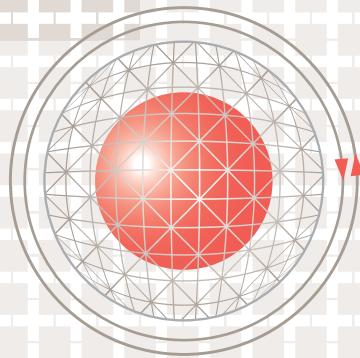


20 Interview



The CV

2011

Appointed member of the ACCA Canada Advisory Board, Toronto

2010

Joins Institute of Public Administration Canada; and becomes business analyst in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Government of Ontario

2009

Masters degree in accounting, Anglia Ruskin University, UK. Joins the Certified General Accountants of Ontario; business analyst with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Government of Ontario

2007

Becomes ACCA member and area decision support analyst, Royal Mail

2004

Human resource analyst with Royal Mail, UK

2000-2003

Finance officer, Australian High Commission, and credit analyst, International Finance Investment and Commerce Bank, Bangladesh. Moves to London, UK

2000

MBA, Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, Bangladesh

1998

Honours degree in statistics, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh



GLOBE TROTTER

After travelling from Bangladesh to Canada by way of the UK, Mohammed Chowdhury ACCA is growing to love the North American life – and its formidable landscape

For Mohammed Chowdhury, his recent appointment to the ACCA Canada Advisory Board marks the end of a long journey from his native Bangladesh to a new home halfway across the world. At the same time, it heralds the beginning of what he hopes will be a long and prosperous career in North America.

Chowdhury was born in the Rangpur Division of northern Bangladesh in 1976. An area rich in history, with magnificent palaces and remnants of the Raj still dotting the landscape, travellers through the centuries have paused on its well-travelled roads, and it wasn't long before Chowdhury's family would follow their tradition.

Chowdhury senior was a government engineer, a profession that involved the family's constant relocation throughout the country. Bangladesh was in the process of rebuilding following unimaginable disasters and intense political upheaval. The young Chowdhury children were able to witness the rebuilding of a nation, and to behold the incredible bravery and resilience of the Bengali people.

Chowdhury remembers Bangladesh fondly. 'It is an amazing country,' he says. 'We have the largest mangrove forest in the world, the Sundarbans. We also have Cox's Bazar, the longest beach in the world.'

In the Chowdhury household education was paramount. Chowdhury's parents were extremely intuitive when it came to recognising the intellectual strengths of their children, including young Mohammed's mathematical ability. He followed his father's guidance and explored this strength through accounting.

'The accounting profession was a natural choice for me, and was something my father always wanted me to pursue, simply because it makes sense,' he says. 'Number one, I am good with numbers. Number two, accounting is one of the few professions where you can put literature to numbers and make decisions based on that.'

This sporting life

Away from studying, Chowdhury would dream of trekking faraway mountain peaks or spend endless hours on the cricket field: two passions that have remained. 'I am not a mountaineer per se, although I trekked through the Annapurnas in the Himalayas,' he says. 'Mountains fascinate me and I will never grow bored of them.'

Schooldays hold many happy memories for Chowdhury, who enjoyed long evening chats with his friends in the many teahouses that dot the street corners of the bustling city. And, of course, they were always on the lookout for an available cricket field. 'Cricket will always remain an important activity and interest in my life,' he says. 'It has taught me the value of leadership and ingenuity and the importance of unity.'

When he and his friends arrived at the Institute of Business Administration at the University of Dhaka, they had become masters of improvisation and would play cricket on the dormitory roof. If the ball went out of play – in other words, went off the roof – as punishment someone would have to find it. Following many trips up and down flights of stairs and some

intense searches of the surrounding countryside, great efforts were made to keep the ball on the roof.

Sometimes during strikes classes would be held in the dormitories and on several occasions a furious lecturer would chastise the rooftop cricketers. 'I remember one extremely irate professor who came running up the stairs, criticising us severely for disrupting classes with our rooftop cricket match,' Chowdhury recalls.

In 1998 he received an Honours degree in statistics and in 2000 earned his MBA. He took up a position as a credit analyst at the International Finance Investment and Commerce Bank, before going on to become an analyst with the Australian High Commission in Dhaka.

Chowdhury enjoyed his life in Bangladesh but knew that he would pursue a degree in accounting and had yet to see the mountains of his boyhood dreams. This prompted him to go abroad to study. Careful research led him to consider travelling to Australia, Canada or the UK to further his education. He found the UK to be the most competitive and, in 2003, set off for London.

Once settled into London life and study, Chowdhury joined Royal Mail part time. His computer and analytical skills quickly saw him promoted from postman to human resources administrator and, finally, area decision support analyst. 'I applied for that job and there was a huge competition,' he recalls. 'It was cut down to 50 and finally 10 applicants remained and in the end there was myself and two other applicants.'

Climb every mountain

In 2007 Chowdhury became a member of ACCA and in 2009 received his Masters degree in accounting from the Anglia Ruskin University. Yet although growing successfully in his career in the UK he would still dream of those faraway mountains. In the end, it was Chowdhury's curiosity about the Canadian Rocky Mountains that led him to Canada. 'I find the Canadian terrain fantastic,' he says.

He was also intrigued by the level of volunteerism in Canada. One particular volunteer-based agency was integral in helping his young family adjust to their new home. The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) is a mentoring partnership programme designed to assist newcomers approach potential employers in the Toronto area. Having found the programme so beneficial, Chowdhury went on to become a volunteer mentor himself.

'The programme matches you with a mentor in your field, so if you are an accountant, it would find a mentor who is also an accountant,' explains Chowdhury. 'The mentor shares his professional network with the mentee. So it broadens his or her network and at the same time gives the individual a positive way to do something structured.'

'When a new immigrant comes to a new country, they are naturally a bit down, a bit depressed. The mentoring programme is a good remedy for that.'

Chowdhury is also a volunteer tax preparer for the Certified General Accountants of Ontario, working with seniors and low-income families, and he is a volunteer fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, an organisation that provides child and youth mentoring services.

Thanks to his experience with the Australian High Commission and Royal Mail, Chowdhury quickly secured a position within the



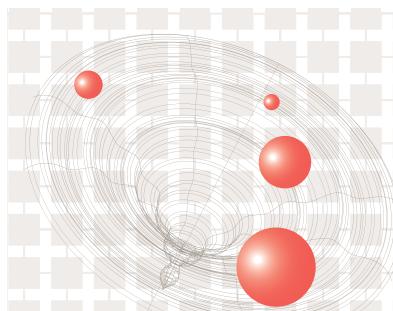
Ontarian government, first as a business analyst with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and then at the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

His latest achievement is joining the ACCA Canada Advisory Board. 'Our aim is to project the value of the designation in the Canadian marketplace,' he explains, stressing the distinctive characteristics of the ACCA qualification. 'Where ACCA differentiates from traditional [Canadian] accounting disciplines, like CGAs [certified general accountant] or CAs [chartered accountant] is that it encompasses

management accounting and auditing, as well as accounting itself.'

Chowdhury has yet to explore the Rockies but has flown over them. His 2012 holiday plans feature a drive across the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, one of the most beautiful and rugged mountain terrains in the world. All in all, the Chowdhury family is enjoying their new life in Canada and, as he points out, there is another advantage to working in Canada: 'Plenty of parking!'

Nikko DeAngelis and Ramona Dzinkowski, journalists



WHEN A NEW IMMIGRANT COMES TO A NEW COUNTRY, THEY ARE NATURALLY A BIT DOWN, A BIT DEPRESSED. THE MENTORING PROGRAMME IS A GOOD REMEDY FOR THAT

The basics: MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES, GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

The mandate of the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services is to implement programmes that are targeted towards supporting adults with disabilities and to ensure legal child and family financial support. More specifically, the Ministry helps disabled adults work and participate in a range of community activities. It promotes accessibility and work to break down barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in the social and economic life of Ontario; helps Ontarians recover from hardship; and enforces family and child support orders issued by the courts.