

Shaping Bangladesh's future leaders

Career map and advice for the youth from a trailblazer

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Steve Poré is the Regional Marketing Director - Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa (APMEA) at BAT. He is a distinguished figure with an illustrious career that has taken him from the captivating landscapes of New Zealand to bustling metropolises worldwide. However, this isn't just a standard corporate tale; it's a story of a global maestro unravelling the immense potential of Bangladesh and its youth. In a sit-down conversation with him, we explored Steve's exceptional career, international exposure, insights into Bangladesh's potential and the rising prowess of its youth.

As this is your first visit to Bangladesh, how have you found Bangladesh so far?

It's everything I envisioned. I am overwhelmed by their warmth and welcoming nature, their local cuisine and their handicrafts, which are so delicate and lovely. These delicacies enriched the legacy of Bangladesh's culture. Hearing about this heritage for quite long, I always wanted to visit Bangladesh at least for a while, and happily, my current position gave me the chance to do so. The energy and traffic were chaotic and buzzing, and it was obvious that Bangladesh was on a faster development track.

Given the impressive growth and resilience of Bangladesh's economy over the years, what do you think of its journey toward a developed country?

The economy of Bangladesh has shown remarkable resilience, a testament to the nation's commitment to good governance and strategic policies. Investments in critical infrastructure, such as electricity, have played a vital role in driving productivity and contributing to the country's growth. The ready-made garments industry has been a cornerstone of Bangladesh's economic success, thriving despite global economic pressures. This growth trajectory has positioned Bangladesh on the cusp of accelerated progress, akin to other dynamic economies like the BRIC or MINT countries of the past.

You've had an illustrious career for over many years. Can you tell us more about your journey?

I've been with the company for 28 years and 11 months, although it only seems like yesterday. And I began as a graduate in my home country, New Zealand. After spending one and a half years in my home country, I got the opportunity to go abroad, which was quite rare

at the time, to be the Head of Trade Marketing in Myanmar, and I spent two years there. Far from family and leaving them behind in New Zealand, I went to a totally different place. My experience there was challenging due to the stark cultural and environmental differences between Myanmar and New Zealand. I initially learned about Asian culture and people here.

Then I spent four and a half years in Malaysia doing a lot of my brand development work. After that, my journey took a break from Asia, and I went to Australia and spent two and a half years there on skills development

When I moved to Indonesia where I was the Marketing Director first and then the Area Director of the total business for Indonesia. Then in London again as Regional Marketing Director, America & Sub-Saharan Africa (AmSSA). Now I'm back in Singapore with a much wider remit as the Regional Marketing Director for Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa (APMEA) and covered.

This is a brief summary of my career. As you can see, I quickly advanced through a variety of positions in several nations, moving from territory management to regional management at this point. This journey took me to

Understanding others' perspectives allows me to adjust my approach to giving direction and feedback, creating a conducive working environment.

Bangladesh has been blessed with one of the world's largest pools of young population. What is your opinion on converting those youth into a critical asset for the economy of Bangladesh?

Unquestionably, Bangladesh's large pool of young talent is a blessing for the nation and its future development. The RMG sector and skilled migrants are Bangladesh's two economic pillars. Currently, it is estimated that ten million Bangladeshis are employed overseas, which is boosting the GDP of the nation. Most of these migrants are young people, and they work their way up from the bottom in various industries across many nations. The government of Bangladesh is doing excellent work for skill development for the people and gender equality by empowering women. The government can convert this youth population into demographic dividends by encouraging STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education.

I have close connections with many top talents from BAT Bangladesh operating in other markets of BAT. They demonstrate a strong work ethic, creativity, and a willingness to embrace new ideas and technologies. Currently, 50+ Bangladeshi talents are working globally in mid- or senior-level positions. They are making significant contributions and gaining experience outside and interacting with different perspectives will only strengthen their potential to contribute to the economy.

What advice would you give to those getting ready to get into the job market, and how can they build a career in BAT?

Young people should focus on continuous education, learning, and gaining practical experiences through programs like Battle of Minds. At BAT, we believe that any company can gain a competitive edge by attracting the largest number of bright and talented individuals in the country. Our objective is to develop the most capable leaders possible for the next generation through Battle of Minds, attract fit-for-future talent through a captivating EVP, and provide cutting-edge talent acquisition tools for aspiring youths to further strengthen their repertoire. Since 2004, we have been offering chances to hone leadership abilities through the Battle of Minds. This talent-grooming programme, initiated by BAT Bangladesh, is currently presented all

across the BAT universe.

This year, the Battle of Minds celebrates 20 years of legacy, where thousands of young talents participate each year to showcase their skills in innovation and strategy. For that reason, Battle of Minds has emerged as one of the most prestigious talent platforms in the country. Participants in this program have received intensive grooming throughout the seasons, found employment, and excelled in the corporate and development sectors, including prominent FMCG businesses, banks, and telecoms, among others. BAT Bangladesh is proud to employ more than 150 talents who have come up through Battle of Minds. Being a part of initiatives like this can help mould concepts, broaden networks, and lay out a development roadmap.

The tech industry is now at its peak, and today's marketing world is more focused on artificial intelligence (AI) than in the past. According to you, are there any particular skills that might be critical for success in this ever-evolving world of marketing, especially consumer marketing?

Data and analytics skills are becoming crucial in a data-centric organisation. Understanding consumer behaviour, consumer experience, and how consumers adopt products will be essential in marketing decisions. Additionally, having a consumer mindset and understanding human behaviour will be valuable in marketing roles. Technology is enabling a lot of things at the same time because we need to reach consumers in a variety of ways so they can get the information and direction they need to make those decisions, not only from a consumer perspective but also from a trade perspective. 3 to 4 years ago, I put myself through a programme on top of the job with Kellogg's in the USA, North-western University, to look at digital marketing, AI, automation, and analytics, just to understand how things have changed and what the implications could be for our business.

Do you have any concluding advice to provide to the nation's promising talent who wants to develop a career in marketing, especially in BAT?

My advice to young individuals will be to prioritise personal growth and remain dedicated to learning. At BAT, we promote personal growth and encourage employees to take ownership of their careers. Communicating your desires is essential to develop a plan harmonising personal and professional aspirations over time.



for marketing. Then I took another big step and went over and worked in Nigeria for four and a half years doing brand trade strategy roles. There I got the opportunity to work and learn about the people of Africa and their rich and diverse culture, as well as their norms.

Afterwards, I went to London, where I led brand development initiatives for a global brand and only a year later, I moved to Russia, where I was the Head of Brands for Russia for three years. In 2014, I came back again to Nigeria and managed 23 countries across West Africa and spent more than 2 years as Area Marketing Director.

Myanmar, Malaysia, Australia, Nigeria, Indonesia, England, Russia, and now Singapore, overseeing a vast region.

With your international exposure, what critical standpoints have you learned from operating in so many countries?

Marketing is all about empathy for consumers and understanding their needs, regardless of the culture or country. Consumers are consumers, but the impact of culture is significant, and it's crucial to understand the local culture deeply. I've ingrained myself in the local cultures wherever I worked, spending time with locals to understand consumers and people better.

How to craft your personal brand in the contemporary job market

In today's fluid job market, the concept of personal branding has ascended from a marketing buzzword to a career imperative. The current economic landscape, defined by rapid technological advancements and ever-shifting industry demands, calls for individuals to position themselves as marketable commodities. Your personal brand isn't just a lofty abstract; it's a concrete strategy that could well determine your career trajectory. Here's how you can lay its foundations.

Self-reflection: the cornerstone of personal branding

Building a personal brand starts with introspection. Take time to assess your strengths, values, and unique selling points. A coherent understanding of what you bring to the table not only guides your professional decisions but also helps you articulate your value proposition to prospective employers or clients.

Online presence: more than a digital footprint

In a world where recruiters spend an average of six seconds skimming a CV, LinkedIn and other social media platforms can serve as your extended CV. A well-crafted profile can not only showcase your expertise but also make you discoverable to industry insiders. But remember, it's not just about visibility; it's about resonance. Share valuable content, engage with your audience, and consistently demonstrate your expertise.

Consistency: the unsung hero

Consistency in messaging and online engagement builds credibility. Regular updates, insightful articles, and timely interactions with your network can elevate your profile from being merely visible to being influential.

Networking: it's all about the human connection

While digital platforms provide a convenient medium for professional connectivity, never underestimate the power of traditional networking. Industry events, webinars, and seminars offer fertile ground to sow the seeds of meaningful professional relationships. Your next job offer could well be a

handshake away.

Authenticity: the currency of trust

Being authentic doesn't mean airing all your personal quirks in a professional setting. Rather, it means being genuine in your communications and transparent in your intentions. Authenticity creates a relatable personal brand and fosters trust—a priceless commodity in any professional interaction.

Skills development: the evergreen imperative

The job market is not static, and neither should be your skill set. Continuous learning not only makes you adaptable but also adds layers to your

a curated space to showcase your expertise, share insights, and even exhibit your portfolio. It offers a more nuanced narrative of who you are as a professional, beyond the constraints of a LinkedIn profile or CV.

Dress the part: your wardrobe as a brand statement

The adage 'dress for the job you want, not the job you have' still holds weight. Your attire can be a visual extension of your personal brand, conveying professionalism and ambition.

Feedback: the loop that keeps you in tune

Your personal brand is a dynamic entity



Working Woman Bangladesh hosts inaugural career workshop

Founded in 2022 by entrepreneur Farhia Hoque, Working Women Bangladesh (WWB) held its first career development workshop on Saturday, 9th September. The event marks a significant milestone for the organisation that originated as a Facebook community, offering a safe space for women to discuss the distinct challenges they face in a predominantly male work environment.

WWB emerged as a response to the frustrations Farhia Hoque experienced in the male-dominated startup landscape. By 2023, the Facebook community had grown exponentially, inspiring Hoque to transition the virtual community into a real-world resource. The group offers women a platform to voice their concerns, lend mutual support, and work toward tangible solutions. The recent workshop serves as the first in a series of events aimed to elevate the advantages of this virtual community to a more impactful, offline sphere.

Participants in the workshop represented various career stages and sectors but shared a striking similarity: most were the only women or among a few women in their respective teams. The women spoke candidly about having to work doubly hard to achieve the same recognition as their male colleagues. Data from an internal Hewlett-Packard (HP) report substantiates these accounts. According to the report, men apply for jobs even if they meet only 60% of the qualifications listed in the job description, whereas women tend to apply only if they satisfy 100% of the criteria.

Samiha Tahsin, co-founder and CEO of Bonton Connect Ltd., was a guest speaker and organiser. She emphasised the importance of overcoming limiting beliefs and seizing

opportunities even when one doesn't feel fully qualified. Tahsin recommended the judicious use of internships and extra-curricular activities to gain experience and insights into desired career paths.

Numaya Shahriar, Senior Manager at the MD's office, foodpanda, who also initiated the workshop, highlighted the importance of networking, applying, and interviewing as the three key components of job hunting. The workshop underscored the potential of LinkedIn as more than just a digital CV. Participants were encouraged to utilise the platform for direct engagement with potential employers and industry professionals. Top recruiters recommend limiting resumes to two pages, focusing on action words, and prioritising the most recent experiences. Preparation is key for interviews. Candidates were advised to thoroughly research companies and prepare articulate answers to common interview questions.

The organising team, including Luana Nasir, Farhat Anan, and Ishrat Jahan Prachy, concluded the workshop with an interactive networking session. Farhia Hoque shared WWB's ambitious plans to become the largest resource network for women. "When you pool together talented individuals from different walks of life, something beautiful is bound to come out of it," said Hoque.

For those interested in joining this transformative community, WWB is accessible through its Facebook group. The workshop was not just a one-off event but a bold step in the ongoing struggle for workplace equality. It represents a proactive approach to dismantling gender barriers, one workshop at a time.



personal brand. Whether it's through certifications, workshops, or further education, staying updated is staying relevant.

Testimonials and recommendations: word-of-mouth in the digital age

Endorsements from colleagues, mentors, or industry experts can add a stamp of credibility to your personal brand. These testimonials can be particularly impactful when featured prominently on your LinkedIn profile or personal website.

Personal website or blog: your digital portfolio

A personal website or blog serves as

and should evolve with the changing tides of the job market. Regular feedback from peers and mentors can offer valuable perspectives that help refine your branding strategy.

The journey ahead

Remember, personal branding is not a one-off exercise but a continual process. As the job market evolves, so should your brand. The key to a successful personal brand is the synergy of self-awareness, online engagement, continuous learning, and authentic interactions. In a world that's in a constant state of flux, your personal brand is your anchor. Navigate wisely.