary policies



FEIHAN AHSAN

THE Covid-19 situation may seem under control in Bangladesh right now, but it would be unwise to be complacent and think it's over. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently warned that Covid may resurge in winter, bringing with it the economic hardships and uncertainties that have plagued the country—as well as the rest of the world—for more than one and a half years. In these uncertain times, employers must rethink and re-evaluate their compensation strategies, and remain flexible with their remuneration plans where possible. As companies take stock of their current financial situation and prepare for the months to come, compensation is a significant part of that assessment. There are some actions that employers can take now to mitigate the negative effects on their employees and position themselves better for financial recovery.

Be flexible with pay programmes

According to the Bangladesh Society for Human Resource Management (BSHRM), there are seven to eight million executives and staff officials in the private sector of the country. Most of these employees have felt the effects of the pandemic in one way or another. While it is true that blue-collar workers have suffered the most, managers and executives have not been spared from the pandemic's impacts either. Many employees saw salary cuts, cancellation of Eid bonuses, while some employees only received partial payments. And for those who have not felt the axe yet, the thought of impending layoffs and economic uncertainty has created a tense and unpredictable work environment.

Still, many companies have continued to support their employees to the best of their abilities during these troubled times. The large corporations with deep pockets have continued to pay their workforce despite the economic crisis, while some organisations have committed to helping their employees by offering additional financial support or making exceptions to their current compensation programmes to ensure that the employees can endure the difficult times ahead.

But not every organisation is financially capable of using these types of methods. Smaller organisations can find other ways to be flexible and supportive. For example, annual employee bonus schemes can be redistributed as emergency funds when employees need it the most, instead of disbursing them at fixed times during the year. Office equipment can be subsidised for employees who can work remotely. Also, frontline workers and others, who are doing essential jobs, are putting themselves and their families more at risk by leaving their homes and interacting with other people. These employees can be rewarded with hazard pay, which takes into account the risk of their jobs. Services such as Foodpanda and Pathao have

been crucial in delivering essential services at a time when people may be reluctant to go out themselves.

Increase support for sales and marketing staff

With sales figures dropping in a lot of companies due to the pandemic, there has been a significant effect on the compensation of sales teams. Salespeople generally have a significant percentage of their total pay coming from incentive bonuses, earned as a result of successfully closing sales deals or contracts. Often, these sales commissions can make up a large portion of their monthly salaries. With the reduction in sales opportunities due to the pandemic, there has been a sharp drop in take-home pay for salespeople. As a result, many of them are more concerned about their livelihood than getting sick with Covid.

In such a situation, it is important to



Frontline and essential workers, as well as workers in the export industries, are among those who have taken the extra risk to go out and do their jobs during the pandemic.

support your sales team both financially and in spirit, as they will be crucial to helping your organisation recover. For example, increasing the base salary ratio on a temporary basis can act as a buffer and safety net, especially when sales are down and commissions don't provide enough. At the same time, lowering the target thresholds for commission-based pay can provide some relief. Companies can try increasing accelerators for sales beyond a certain level of attainment. Other options include changing the incentive plans into a bonus plan for the next two quarters, or at least until the pandemic eases.

Re-evaluate performance benchmarks

In the current situation, companies need to rethink and re-evaluate their established performance goals, especially if the achievement of these goals are tied to

compensation outcomes. Goals set at the beginning of the year might have made sense under normal circumstances, but the pandemic has changed where, when and how people work. These changes may warrant an alteration to the expected levels of performance. Productivity and performance standards might need to be measured differently due to social distancing restrictions and office closures. Companies need to reset previously held performance expectations and embrace the new normal—especially the companies who are using pay-for-performance models.

The future of pay

There is no one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to employee compensation. Companies must carefully assess their situation and find the right balance between economic survival and employee satisfaction. Effective management will save both the companies

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Beach grains
6 Houston player
11 Concerning
12 Singer-songwriter
Leonard
13 Sullen sort
14 Corundum, for one
15 Keats work
16 Melody
18 Homer's neighbor
19 Harden
20 Travel stop
21 Tapped item
22 Nod
24 Silent worker
25 Campaign
loser
27 Radio format
29 Goal

32 Maximum amount
33 Fuming
34 Saloon quaff
35 Corp. or Sgt.
36 Yale rooter
37 Not strict
38 Marriage gifts
40 Take as one's own
42 More than some
43 Scoundrel
44 Olympics award
45 Passover feast

DOWN

1 Indian turnover
2 Homes
3 Motel sign
4 Expected

5 Tries hard
6 Squirrel's find
7 Boston team, familiarly
8 Saying what's on one's mind
9 Cash in
10 Nervous
17 Collectively
23 Caribou's kin
24 Spoil
26 Some tires
27 Shared bike
28 Statue setting
30 Go by
31 One having a silent conversation
33 Oscar winner
Streep
39 Period
41 Buck's mate

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works given below.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender Closing Date & Time
01.	629637	APP/1000/1/quarter/cumilla/memo: 466 date: 26.10.21	Tiles works at floor, internal painting, repairing of windows and doors, thai works at window, replacement of civil sanitary fittings fixtures along with miscellaneous works at GHA and Cha flat of 1000(1) quarter in government residential area, Lakshmpur, F.Y: 2021-2022.	05-Dec-2021 12:00
02.	629645	APP/DC quarter/cumilla memo: 521 date: 08.11.21	Construction of chouchala shed above porch using roof tiles and interior works at Deputy Commissioner residence, Lakshmpur. F.Y: 2021-2022.	05-Dec-2021 12:00
03.	629817	APP/DC gate marble/cumilla memo: 522 date: 08.11.21	Marble fitting at entrance gate and repair of boundary wall at office of Deputy Commissioner, Lakshmpur. F.Y: 2021-2022.	05-Dec-2021 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National E-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).
(Labannya Barua)
Executive Engineer
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GD-2100