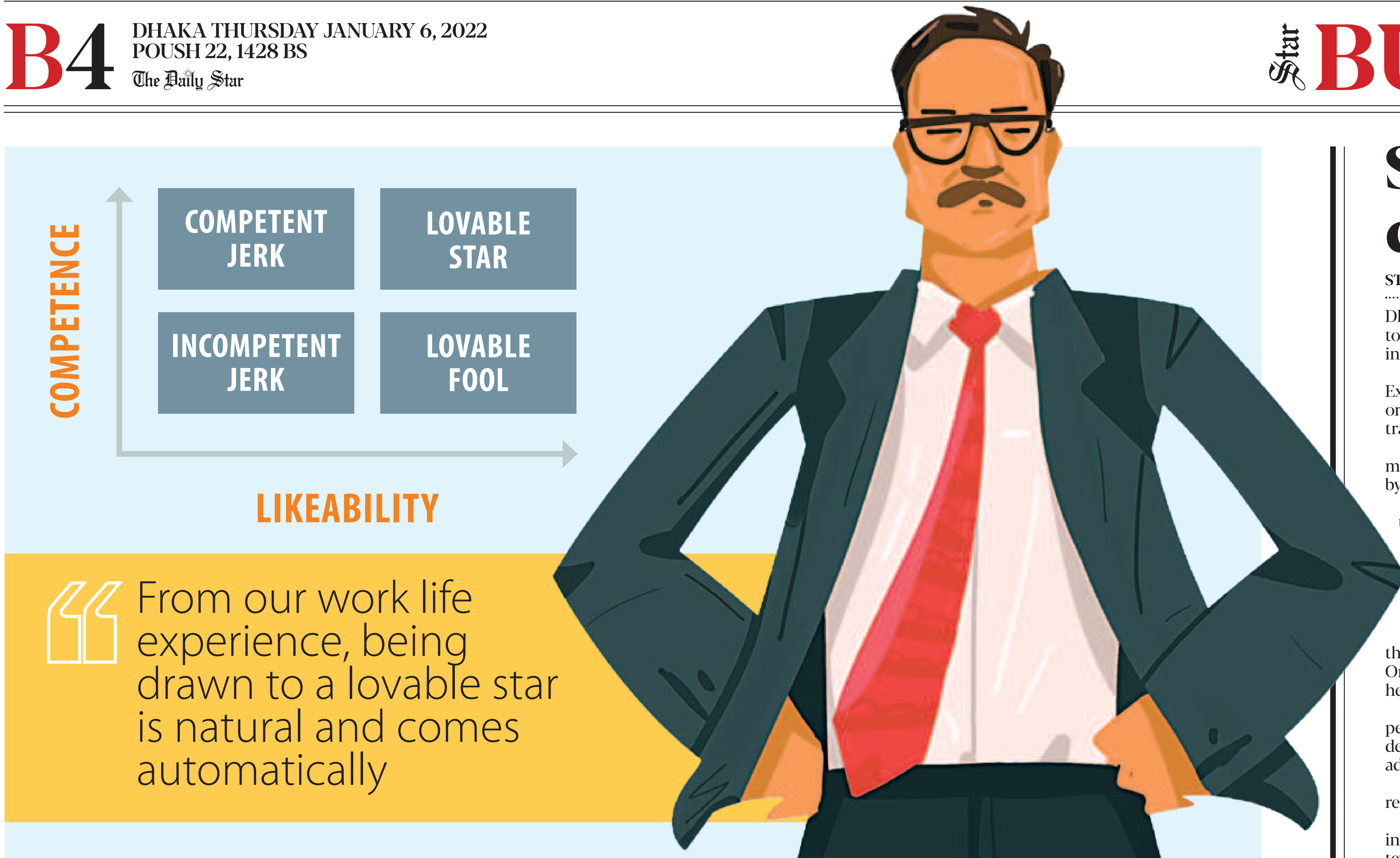

DO YOU WANT A BOSS who is a competent jerk or a lovable star?

It may not be easy to upgrade a Lovable Fool to a Lovable Star by coaching or mentoring alone. This group needs to focus more on functional skills by attending functional as well as on-the-job training

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

It is a universal truth that criticising colleagues and bosses is basic to all work cultures although it hurts to admit it. A recent study found that the most talked about, rather criticised, in any organisation is the boss and its HR practices.

Most of us would agree that this practice often becomes a key recreation in the work environment where our wounded imagination and malicious wishes go in all directions. The bosses who are criticised and hated far outnumber the lucky few who earn the hallowed respect.

Faltu Boss! Arrogant Boss! *Kichhu Bujhe Na!* How often do we hear all this! However, the gap between perception and reality is a matter that is too often ignored; it is a grey area that renders close inspection for the optimum benefit.

A study conducted on 10,000 work relationships in five organisations by Tiziana Casciaro and Miguel Sousa Lobo of Harvard Business School and published later by Harvard Business Review, classified work partners into four archetypes: the Competent Jerk (mostly avoided), who knows a lot but is unpleasant; the Lovable Fool (mildly wanted), who may not know much but is a delight to work with; the Lovable Star (desperately wanted), who is both smart and likable; and the Incompetent Jerk (desperately avoided), who is neither capable nor likeable and keeps the gossip mill the busiest!

From our work life experience, being drawn to a Lovable Star is natural and comes automatically. Similarly, the aversion of working with the Incompetent Jerk comes as no surprise. But the problem starts when people prefer the Lovable Fool over the Competent Jerk.

Recently, I carried out a voting on the above matrix as a part of my Facebook Live! It reaffirmed the original study carried out in 2005 which resulted in the general preference for the Lovable Fool over the Competent Jerk. Does that mean, we prefer likeability over competency? The answer is not so simple.

At different stages of organisation transformation, it needs a different set of competencies.

In other words, these jerks and fools and stars, with their own unique broods, tantrums and antics, are all integral to the growth of a company.

A large majority of people like the Lovable Fool who can bridge gaps between diverse groups that might not otherwise interact. Their networking skills can significantly improve the company's engagement with the disintegrated people who work in silo. So, in certain contexts, an organisation needs the Lovable Fools to bring and hold it together.

The risk with this group is that they often drive likeability at the expense of job performance which can make them vulnerable to downsizing when the need for engaging the team is over. To get the most out of them, leaders need to protect them and put them in positions that don't waste their bridge-building talents.

It may not be easy to upgrade a Lovable Fool to a Lovable Star by coaching or mentoring alone. This group needs to focus more on functional skills by attending functional as well as on-the-job training.

In case of the Competent Jerks, often their expertise goes untapped by people who just can't put up with them like accountants, engineers, researchers etc. But they can be conditioned by social engagements, professional coaching or by being held accountable for bad attitude.

This group is also called the backbone of the organisation as they are needed in every phase of the organisation's development. The potential of this group to shift to Lovable Star is likely to be high with professional coaching and mentorship.

Our five fingers are not the same in terms of shape, size and functionality but we can't do without any one of them. Likewise, an organisation needs all types of bosses. Using such a model would help us to create more Lovable Stars in the organisation and achieve business goals more efficiently, as the direct relationship between the number of Lovable Stars in the organisation and its overall business performance is undeniable.

The author is a telecom and management expert.

Stocks' rally continues

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Dhaka stocks finished higher yesterday compared to the preceding day as traders hoped for the index to better perform in the upcoming days.

The benchmark index of Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), the DSEX, edged up 36 points, or 0.53 per cent, to 6,929. This is fifthconsecutive trading days' rise for the index.

Investors' participation was higher in the market. Turnover of the premier bourse soared by around 20 per cent to Tk 1,414 crore.

As the market is rising, people are regaining their confidence, said a top official of a stock brokerage firm.

So general investors are also pouring in funds and the stock index is rising, he said, adding that they should not lose hope when it undergoes a correction.

They should invest in good stocks so that their investments remain safe, even if the Omicron variant has a big impact in the country, he added.

If anyone invest in companies with good performance records, they will not be detrimentally impacted in the long run, he added.

At the DSE, 218 stocks advanced, 121 fell and 39 remained the same.

Among the major sectors, non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs), services and real estate and textile closed in the positive. Life insurance, mutual funds and pharmaceuticals faced correction, according to UCB Stock Brokerage.

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation topped the gainers' list, rising 9.94 per cent, followed by Robi Axiata, National Housing Finance and Investments, Bangladesh Thai Aluminum, and Taufika Foods and Lovello Ice-cream.

Prime Insurance Company stocks shed the most, eroding 5.75 per cent, followed by National Life Insurance Company, Popular Life Insurance Company, Sonali Paper and Board Mills, and Sonali Life Insurance Company.

Stocks of Beximco were traded the most, worth Tk 100 crore, followed by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, Fortune Shoes, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, and Saif Powertec.

The stock bourse of Dhaka continued its gaining streak as the buoyant investors went on a purchase spree in sector-specific stocks, said International Leasing Securities in its daily market review.

Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) also rose yesterday. The CASPI, the main index of the bourse of the port city, rose 172 points, or 0.85 per cent, to 20,326.

Alibaba, Tencent fined for failing to report deals

REUTERS, *Shanghai*

China's top market regulator said on Wednesday it has fined units of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, Tencent Holdings Ltd, and Bilibili Inc for failing to properly report about a dozen deals.

According to public filings, China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) placed penalties of 500,000 yuan ($78,692) on the companies per deal, the maximum under China's 2008 anti-monopoly law.

Alibaba, Bilibili, and Tencent did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The penalties come amid an ongoing regulatory crackdown on a range of industries in China, with the tech sector as a main target.

SAMR in particular has targeted unreported deals involving tech giants. Last November it listed 43 investments that companies failed to report and levied a 500,000 yuan fine for each one.

US manufacturing catches breath

REUTERS, *Washington*

US manufacturing activity slowed in December amid a cooling in demand for goods, but supply constraints are starting to ease and a measure of prices paid for inputs by factories fell by the most in a decade.

The Institute for Supply Management (ISM) survey on Tuesday also suggested some improvement in labor supply, with a gauge of factory employment rising to an eight-month high.

Still, Timothy Fiore, chair of the ISM manufacturing business survey committee, noted that "shortages of critical lowest-tier materials, high commodity prices and difficulties in transporting products continue to plague reliable consumption."

The survey does not fully capture the impact of the Omicron Covid-19 variant, which is rapidly spreading across the United States and abroad.

Sky-rocketing infections could force workers to stay home and halt the tentative supply-chain progress.

"There's still a lot of ground to make up before supply chains fully normalize, but cooling prices and increased employment are positive signs," said Will Compernolle, a senior economist at FHN Financial in New York.

The ISM's index of national factory activity fell to a reading of 58.7 last month, the lowest level since January 2021, from 61.1 in November.

A reading above 50 indicates expansion in manufacturing, which accounts for 11.9 per cent of the US economy. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index would fall to 60.1.

All of the six biggest manufacturing industries - chemical products, fabricated metal products, computer and electronic products, food, transportation equipment, and petroleum and coal products - reported moderate-to-strong growth.

A GMC Hummer EV truck is seen at the General Motors' Factory Zero in Detroit, Michigan. All of the six biggest manufacturing industries in the United States reported moderate-to-strong growth.

PHOTO: AFP

Oil slips below $80

REUTERS, *London*

Oil prices slipped below $80 a barrel on Wednesday after OPEC+ producers stuck to an agreed output target rise for February and investors assessed the impact of a spike in Covid-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant.

Brent crude futures were down 18 cents, or 0.23 per cent, to $79.82 a barrel by 0945 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures declined 23 cents, or 0.3 per cent, to $76.76.

OPEC+ producers, which include members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries along with Russia and others, on Tuesday agreed to add another 400,000 barrels per day of supply in February, as they have done each month since August.

While OPEC+ raised its output target, it will likely struggle to reach it, as members face difficulties ramping up production, Barclays analysts said.