

No shortcut to success

Hamidah Naziadin, Director of CIMB Group Corporate Resources, tells *Caroline Yap* what helps a fresh graduate get into the workforce.

If there's one thing that fresh graduates need to remember is that "there is no short cut to success. It's all hard work," says Hamidah Naziadin, Director of CIMB Group Corporate Resources.

Her advice to graduates is not to look for high-paying, glamorous jobs. Rather, she suggests planning and thinking ahead. "Ask yourself: 'what do I want to achieve in five or 10 years?' Have long-term goals. Don't think about your first job as a stepping stone that you just want to try out."

Hamidah has interviewed many people who have lost out career-wise because they wasted time drifting around for the first few years.

She does feel that graduates today are more outspoken, more aware and know what they want. She feels they are more clued in to their rights and are more knowledgeable.

"Nowadays, they also want quality of life. They want that balance in their lives," she says, comparing them to the young employees of yesteryears who were willing to give all their time to work.

While she knows that seeking a balance is a good thing, she also feels you should try to gain more experience while you are still young. And the only way to do this is make sacrifices for your work.

"You must not forget that whatever knowledge and experience you gain now will remain with you for the rest of your career and life."

Learning, though, has a lot to do with having the right attitude.

"You should want to learn.

You should have the initiative to find out. Don't wait for superiors to come around.

You need to be proactive, not reactive. If you ask, you learn."



Hamidah Naziadin

Applying for a job

Of course, you need to get your foot into the door before you can start your career and this begins with having a good CV.

Hamidah says there are many ways of writing a CV, but what is important is that it shows what you want and how you can grow with the organization. For example if you say: "I want to be a banker", then explain how the company can help you achieve your vision.

Hamidah receives many applications stating a few positions the person is interested in. This, she says, shows you are not sure what you want or that you are using the job as a stepping stone.

Your CV is the document that advertises you to the company, she says, so make sure it is well-written, clear and concise. Even your photo makes a difference. She says you should always use a recent photo (and try to look cheerful in it!). The fact that you have taken care with the details of your CV puts you in a positive light.

"Don't put every nitty-gritty details like when you took piano lessons. These things are not relevant. Just highlight the important points."

Other tell-tale signs are sending a letter with the wrong name of the company or leaving it unsigned. And find out who the letter should be addressed to rather than addressing it to Dear Sir/Madam.

"This is your future and your career. You should be in a serious mindset. You should not have the attitude of: 'I try here and there.' What you should be saying with your CV is this: 'I'm serious about you being my employer of choice.' And make sure you list why.

"Always remember that when you send in an application, it is the first contact with your potential employer," she says.

What CIMB looks for

Hamidah says the right person for the job is not a person who just has all the right qualifications.

Hamidah doesn't just look at degrees, but at SPM results as well. She feels that the Form Five exam is a good reflection of a person's capabilities. "You can tell if they are good at numbers and so on." Many other employers also place importance on SPM results. Her reasoning is that everyone takes the same SPM papers, where as university standards differ from one institution to the next.

CIMB's interviews include tests and presentations. "This is to see how they approach a topic. There's never a right or wrong, but this allows us an insight into their thinking processes and mindsets." Candidates are given a topic and are asked to present their views. "It's how you defend your views that's important. It shows that you can think."

She says that while foreign students may speak better and may at times be more confident, it's still an individual thing and it's the attitude that counts. "It's not so much about the language and English, but how you think and present yourself."

Employers like her also don't want someone who just studies. "I want someone who is interested in the world outside and in current affairs." And she stresses that with today's technology, knowledge and information readily available, it shows that you have initiative when you take note of what's around you.

"It's true that certain graduates who have gone through certain fields will know exactly what they want to do in the bank, we are also open to employing graduates with good degrees from different disciplines. A person's attitude is more important than what they studied."

After all, as she says: "To be called for an interview you need your academic qualifications. But it's your attitude that gets you the job."

Opportunities waiting

CIMB prides itself on its culture of meritocracy and fresh graduates who perform well can look forward to a promotion after their first year.

There is also plenty of training available. The CIMB Complete Banker programme gives fresh graduates exposure in investment and retail banking. The one-year programme moves you around the company and gives you a good overall understanding of how it works.

Training programmes focus on soft skills such as team building, communication and business writing, as well as more technical programmes such as finance for the non-financial person and

other core programmes on risk management, anti-money laundering and so on.

Training in CIMB is quite personal. Employees are guided by their heads of department and both parties then find the best areas that fit in with the employees' career aspirations.

CIMB has made a name for itself as good training ground. Perhaps the biggest confirmation of this is the fact that its young staff are constantly being poached. "This is why

"As new employees go along, they have a better understanding of the bank. After 10 months they should more or less know where they can fit in for a permanent position. Then we can focus their training on what they want."

our HR framework has to be strong. Our compensation paradigm has to be able to attract and keep the best."

Why join CIMB? "This is a place where you can unleash your potential. There's always opportunity for you - that's our strength."

Besides, as she says, the CIMB team is made up of people who have been there for years. "They are experts in the field and you are given the opportunity to learn from the best."

Applications are accepted at any time. While it employed 40 management trainees last year for the investment arm of the bank, Hamidah doesn't have a fixed number of people to employ every year. "I go for quality, not quantity. It's not about the numbers but about getting the right people." ©