Employability boost for graduates

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**RIGHT SKILLS SET:** It is projected that over the next three years up to 2017, some 10,000 job opportunities will be made available by companies in Cyberjaya.

However, the quality, competency and employability of graduates in meeting industry demands remain a pressing issue.

PIKOM’S 2014 ICT Job Market Outlook in Malaysia reported that only 10 per cent of new employees were work-ready, and the rest needed further training before being able to fully undertake the requirements of their jobs.

Last year, Setia Haruman Sdn Bhd initiated a talent development programme that empowers, trains and prepares local graduates with the skills set needed to make them employable in high impact companies located in Cyberjaya.

Called the Cyberjaya Graduate Employability Enabler Programme (CGEE), the project is aimed at solving the mismatch between graduates from local institutions of higher learning and multinational corporations in Cyberjaya and elsewhere.

To ensure the programme’s success, assistance was sought from three main stakeholders.

Local institutions of higher learning were asked to identify the soft skills lacking from local graduates and to shortlist names of graduates who were still unemployed.

Multinational corporations in Cyberjaya were asked to provide the graduates with technical skills training and employment opportunities.

Training institutions were asked to develop customised training modules and also to assess and evaluate the graduates.

The programme comprised two divisions, one for IT graduates and the other for non-IT graduates.

The modules covered such areas as leadership development, experiential learning, communication skills, best business practices, project management, strategic thinking and character building.

Skills taught in the programme included problem-solving and decision-making, analytical and critical thinking, computer literacy and environmental conservation.

The pilot project was successfully kicked off with the participation of four industry partners and 333 graduates from five universities.

Graduates from Universiti Putra Malaysia were paired with AIA Shared Services Sdn Bhd, those from Universiti Utara Malaysia and Taylor’s University with Shell Business Service Centre Sdn Bhd, those from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM) with HSBC Electronic Data Processing Sdn Bhd, and those from University of Malaya with IBM Global Delivery Centre Sdn Bhd.

Of the 333 graduates, seven were offered direct employment and 74 more were selected to undergo 12 weeks of training under the CGEE programme.

Eventually, 70 of the 74 were also gainfully employed, giving the programme a 95 per cent success rate.

The successful graduates all showed a positive increase in their self-motivation and confidence, traits that all graduates were expected to have when stepping into the real world.

Now, a year later, the CGEE programme pioneers are mentors to graduates selected for the CGEE2 programme and Buddy System.

The Buddy System matches the current trainees with their seniors from the pilot year.

In this system, the mentors will transfer their knowledge and experience to the mentees, not only during the training period but even after the mentees have found gainful employment.

Mohd Ikmal Hisham Mohamad Nein, a business computing graduate from UiTM now attached with Tech Mahindra Limited, shared on the process he underwent.

He said: “First we submit our resume and take an online English test.

“The candidates, from a filtered list, will then be called for an interview with the company during which we will be asked about our technical skills.

“Our 10-week attachment will be the time when our skills will be further improved, so that we will be fully ready for the job we are being employed to do.

“I was also paired with a mentor who shared his experience with me, and I will be required to do the same next year when I become a mentor to someone else.”

Following the success of the CGEE pilot project, an allocation of RM1.2 million was provided by the Education Ministry for CGEE 2014.

This second edition sees the involvement of six industry partners and 139 graduates from six universities and Yayasan Sime Darby.

The CGEE 2014 Programme was recently launched by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also the Education Minister.

Present at the launch was CGEE promoter and Setia Haruman chairman Tan Sri Mustapha Kamal, corporate heads from participating companies and senior representatives from various local universities.

Muhyiddin, in his speech, expressed his confidence that with the availability of more local graduates with the right skills set, more high impact companies and brands will set up their base in Cyberjaya.
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(From left) Mohd Ikmal Hisham, Joyce Ding, Kartina Abdullah, Muhyiddin Yassin, Mustapha Kamal, Norman Zakaria, Vanitha Paliah and Muhamad Firdaus Abd Halim.