

Singapore

Overwhelming response to career fair targeted at start-ups

More than 1,100 job seekers turned up at the fair, which had about 300 jobs on offer.



Job seekers at the inaugural Startup Career Fair on Mar 30, 2017. (Photo: Hafiz Ma'il)

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SINGAPORE: A career fair organised for start-ups to find talent saw an overwhelming interest from job seekers, with more than 1,100 people turning up to explore about 300 jobs on offer.

The inaugural Startup Career Fair, which was held on Thursday (Mar 30), offered jobs from more than 100 start-ups. It was organised by the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE), a private-led, Government-supported enterprise that helps drive innovation and entrepreneurship in Singapore.

Noting the good turnout, ACE's executive director, Phan Ching Chong, said they are very happy with the outcome. "In all honesty, to trial this we were prepared for just a fraction of the 300 positions to be filled," he said.

He added that the high demand did not just come from the job seekers, but also from the start-ups. Initially, they had planned to only have about 50 to 60 start-ups, but within a "couple of weeks", 120 start-ups had indicated their interest in the fair.

"The hiring challenge is (felt) across the board," he said. "Start-ups are smaller and it's hard to compete against the employer branding efforts of MNCs, SMEs and the public sector.

FITTING THE BILL

The jobs available at the fair included roles in software engineering, technology and creative and marketing. They ran the gamut from internships, to entry-level positions and more senior roles suitable for professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) looking for a mid-career switch.

Founder of food delivery start-up Fastbee.sg, Khoo Kar Kiat, was looking to fill a marketing and business development position in his team.

“I think people are excited about start-ups and they find it sexy,” he said. “But there’s also so much uncertainty. I was in the Government before, where there are so many policies, SOPs and if things go wrong, you can just look up and your boss is there. When you’re out as an entrepreneur, you’re on your own.”

He said that the person they are looking for would need to be able to handle that uncertainty. “If they come with the mindset that they are really willing to learn, they have that passion ... Someone who is willing to come out and try, fail and make mistakes.”

E-commerce start-up Shopback was looking to fill more than 10 positions, the bulk of which are in software engineering. Its HR business partner Rachel Lee said the response was “overwhelming”.

She said she was looking out for qualities such as flexibility, adaptability and good problem-solving skills. Age, background or experience is not a factor, she said.

“If they say they have a passion for operations, even if they have never dealt with e-commerce operations before, as long as they have passed our test, we are open to hiring them,” she said. “We usually test if a person is a good fit by giving them a skills test, like a coding assignment. And if they pass, we’ll proceed with the next round.”

“We want to be age-blind in that sense. They must show that they are competent to do the job and before we assess for culture and stuff like that.”

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Job seekers Channel NewsAsia spoke to said this was a chance for them to explore new opportunities amid a tough job market.

First-year business undergraduate Rossafiq Roszaini was looking for an internship in the digital marketing and business development sector.

“Start-ups are very exciting because a lot of things are very new and I like how they are very tech-focused,” he said, adding that they hold an edge over traditional MNCs which could be “boring”.

Those looking to do a mid-career switch were also open to the possibility of earning a lower salary.

“I’ve been in an oil and gas MNC for more than 10 years,” said 40 year-old Melvin Teh. “Before that, I was doing accounting, so I want to try something different.”

“I think the job market is now very bad,” he added. “So we have to be prepared to maybe cut down (our salary expectations) by a few hundred (dollars) ... If I continue to wait for half a year, I may not be able to get a job as well.”

“(One) must be flexible,” he said.

Source: CNA/lc

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