

■ OPINION ■

WHY HAS LANDING AN INTERNSHIP BECOME SO DIFFICULT?

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Landing an internship today is no longer just about getting your foot in through the door, it has become a rat race. In Bangladesh, while there are openings offered throughout the year, securing an internship almost feels as tough as applying for a full-time job, with companies relying on a series of rigorous screening rounds that make even the most confident candidates doubt their chances.

Four to five rounds of assessment tests, multiple case studies followed by an interview – simply to land an internship. While it is only natural that employers are looking to hire the best candidate, what has become a matter of concern is that the screening method has turned into an elite selection process for fresh graduates and thus, shut out many talented individuals.

Internships are meant for students to gain exposure and some experience. For it to become inaccessible to many – especially a large portion of whom have no prior experience – appears to be incredibly defeating.

Additionally, job listings for interns now include requirements like “previous relevant work experiences will get preference”, which is paradoxical. The scenario has become so warped that it discourages them from applying

in the first place. This leaves them stuck in a loop where they can't land internships because they lack experiences, which in turn, prevents them from gaining experience because they are unable to get an internship.

There's this issue of prestige too. Being an intern at a smaller company often provides more hands-on experience than a larger one. Yet when these students apply for a full-time job, they often don't get the same preference as the handful of people who might have worked at larger companies. Instead of evaluating what it is that a candidate has learned during their internship, employers often judge their time as interns based on the brand name.

Experience at smaller startups should be valued just as much as large corporations. For instance, an intern at a startup might have worked across multiple departments and even taken on leadership responsibilities. To full grasp why their time as an intern added value to their professional development, employers could look at the objectives that the applicant was able to achieve and what they learned in the process instead of merely fixating on where they did it.

Such hurdles and shortcomings filter out too many promising candidates. Alongside such issues, the obsession with intense screening processes has made it harder for students to attain the experience they so desperately want

and need.

Is it then any wonder that the stringent selection procedure has left a flock of demotivated job aspirants in its wake?

This ruthless approach, fraught with high requirements, frequently makes students feel inadequate, impeding their professional development rather than inspiring them to keep trying. The implications of such gaps fester as this same demographic, then have to put up with the ordeal of applying for full-time jobs with little or no experience.

If companies continue this trend, the job market will soon be filled with applicants who successfully navigated based on strict selection criteria, which is difficult for most students to attain. If this approach prevails, it will – to many degrees – undermine the very purpose of internships and perpetuate inequity.

To genuinely nurture the next generation of professionals, companies must expand their reach and process of recruiting interns – one that doesn't just benefit a select few who have already enjoyed success, but a broader range of candidates.

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A GUIDE TO SURVIVING YOUR FIRST INTERNSHIP

Arrive with an open mind

Your first internship might not match your dream role. However, it is a learning opportunity. Embrace every task, no matter how small, because it gives you insight into how real workplaces function.

Learn from your colleagues

Watch how your colleagues communicate, lead, and collaborate. These behaviours often reveal more about workplace culture and expectations than anything written in a manual.

Ask questions thoughtfully

You are not expected to know everything. When you are unsure, do not hesitate to ask questions. That being said, you must make sure that you have attempted to figure things out first. It shows initiative and respect for others' time.

Treat it like a real job

Be punctual, dress appropriately, and take your responsibilities seriously. Interns who show professionalism are more likely to receive glowing recommendations or even job offers.

Reflect and improve

Keep a journal of what you learn, what challenges you face, and what excites you. It will help you grow and prepare you to navigate future jobs with greater confidence.



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