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Headline: Meaningful internships a way to attract the right talent

Meaningful internships a way to attract the right talent

By Narendra Aggarwal

DOING an internship for some months will be useful for young people in deciding their career path, especially if they are considering the food and beverage (F&B) and tourism sectors, says Janet Tan-Collis, chief executive of East West Planners who has been in the meetings and incentives industry for over 35 years.

Companies, on their part, should try to give interns as much exposure to the business as possible, she suggests. This will create a win-win situation for both as the youth will be able to make better informed decisions about their career and the companies will be able to attract the right kind of talent.

In fact Mrs Tan-Collis goes a step further by suggesting that to incentivise the interns, those doing six months or more be awarded points to be able to go to university. She made these points during a panel discussion at the Singapore Management University (SMU) on the release of the CSISG report on Nov 25.

"For youths or anyone wanting to continue higher learning or qualifications in the field of tourism and F&B, they should look at internship as a hands on, deep-dive approach, not only learning and understanding but observing and involving themselves in the work as much as possible and permissible. Through this exercise, the result is that one is more insightful and

knowledgeable of the goings on that make the business work. The internship also gives one the ability to decide the pathway of their life's aspiration," Mrs Tan-Collis later tells *The Business Times*.

"At the same time organisations taking in interns should see this engagement as a critical exercise for 'reinstating' and 'espousing' their business model. They should put in place work scope with a balanced work and assignment rotation. Conducting feedback and getting suggestions from these interns may prove helpful and useful to progress the organisation's performance," she adds.

Mrs Tan-Collis also notes: "It may not be doable or practical to give interns all-round live exposure within the short timeframe of an internship. However, it is possible to give them an orientation of the organisation's business model and assignments or as an observer within the different departments."

Moving to the CSISG report, Mrs Tan-Collis says it is a very useful service performance barometer. "To have such findings of one's specific industry, be it tourism or F&B, is a good way to know how one is performing in the realm of customer service performance.

"At the same time, these two industries are very much linked. So a dialogue as organised by SMU's Institute of Service Excellence was a perfect way of being able to make some level of

comparison, know how well one is performing, share and learn about initiatives that have a positive outcome and effect not only for the customers, but also the employers and the organisations."

Mrs Tan-Collis says that the service credo – practice and beliefs – may mean different things to different organisations. The emphasis on "service delight" may also differ. But the key is to have this ethos clearly understood and embraced, and practised by all within the organisation, she adds.

Undoubtedly, more needs to be done to improve customer satisfaction in the F&B and tourism sectors, she says.

Delighting customers and clients should be looked at carefully. Businesses should ask themselves what they need to do and to improve so that they have more and more "happy and loyal customers", says Mrs Tan-Collis.

Further, businesses need to consider leveraging technology without compromising service and quality and more so in the areas where there is a need for human engagement, she adds.

At the same time, education and people development should be incorporated into the scope of training with career opportunities and advancement.

Rewards and incentives that are appealing to both the employees and loyal customers should be considered carefully, says Mrs Tan-Collis.



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