

■ CAREER ■

TRANSITIONING

from Classroom to Workplace

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"The moment you throw your graduation cap in the air, you're all on your own. It's scary how you won't have anyone to blame."

When I heard this quote on a random Tuesday from a random YouTube video, I had no inkling of how deeply it would resonate with me. Graduation is a time of exhilaration, where you bubble with the excitement of reaching the finish line, yet it's also a time of doubt. As much as graduation brings happiness and fulfilment, the shift to the real world can be a bit hard to settle into.

Moving from university to the working world is anything but uniform. Mashequr Khan, a recent graduate and former employee at BAT, reflects on this shift, "The transition from university life to the professional world starts with optimism but can quickly turn frustrating as job applications yield no results."

Like Mashequr, many graduates grapple with the difficulty of finding employment. The post-graduation blues can weigh heavily on graduates during the gruelling process of job interviews and applications.

For those fortunate enough to secure a job, the reality of entering the working world may not resemble the fairy tale they envisioned.

One of the most noticeable changes is your relationship with time. In university, you may have had the flexibility to set your routine, staying up late, pulling all-nighters, and waking up at various times. However, as a professional, you're often bound by the 9-5 routine. In Bangladesh, the constraints of a typical 9-5 job, exacerbated by traffic, can consume nearly 80 percent of your day, making it feel more like a 7 to 7 or 8-8 commitment rather than a 9-5.

Azwaad Labiba Mohiuddin, a software engineer at mPower Social Enterprises Ltd., explains, "My entire routine underwent a drastic change. I couldn't stay awake until 4 AM anymore. I needed at least 7 hours of sleep to function during 8-9 hour workdays. I also had to come to terms with the fact that taking sporadic leaves for leisure was now a luxury."

Weekdays are like skipping stones, and when you

land on the weekends, you get respite. This recurring routine might make it feel as if you are reliving the same days, unlike the diversity of experiences in university.

Starting a job also means collaborating with individuals of various age groups. While this offers a unique opportunity to learn and gain knowledge from experienced colleagues there will inevitably be a generational gap in most places.

Once you slide into the shoes of a working professional, keeping in touch with your friends becomes an arduous task. Your social circle may shrink as you observe your university friends dispersing — some moving abroad, others settling down or becoming engrossed in their own lives. While you will indeed form friendships at work, these relationships often carry an additional layer of professionalism.

Perhaps the most significant change when leaving university is the shift in responsibilities. When you are a student, all that is expected from you is your input following a set curriculum. From school to university, students have just one major task, that is to study. But once you

shed your student tag and embrace adulthood, the safety net of being a student disappears. Good grades and proficient skills may land you a job, but like university, there is no set rubric that you are judged on. Surprisingly, you may find that only a fraction of what you learned in university is directly applicable to your job as theoretical knowledge often falls short in practical situations. Hence, continuous learning and self-improvement become imperative.

"It's very hard for a fresh graduate to gain acceptance in the industry," remarks Muballigh Hossain, a Solution Architect at Huawei. "Navigating the intricacies of corporate customs and unspoken rules can be taxing for newcomers. Often, senior professionals may overlook the juniors' capabilities due to biases and compatibility issues."

Financial literacy is seldom taught in university, yet money and finances play a significant role in adulthood. The professional world can be highly competitive, and as a newcomer, you might not receive your desired salary. The degree you diligently worked for, investing time, effort, and money, can sometimes seem insignificant when it comes to valuing yourself. Hence, it's crucial to be consistent and confident in negotiating your desired salary.

Effective communication and proper etiquette are paramount in the business world. In university, we get away with informal tones of speaking and communicating but in the corporate world, clear, effective communication is instrumental in ensuring successful outcomes.

Raima Islam, a Global Graduate in Information and Digital Technology at BAT Bangladesh, says, "While it is important to know the technicalities and specific skill sets related to your job, it is just as important to make sure your soft skills such as communication, and storytelling are polished." She also points out that starting your first corporate job can be difficult, and while you might feel the need to give your all and avoid making mistakes, the errors you make often provide the most valuable lessons.

In the end, it is important to acknowledge that you may not remain in the same job or career forever. Networking, taking calculated risks, maintaining a positive outlook, and learning from failures are all crucial steps on your journey toward achieving your goals.

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