

Overcoming career obstacles with postgrad studies

SOURCE: ASIA E UNIVERSITY

> It can steer you to new highs in your professional life

THE employment environment in Malaysia has become increasingly challenging. Some factors, such as job satisfaction and security, already seem like a distant dream to many. For this reason, employees today look for new ways to enhance their employability.

How does undertaking a postgraduate course alter one's career prospects?

CHANGING THE GAME PLAN

One thing that has changed dramatically in recent times is the concept of the linear career path. In a nutshell, a linear career path is the traditional career advancement route that most working professionals abide by.

Since there is a hierarchy—no matter how defined—in every organisation, it is this hierarchy that becomes the “path” that employees start treading on.

Today, postgraduate courses are seen as one way to break away from this structured form of career progression. By picking up new skills through an advanced degree programme, an employee will have the opportunity to transcend previously defined barriers and enjoy more flexibility—which may come in the form of a career in an altogether different field.

In fact, many employees consider the linear career path model to be virtually obsolete, because many professionals plan to work in multiple areas during their working lives.

This phenomenon highlights the importance of postgraduate studies as an enabler for a multidirectional career path, which means that one will be able to make a lateral move (for example, across departments or even organisations).

Fresh skills picked up during the course of a postgraduate study stint can allow an employee to perform in a different function, and ultimately open the doors to achieving professional success through multiple avenues.

GEARING UP FOR THE SWAP

Being overlooked by prospective employers is a fear shared by countless middle-aged, mid-career workers all over the world. In Malaysia, the situation is no different. This segment of the jobseeking

market is aware of the dangers of lagging behind fast-moving trends, and is therefore open to the idea of going back to school to gain entirely new skills or sharpen existing ones.

Additionally, many of these workers—in particular those who find existing training opportunities at their current workplace to be few and far in between—view postgraduate studies as a feasible path towards self-improvement.

At this point in their careers, mid-career workers are also interested in enhancing their qualifications to better prepare them for a drastic career change, or for a job in a sector that provides better long-term opportunities and benefits.

In such instances, mid-career workers find the Master of Business Administration (MBA) qualification to be the most attractive way to attain practical business and management skills. On top of that, they may find the MBA to be a great way of expanding their network of peers and contacts.

It's worth noting that mid-career workers who have the desire to leave their existing departments or organisations are not the only ones jumping on the MBA bandwagon. Those who are content with their job and line of work may also find the MBA to be a worthwhile addition to their résumés, as they can potentially fast-track their career by making the most of their newly acquired skills.

GOING SOLO

Another factor that has contributed to the relevance of postgraduate studies for career changers is its popularity amongst those who aspire to make it on their own. Potential entrepreneurs (and some technopreneurs, too) resort to postgraduate studies to pick up the knowledge, skills and networking opportunities to get their business going.

As a result, many programmes offered by postgraduate course providers today revolve around case studies and support groups to better cater to the needs of aspiring entrepreneurs.

The course structures of such programmes are based on subjects that can assist students in understanding and anticipating the challenges of the business world. For example, they will be tested on their understanding of the aspects of a new venture business life cycle.

Some courses, such as a specialist MBA in entrepreneurship, are further tailored to help students

successfully deal with the trials and tribulations that come with being an entrepreneur. Recognising opportunities is among the skills that are taught.

A postgraduate course can be a worthwhile solution to employees who find themselves with their backs against the proverbial wall at the workplace. For those who are seeking opportunities in another line of work, a second degree can be the enabler that they need to find success in greener pastures.

Source: GTI Media, a leading graduate careers media and research business. For more insights, visit www.postgradasia.com



A postgrad qualification can help open doors and expand one's horizons.