

Meeting Memo
1st General Discussion Event 2009
Role of Media in SMEs' Access to Business Development Information
 Jointly organized by FutureLeaders & Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Date: March 18, 2009
Venue: Bangladesh Enterprise Institute

Participants:

Mr. Farooq Sobhan	President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Mr. Tariq Karim	Vice President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Mr. Rashedur Rahman	Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Ms. S. Kaiser	Dhansiri Communication
Ms. Mishu Rahman	Purple
Mr. Shafayatul Islam Khan	Banglalink
Ms. Munia Ghani	Banglalink
Mr. Alijeh Ahmed	PRICE
Ms. Shazia Ahmed	IFC-SEDF
Mr. Afsaruddin Ahmed	GTZ-PROGRESS
Ms. Jill Majerus	Action For Enterprise
Mr. Md. Farhad Zamil	Action For Enterprise
Mr. Md. Abdul Wahed Tomal	Computer Jagot
Mr. Md. Anisuzzaman Chowdhury	JICA
Mr. Tamim Daiyan	ADB
Mr. Md. Abul Hossain	Winrock International
Mr. M. A. Rafiq Sarkar	ICEA/ IRG NRCEA International Ltd.
Ms. Sabrina Zaman	Impact PR
Ms. Nighat Munia	Brac Bank
Mr. S. A. Wasel	IDE - Bangladesh
Mr. S. M. Shahin Anwar	SME Foundation
Mr. Tim Canedo	Ministry of Industries – Strategic Support to SME
Ms. Iffat Nawaz	Driven
Mr. Mridul Chowdhury	Driven
Mr. Quazi M. Ahmed	FutureLeaders
Ms. Tajmeri Haque	Media Arts and Technology Research
Ms. Nurun Nahar	Practical Action
Mr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman	Eclectic
Mr. Jishu Tarafder	FutureLeaders
Mr. Tauhid Ziauddin	FutureLeaders
Ms. L. Rahman	Bangladesh Enterprise Institute
Mr. Tahsin Akbar	Coordinator - MDF

The program started with the opening statements by Mr. Farooq Rahman, President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI). He welcomed everyone present and Introduced Mr. Q. M. Ahmed, CEO, FutureLeaders and Mr. Tariq Karim, Vice –President, BEI.

1. Opening remarks

- In the opening remarks, Mr. Sobhan highlighted the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in the economy. He also stressed on the point that SMEs in a developed economy account over 75% of the total employment. The three crucial points he raised in detailing the importance of the SME were, (a). SMEs role in creating employment, (b). Generating export by SME and (c). SMEs are providing industrial growth.
- Media also has a role in developing SME through providing information. The role of ICT is also important as a medium for development of the SME sector. He also emphasized on the fact that media and other corporate houses need to demonstrate their commitment and address social concerns.
- Mr. Tariq Karim, in his opening remarks, emphasized on the challenges that SME face regularly. These challenges are setting competitive market prices of the products produced by SME's, market penetration, business development information etc.
- Mr. Quazi M. Ahmed opened his remarks by defining an SME of Bangladesh with the excerpt from the government of Bangladesh notification. In the definition, there was clear distinction made for services and manufacturing industry. This definition is very important regarding the topic of the event. With this, Mr. Ahmed requested Mr. S. Moinuddin Ahmed of BRAC Bank to present his view in assisting SME & the role that media can play.

2. Brac Bank

Mr. Syed M. Ahmed, Vice President and Acting Head of SME Banking, BRAC Bank, in his remarks, commented on various issues including the role of demand and supply side, role of media in disseminating information etc. He also shared own experiences. From his experiences he stated that SME in Bangladesh are mostly family oriented businesses. Media may play a key role by warning the SMEs by giving information on present day global turmoil.

3. Banglalink

Mr. Shafayatul Islam Khan, Banglalink presented on a latest intervention by Banglalink – 'Jiggashya'. This new service has been targeted for the people who are working in agriculture industry, especially the farmers. He explained through his presentation, how the system operates to provide answer to the 'technical' queries of marginal farmers. The service is introduced targeting the SME and pricing settled for this sector allowed the system to be commercially viable.

Mr. Khan emphasized on the business process, financial incentive and corporate social responsibility would be vital for growth of SME. He also stated Banglalink started the new service with corporate social responsibility. The present business model of 'Jiggayasha' currently serving the information need of the SME, specialized call rate allowed the service provider to have a commercially viable business service and call centers working are also making profit.

4. Purple

Ms. Mishu Rahman of 'Purple' and media personality shared her views with emphasis on the point of 'why Media do not address SME issues'. She gave four points as reasons. Her points were i) as news, SME news is not treated as newsworthy. For this reason, SME news is not covered in electronic media. ii) Present journalists in media sector are not skilled to cover the SME news. iii) The main source of earning for media is the advertising, where contribution of SMEs is quite small. For this reason their news are not covered. iv) Media in Bangladesh often tend to cover based on the 'glamour' value of the news. In this regard, SME does not meet the criteria.



Ms. Rahman, based on her experience, also gave some points to be considered for the development of SME in relation to media. Her points were i) There is no single point or place where media can cover SME. A PR cell in SME Foundation could become useful in this regard. ii) SME's can create a collective fund which would provide them an access to media for advertisement. For creating this fund, donor or other related communities may come forward to raise the necessary funds.

5. Dhanisiri Communication

Ms. Shomi Kaiser of Dhansiri Communication and a media personality offered her views on the role of media in developing the SME sector. She identified some issues where media could be useful. SME's require information regarding their business development. This information are critical in Financial performance, HR, physical resources, etc. She identified following recommendations in general for SME development i) In electronic media – sponsorship is the problem. However, business shows could be organized. A local example of business show is the RTV's program in each morning. ii) In print media – Community magazines could be used. Here each SME will contribute and have a business sector related magazine. Also other institutions such as banks could support this effort. iii) In the internet, electronic journal/e-newsletter could be brought out which is very cost effective. This will also help people who are in SME but may not be computer literate. Due to this intervention, it will motivate SMEs to learn to use electronic resources.

For SME, in electronic media, small programs could be prepared which would be in TV transmission as fillers. This will cost very less and will serve SME in developing their businesses.

6. Driven

Mr. M. Chowdhury of 'Driven' spoke highly of the technology change that will play key role in disseminating information. He stated that traditional media is supply driven while mobile phone is demand driven media. Here information needs of SME can be largely addressed if new technology are used.

7. Discussion

Mr. Quazi Ahmed stated, from the opinions of Mr. M. Chowdhury, on demand training is very important, he then opened the discussion floor for all the members.

- Mr. Shahin Anwar of SME Foundation stated that SME foundation has signed MoU and currently hosting all information available regarding SME in their web portal. He requested to emphasize on the Role of Media and Information that would benefit the SMEs.
- In answering a question from a member, Mr. Khan of Banglalink stated that source of the information that they are currently providing is not generated by them. Banglalink also plays a neutral role in information dissemination so that no input supplier could get benefited from their services. His service – 'Jiggaysha' currently receiving 3500 calls per day though it had a very small profitability. A better targeted pricing helped them to bring the service at a financially viable situation.
- In the discussion it came apparent that a 1-stop information service is required. Information services should not only be limited to agri-sector. There is also need for similar services in other sectors such as light engineering etc.
- Corporate organizations are required to come forward and contribute here as part of their CSR rather than approaching in a profit seeking way.



MARKET DEVELOPMENT FORUM
BANGLADESH

- Information that are currently being disseminated are available in Bangla. Advisory services are also available from SME Foundation.

8. Conclusion

In the conclusion part, following points were identified to be very important for SME development.

- The content/ information should be easily accessible to all. Making the information in Bangla would allow all to access information easily for the general users.
- All the intervention should be made in sustainable way. Thus projects are required to be profitable in long run.
- On demand information and training would be very useful for the SMEs.

Mr. Traiq Karim, VP, BEI in his conclusion thanked all the members for attending and participating in the event. He ended the session with a statement that 'sharing of information/ knowledge is actually a beginning of the positive change'.

Finally Mr. Quazi M. Ahmed thanked all for participating and expressed that on behalf of his organization, he would like to carry on some of the recommendations that have been found in the discussions.