

CONSULTANCY ATTACHMENTS

A double sigh of relief

Business Advisors Programme places retrenched PMETs in six-month stints at SMEs

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IT'S a scheme with advantages for two groups crying out for aid: Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and retrenched professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs).

For resource-strapped SMEs, they'll get unemployed professionals with a wealth of experience at a heavily-subsidised cost, to help develop their business.

And PMETs will be assured of at least six months of income, in their project-based advisory attachments, with the possibility of permanent employment should the fit prove right.

The Singapore Management University (SMU) on Friday launched the Business Advisors Programme, which is part funded by Spring Singapore.

While there are schemes to help blue-collar workers, fresh graduates and PMETs transition to specific industries, more could be done for experienced PMETs from sectors like finance and IT, said SMU dean of executive and professional education Annie Koh.

She added, the aim of the scheme is not to create jobs, but to give retrenched PMETs a hand while they're in transition. Nonetheless, Mr David Lim, who left his job in a venture capital firm this year, said: "It's not just useful in the interim, it also a platform for future opportunities."

Though SMEs have yet to officially come

on board, interest level is high.

Wine distributor Magnum Wine and Spirits, for instance, hopes to take on someone with business development and logistics experience. "We don't always have the resources to look at this area," said director Edmund Tsai.

Web Synergies managing director Gideon Lim notes that "going to a consulting firm for an audit can cost in the five figures".

Contrast that outlay with the \$5,000 a month in advisory fees that successfully-placed PMETs will get under the SMU scheme – with SMEs only having to cover 30 per cent of it, as Spring Singapore will pay the rest.

But the success of the pairing will depend on whether firms land someone with not only the right skills but also the right attitude.

Most PMETs would come from a multinational company, used to a slew of departments at their disposal to get tasks done. "In an SME, we do everything ourselves," said eco-packaging company Greenpac chief executive officer Susan Chong.

"There won't be a research team to compile data for you to analyse, you find your own data," she added.

Selected candidates will have to undergo a two-day induction designed by SMU to prepare them for the SME culture, said Associate Professor Koh.

To qualify, PMETs should have at least five years' working experience and be prepared to work full-time for six months.

The university hopes to match PMETs to at least 30 projects by May.



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