

# Get a feel for jobs early on, say bosses

## Employers keen to offer internships and conduct career talks in schools

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STUDENTS should be exposed to possible future careers as early as secondary school and go for internships to discover their interests.

This was a key suggestion of 20 employers in reaction to the Government's announcement on Wednesday that it will work with companies to plan for their future manpower needs.

Bosses said they are keen to offer more internships and also conduct career talks and lectures in schools.

"If we interest young people in our work while they are studying, they will be more likely to join us later," said Mr Dennis Ng, human resource director of industrial automation firm Rockwell.

Mr Tay Cheng Hoo, human resource director of German electronics firm Rohde & Schwarz, suggested that polytechnics and universities work with companies to design courses that train graduates with specialised skills needed by a particular industry.

For instance, his company struggles to hire engineering graduates with a strong grounding in radio frequency technology, which is used in mobile software.

"Few engineering graduates are trained in this area," he said.

However, on top of technical knowledge, students must pick up skills in other areas such as communication and teamwork in school, bosses said.

They also suggested that students hone interpersonal skills and learn how to use online re-



Singapore Management University student Brandon Ong (right) has gone on four internships in various industries, which helped him decide on a career in banking. Mr Kwok Wei Jie had a job attachment at the Economic Development Board and is now working there on a permanent basis. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

### EMPLOYERS SHARE THEIR VIEWS

#### CULTIVATING INTEREST

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– Mr Dennis Ng, Rockwell HR director

#### ALL-ROUNDERS

There's no point in having the paper qualifications but not being able to deliver in the workplace.

– Mr Brenton Ong, Concorde Hotel Singapore HR director

#### TRY AND SEE

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– Mr Alan Tan, owner of catering company Rasel

sources to deepen their knowledge in a certain area.

"There's no point in having the paper qualifications but not being able to deliver in the workplace," said Mr Brenton Ong, director of human resources at Concorde Hotel Singapore.

To help firms build up their talent pool, Mr Farid Khan, regional managing director of maritime firm Bourbon, suggested that the Government and firms work together to give out tuition grants or scholarships.

"We must give students incentives to join the companies," he said.

However, LSK Engineering stopped its sponsorship programme as workers tended to leave after completing their bonds. Its managing director Roger Heng disagrees that scholarship programmes guarantee that workers will stay on.

"When they come out from school they may not be sure of what they want," he explained.

To prevent job-hopping, bosses said that students should not be pigeon-holed by restricting the industries they are exposed to.

Mr Alan Tan, owner of catering company Rasel, said: "They should be able to try out a range of jobs from service, food and beverage or fashion design. Then they get a better idea of what they like or don't like."

While internships will help to raise awareness of different careers, one boss even suggested that TV programmes featuring less popular industries could help garner interest.

"Many people want to become chefs, maybe because there are so many celebrity chefs," said Mr Dominic Choy, director of projects at Hexacon Construction.

"Maybe they can film a TV drama about construction."

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