

Report on

My Journey as an Executive Team Member at *BackpagePR*

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An internship report submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that,

1. The report submitted is my/our own original work while completing Degree at BRAC University.
2. The report does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The report does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The report titled "My Journey as an Executive Team Member at *BackpagePR*" submitted by Md. Arafat Hossain Fahim (18103084) of Summer 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and Humanities.

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Acknowledgement

At first, I want to thank Allah for everything. For keeping my parents, my family members and my friends healthy during such extreme times. Secondly, I would like to thank my parents from the bottom of my heart. I have never shown them the gratitude that they deserve for providing me with such a beautiful life. University life is nothing without friendship. And I have managed to have friends like Sadhin, Shagor, Aashique, Shanto, Bishal, Antu and Radwan beside me. Thank you for blessing me with your friendship.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude towards all the faculties of BRAC University for their rigorous hard work towards their students.

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Chapter 01: Introduction

“If I only had two dollars left I would spend one dollar on PR.”

— Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft.

Public Relations or PR oversees and directs impression of a business to draw in new clients and fortify the reliability of existing clients. A PR agency uses certain sets of strategies and techniques in portraying a company's or an individual's information to public and media. For the sole purpose of growth for its clients' business, a PR agency plays a very important role. It helps businesses to cultivate or maintain a conscious public image through strategic communication. It can also be regarded as a brand builder. PR helps to create a demand for the clients' products and services with unique marketing strategies and creating positive media coverage.

In order for a PR agency to promote a business, the first process is to analyze what the problem or opportunity actually is. This counts having to do both formal and informal research on current market, inspecting the market and trying to understand what the public really wants from a similar genre of business or product. Then comes defining who the target customers of that product/business really are. Finding this out is really a key element of PR as they are ultimately the product is meant for. Determining the USP (Unique Selling Point) is another critical factor of doing PR. Because it then makes easier for both the client to make changes in the packaging of the product and helps the media (while advertising) to highlight the uniqueness of the product. Finally, after checking through all these factors, the agency then confirms the path they seem viable with the client. And the agency then collaborates with the press, mainstream media and social media through paid promotion. Thus, people organically become aware of that particular business while also boosting the reputation of the company.

However, if building a successful business was that easy, every other day there would have been a successful new business appearing in the market with the help of PR. PR surely increases the odds of success but it cannot guarantee success. So, it is pretty clear that, even with the help of PR, there is a luck factor involved. There's an old saying that goes like: "Advertising is what you pay for and publicity is what you pray for."

I belong to a business oriented family. So, doing a job is a foreign endeavour to me as nobody within my family has ever done jobs. Everyone does business. For this reason, I was very excited to learn that Media major students have an option to either write a thesis or part take in an internship over the course of a whole semester. I chose to do the latter as it felt the right thing to do and also it would give me the job like feel I never knew of. First and foremost, it was very difficult to find a place for internship which met the requirements for it to count as a proper organization for a media major student. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic caused difficulties finding for an organization because during this tough time, nobody was agreeing to take in a new member. My internship advisor Ms. Anika Saba came to the rescue and found me an organization where I could complete my internship. She recommended me to do my internship from one of the largest PR agencies in Bangladesh, *BackpagePR*. My experience there was really good because of their leniency towards their interns. As I was doing the internship while also doing other courses at my university, the authority was really understanding about it. All they said was- "Education comes first." So, when I had classes, they would give me a break from all work. And on exam days, they asked me to take the day off. Again, I really appreciate how respectful each and everyone was towards me. They never looked down on me and time to time took ideas that I suggested. That really boosted my morale while working there.

As a student with a concentration in Media and Cultural Studies, I had to complete several courses related to it. Some of them are- *ENG 404: Copywriting; Eng 401: Editing; Eng*

465: Translation Studies; and Eng 440: English for the Print Media. Eng 404 is where I learned about advertisements strategies and the basics like fundamentals of persuasive writing, copywriting techniques, print advertising, audio-visual promotions. From Eng 401 course, I learned how to arrange news from a given report and how to arrange the news in a newspaper.

From Eng 465 course, I learned the profound and accurate rules of translating any news from English to Bangla and vice versa. Finally, from Eng 440 course helped me to learn the different sections of a newspaper, like editorials, op-eds, features, obituaries, books and events. These are the major courses that helped me a lot through my internship. These were like part and parcel to my everyday job at the organization. They made sure that I did a thorough job to anything I got assigned.

Chapter 02: A Brief History of- BackpagePR

Backpage PR is a PR agency and a brand service provider that helps to develop their clients' businesses. From the house of 'Starcom worldwide' with a footprint in 78 countries, Starcom started Backpage PR in Bangladesh to create a one-stop media planning and buying solution accompanied by data. They are passionate about delivering efficient, effective, responsible and friendly PR services. Though it is relatively a very new organization with a total of three years of experience, Backpage PR consists of a team of strong thinkers who are always ready to compete and push all boundaries to deliver sustainable results.

Services that Backpage PR offers-

- Corporate Communications
- Consumer PR
- Crisis Management
- Media Relations
- Public / Government Sector Management
- e-PR
- Event Management
- Analyst Relations
- Influencer Relations
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Investor Relations

For a fairly new company, Backpage PR has created a separate identity of themselves out there in the industry. Within these short 3 years, they have already earned themselves 42 worldwide known affiliates. Such as- BMW, Samsung, Huawei, Paperfly, Bkash, Nagad etc.

Chapter 2.1 Team Introduction

As I have already mentioned that Backpage PR is a PR agency that Starcom Worldwide started. So, Backpage PR is an organization that lived off of an executive team. Tanziral Dilshad Ditan is the Director of this company as well as the Head of the ‘executive team’ of the PR agency. With a vast experience of working in the ATL & BTL industry for a glorious 18 years now, she is currently heading the team. Head of Media Relations is the post that has been handled by Azam Chowdhury. He has worked in the PR industry for over 10 years, with tremendous skills at building rapport in the media. He has established and continues to maintain intimate relationships with reporters and journalists in every media whether its newspapers, television, radio or wires. A key position of this while team is detained by Tawfiq Ahmed Bijoy, a Senior Executive of the organization. He is known for his effective communication skills and strong analytical skills. He primarily handles all the E-mailing and regular communication with the clients. Another very important part of this team is Tahsin Reza. He is “ The tech guru” of this team. Most of the organization’s regular client works have been performed online because of Covid and Tahsin has been the person who monitors all the websites of the agency, contents and all the social networking sites on top of that.

Whilst doing my internship at Backpage PR, I got to be a part of Backpage PR's Director Tanziral Dilshad Ditan’s non profit organization called Krayonmag. As both the institutions are related to my internship, I found it logical to include details of KrayonMag as well.

Chapter 2.2 A Brief History of- KrayonMag

KrayonMag, a social storytelling platform empowering society for amplifying voice regarding social injustice, norms and in-built stereotypes around us. It was founded by Tanziral Dilshad Ditan during 2020 while the world was in shambles from Covid-19. The platform intends to inspire the audience to bring out real stories highlighting the different perspective of normalcy. It is intended to engage in conversations for shedding light to the unspoken truths, the grey lines of norms and intriguing thinking.

KRAYONMAG is a manifestation platform that shares experiences that bend views and redefine normalcy. Their motto is-“To Redefine, Recreate and Restart.”

KrayonMag is built upon the message of-

- Intrigue awareness through stories
- Patron artists for promoting breaking the barriers through arts and expressions
- Harmonious Collaboration for Gender Equality.

Chapter 03 My Journey as an Intern

I started my internship on 8th November, 2021. The office of BackpagePR is at Gulshan-1 in Dhaka. At first, I was very tensed thinking how my peers and the office would be. But as soon as I entered the office, they welcomed me wholeheartedly and the warmth they showed, helped me to get rid of any worries I had. The thing which struck me immediately is that everyone was calling each other “bhaiya or apu”. Even they were addressing our Director as ‘apu’ which felt very unique to me. That also eased me up a lot.

I was assigned in the executive team of the agency and soon I came to realize that the director of the agency is also a member of the executive team. I was asked to go through several articles and PR projects on the agency’s social media websites to get the essence how BackpagePR handles their projects.

On the first day, they told me the rules and regulations of the agency and informed me that we have to be present in the office about 2-3 days a week because of the extraordinary situation worldwide during the earlier period of my internship. It did not mean that we worked only 2 days a week. For instance, our team had to join in a video conference call everyday twice in a day – in the morning and in the afternoon. Basically, during the morning meetings, our director and senior executives discussed the agenda for that particular day with us. Then they assigned us with works related to designing communications, campaigns, writing press releases and other content for news, working with the press, arranging interviews for company spokespersons and preparing clients for a live show (PR training) on what and how to represent themselves and the brand. In the afternoon, we had to report the progress on our respective assignments and inform the seniors if we faced any complications.

On the other hand, for KrayonMag, I had to do many field works. As it is a story telling organization that tries to shatter the evil social norms towards women, it needs a lot of

visual elements to organise such events so that people who attend such events can easily understand what KrayonMag wants to portray just by attending the events themselves and observing the decorations and atmosphere.

Again, During the internship period, as a part of the team integration process, I was added to the Facebook pages- BackpagePR and KrayonMag by my immediate supervisor Tahsin Reza as an admin and was also added in several WhatsApp groups. Such as- “BackpagePR Executive Team”, “ KrayonMag” and “BackpagePR” (Logistics dept.).

I am truly honoured that I got the opportunity to become a part of one of the most well-known and popular PR agencies in our country. I feel blessed to get a chance to do my internship at BackpagePR under the supervision of Mr. Tahsin Reza (Senior Executive, BPPR) and I am grateful to Ms. Tanziral Dilshad Ditan (Director, BPPR) for giving me such a golden opportunity to work in her company.

Chapter 04: Daily Work Procedure

As the Covid situation eased up a little bit, it became mandatory to attend office 6 days a week. Even 7 days on special occasions. Office hour started from 9:30 A.M. I tried to reach office within that time everyday and prepared a brief report for Bijoy bhai (Senior Executive) for my previous day's work. He used to rectify any major mistakes and assign new assignments for that particular day. I used to mainly handle the social media sites. Everyday in the morning my regular work was around checking for any breaking news. Any major incident that happened within the previous night till then and there, a post from either or both pages were bound to be uploaded. But to upload a post, it was necessary to have a creative (custom made photo or video with agency logo). For the creatives, there was a person assigned for that named Samiul bhaiya. He was more like a freelancer that worked by requirement. Any major news or incident that had a PR opportunity, I was asked to inform Samiul bhai about it. After he delivered the creative to me and I had made a caption for it, I used to show that to Ditan apu for approval and upload it to the website.

As we worked with many national and international clients, many of the news we received was from different media channel correspondents through email. I had to sort them out and give them to Tahsin Reza (Executive) bhaiya and he would give further instructions on them. Writing press releases was also one of many works I did during my internship. I wrote 2 Press releases for Paperfly that was approved and 1 for the Fintech annual Award Ceremony.

On special occasions or events, we had to do some extra work on weekends. For example- For the Fintech Award Ceremony that took place at the Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka, we were told to mail all the media (print and digital) houses to cover the event 1 week

beforehand. On the event day, we were asked to be present 3 hours prior to the commencing of the award ceremony to see if all the arrangements were fine or not. I was asked to print the press releases (both Bangla and English) and greet all the media personalities and media correspondents. After the award ceremony started, I was given the responsibility to tally up all the attendees (guests and media houses) and make an excel sheet on the spot at the location and upload it on our WhatsApp groups. Because based on that report, a Facebook post would be uploaded within several hours. Most of such shows would end late night and we would get to leave for home after 1 or 2 A.M.

Not only for BackpagePR, for KrayonMag also there were many events organised by us. For which, myself and Tahsin bhaiya would start to organise an event from early morning till late night. From selection of the locations to inviting prestigious guests, everything was our responsibility. But as things happen, many problems arise all of a sudden during an event. So, Crisis Management was also a thing I got to experience during the internship.

Chapter 05: Editing and Translation

BackpagePR has its own unique style of editing for its clients. On the 1st day of my internship, Tahsin bhaiya briefed me on the style guideline of the agency. He also gave me proper instructions for editing and uploading news online on the website. So that every post from our agency remain consistent. Although I am from English department, I was specifically asked not to use too much fancy English words. They asked me to keep the language simple. So that, whoever reads a post on the website can easily understand what it is all about. It makes the posts more welcoming and gets accepted more on social media.

During client works, I was usually given an audio recording of the meeting conducted by the client and our Senior Executive Bijoy bhaiya. After a meeting ended, he would share the recording with me and ask me to go through the whole recording one time. As most often, the recordings would be over 2 hours and even longer, I used to write down meeting minutes while listening to the meeting and sometimes even note down important points that the client wants us to incorporate in the end product. Also, most of the meetings were conducted in Bengali. So it was also compulsory for me to translate the whole discussion into English. And finally, make a summary out of the meeting recording and send that to our Director Ditan apu within 24 hours of that meeting.

An office meeting was always called upon whenever such meetings took place with clients for further preparations. Bijoy bhaiya usually used to lead the contracts and also prepare the press releases. But to teach me how to write an actual press release, (much different than how we write in University) he would always ask me to write my own version alongside his. In the early stages, I made several major mistakes. But he kept rectifying my

mistakes and finally, during the Fintech Awards, he asked me to write the press release on my own in English first (as it always is), and to my wonders! He approved my version of the press release and finalized it. Then asked me to write it in Bengali. He insisted that I should never translate a press release word to word. I should sometimes incorporate and if needed reform a sentence. Thus, finally, my press release (both English and Bengali) got approved by Ditan apu. She even praised me for my work. It was the first actual work in the corporate world of mine and after that, several more times my press releases got approved and it really feels ecstatic when your hard work gets recognized or praised.

Chapter 06: My Work at KrayonMag

After a week of my internship at BackpagePR, I got introduced to their social awareness organization named KrayonMag and got appointed as one of its admins. KrayonMag is a concern of BackpagePR. KrayonMag is a social storytelling platform empowering society for amplifying voice regarding social injustice, norms and in-built stereotypes around us. The platform intends to inspire the audience to bring out real stories highlighting the different perspective of normalcy. It intends to engage in conversations for shedding light to the unspoken truths, the grey lines of norms and intriguing thinking. KrayonMag can also be seen as a manifestation platform that shares experiences that bend views and redefine normalcy. There were both online and offline attention needed for KrayonMag. So, my work on KrayonMag's Facebook page was to post the upcoming events that KrayonMag was going to host and share details on them. To post them more efficiently, I was asked to make a content calendar consisting important dates of the month running. So, I made it and shared the calendar in the WhatsApp groups of BackpagePR and KrayonMag.

During my internship, KrayonMag organized its biggest event till date titled "Break the Silence Eliminate Violence." Ditan apu decided to name the campaign in Bengali as well and "Nirobotar Papchokro" was the result of that.

I was given the responsibility to arrange the required elements for the event. To arrange for an event, I had to have an idea on what the theme of KrayonMag was all about. So, I decided to watch some videos of KrayonMag's previous arranged events. From the videos, I had a rough idea on what theme would be perfect. So, for the colour theme, we selected the colour orange. From the videos, we noticed a line, "Orange The World". Which actually was approved by every member of our group. From the videos, we had a basic vision

of how we want to decorate the stage. I went to Rabindra Sarobar to visit the site and to get a rough estimate on how much of things we had to get. As per the estimation, we bought bamboo mats, poster papers and acrylic paints for banners, Orange and white net clothes for the background and brushes, white sarees for the actors. Besides these, we also did shopping for many smaller equipments.

Finally, the campaign titled "Nirobotar Papchokro" was launched on 25 November with a conceptual photoshoot directed by Abhishek Bhattacharya, to raise awareness on violence against women. The photoshoot included Meher Afroz Shaon, Azra Mahmood, Bulbul Tumpa, Irene Khan, and Sadia Roshni Sookhana. We not only invited media celebrities, but also personalities that had political background as well.

The program featured recitation, music arrangements, performance art, live painting and ended by lighting candles. The local ward commissioner Shirin Gaffar, Nargis Mahtab and the assistant police commissioner of Dhanmondi zone Abdullah Al Mamun, and many more respective guests were there.

KrayonMag organized many events like this after this event. Such as - KrayonMag organised a panel discussion to prevent "Violence Against Women on Cyber Space" at the EMK Center in Dhaka. It was a part of EMK Center's campaign on 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, the program was organized to raise awareness against gender-based violence and to encourage women to speak up against violence.

After conducting such events successfully, the work does not end there. Tahsin bhaiya and me used to select the best pictures to upload them on our Facebook page and I also uploaded all the posts of the TV and media houses that covered these events. Such events were really a great learning curve of my internship as I got to learn how to manage an event

from a scratch and I could also realize how hard it is to host an event which bears such insightful meaning.

Chapter 07: Integration of Concepts and Theories With My Internship

As a student with a concentration in Media and Cultural Studies, I had to complete several courses related to it. Some of them are- ENG 404: Copywriting; Eng401: Editing; Eng465: Translation Studies; and Eng440: English for the Print Media. Eng404 is where I learned about advertisements strategies and the basics like fundamentals of persuasive writing, copywriting techniques, print advertising, audio-visual promotions. From Eng401 course, I learned how to arrange news from a given report and how to arrange the news in a newspaper. From Eng465 course, I learned the profound and accurate rules of translating any news from English to Bangla and vice versa. Finally, from Eng440 course helped me to learn the different sections of a newspaper, like editorials, op-eds, features, obituaries, books and events. These are the major courses that helped me a lot through my internship.

Again, some major concepts that I think helped me the most are discussed below-

- **Globalization:** In ENG 333: Globalization and The media course, we learned that every country inspires each other in the range of political-cultural issues, religion, economy etc. over strong globalization. The progression of media is such a noteworthy part that keeps us completely socially modernized. Today the whole world is connected through Internet. And so, you have the whole world as your customer. In any business, organic marketing is the best way of marketing. So, whenever our agency did any post or deal or organized an event, we were asked to share that post to our friends. And asked them to

either try the product, attend the event and if they liked it, share it to their friends as well. So, whenever there was a event for KrayonMag or a brand launch or product launch by BackpagePR, I would ask my friends to come or examine the product. And asked them to share it on their social media accounts.

- **Timeliness:** Timeliness is very important for any organization. It contains the power to make or break the deal. When I was doing my internship, specifically ‘client work’, our Director, Tanziral Dilshad Ditan apu always told us to do work as if we have got the deal. And continue to work what the client would eventually tell us after we secured the deal. Because an organization gets a deal, the client immediately wants to see how much the work has progressed. And if the client sees that we are running ahead of the strict deadline they allocated, they would want to work more and more with us.
- **Panopticon and Gaze:** An architectural work ‘Panopticon’ means a controlling person to observe the people without knowing them. The main concept of Bentham’s Panopticon is, a tower that is surrounded by cells. A watchman is in the lighthouse and prisoners or workers are in the cells. The tower shines bright light so that the watchman can observe everyone in the cell easily. This ‘gazing’ purpose is to keep prisoners in control and also to make sure that they cannot do the undesirable movement. But Bentham claimed that people who are inside in panopticon always think that they are under observation at all times. French philosopher Michel Foucault establishes the idea of ‘Panopticism’ which is a social theory named after the ‘Panopticon’ in his book *Discipline and Punish* in 1975. Foucault describes that power is a

metaphor for Bentham's prison. Today in our modern society, there are CC T.V cameras everywhere to control the behaviour of people. The authorities use CCTV to conduct inspections on roads and other social places from a particular central location which in hindsight is panopticon. It results in people adjusting their behaviour to avoid getting punished by the authorities.

Similarly, I was under my supervisors' observation all the time while doing my internship. She contacted me frequently for an update and guided me accordingly which kept me on track throughout. In other words, I can say that I was under the gaze and supervision from my university supervisor and my supervisor at BackpagePR. From this perspective, I must agree with Foucault that power is everywhere in our society and we are under observation all the time.

Chapter 08: Conclusion

Unlike other corporate organizations, in our office at BackpagePR, we shared a family like relation with each and everyone. Every other day there would be a birthday celebration or celebration of some sort at the office. And unlike the moody bosses, our director Ditan apu would be the centre of attraction in such parties as she accepts every employee as her family member and never discriminated. Such atmosphere at our office not only enhanced our morale, but also enhanced the quality of our work as well.

With no prior experience, Ditan apu gave me an opportunity to “not” work but “learn” how to work in her organization at BackpagePR. From handling a client to writing a press release, I have experienced everything while working there. When no other well known organization would let an inexperienced employee even apply for a job, she let me join and directly enrolled me in her executive team and a student at that. I definitely made numerous mistakes. But my team helped me in every step and helped me rectify them.

Finally, I am very grateful to the faculties at my University. Without their constant support I would never be able to learn what I have today. Also, the curriculum that BRAC University offers to the Media major students is second to none. It is the ultimate guide to a student who wants to pursue his professional life in the field of Media and Journalism.

I am not going to tell that the 4 months of my internship period was easy. Yes, it was easy-going at times, but when multiple projects were simultaneously handled, it felt impossible to complete the internship as well. Formerly, I used to think that an office job is so easy. All they do is normal “desk job”. But after I experienced that similar kind of job myself, my respect for such desk job workers has increased manifold.

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