Don’t sell yourself short

When you really want a particular job, negotiate over a salary band that you would be satisfied with and show potential employers that you are flexible and can have an open discussion about the salary.

Money does matter

For Kelvin Poh Song Yang, 22, the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector he wants to go into should be able to pay him his expected salary. Most of these companies are big customers and have management trainee programmes with relatively high starting salaries for outstanding graduates.

He hopes to receive a starting salary of RM3,000, which is above the average starting salary of RM2,600 for fresh graduates, according to the Malaysian Employers Federation. He believes that the average salary for a management trainee in an FMCG company is above his expected salary of RM1,000.

He says he has basis this on information gathered at networking events he has attended while still in university.

“I think RM3,000 is slightly more than fair. In terms of my personal financial expectations,” he adds, saying that he wasn’t in debt and knows that his expenses would go up once he starts working.

Right now, his expenses hover around RM1200 a month and that is just as an International Business and Marketing student.

He says this amount is just enough to cover food, fuel, petrol, monthly phone bill and hanging out with his friends.

On whether a company could afford to pay such a high starting salary, Poh says that a company should be able to if they see the value in that candidate.

“On whether a company could afford to pay such a high starting salary, Poh says that a company should be able to if they see the value in that candidate. The Belanjawurka report said that a person would need around RM2,400 to live a frugal lifestyle and own a car. Poh says that having an opportunity to grow in a company is the second most important criteria he takes into account when deciding where to send his resume.

“I don’t have any full-time experience as a fresh graduate,” he adds.

Experience

through learning

Janice Chai Xin Hui, 21, believes that companies should give local graduates jobs instead of hiring expatriates with higher salaries. It is a known fact that companies have to pay expatriates more, includ- ing their benefit packages, for positions that can be filled by locals who are equally talented, she says.

“So why not hire a capable, local fresh graduate who can do the same job just as well?” she suggests.

Shamsuddin advises future graduates to enhance their language and soft skills, who usually command higher salaries, they should definitely be able to get better packages for locals.

The chance to grow will be the key point when Chai starts job hunting after graduation.

She says that the learning experience and growth opportunities are the most important to her.

She would even be willing to consider working in a different sector from her chosen public relations field if she saw the potential for growth.

“I would like, if possible, a balanced work environment whereby we’re not overworked but we’re challenged enough to actually grow and experience what it’s actually like,” she adds.

Although growth opportunities sit at the top of her list, she says she will turn down a starting job if the salary was much lower than her expected RM3500 per month.

Chai says she currently lives with her family and that is not sure whether she would have to rent her own place once she starts working.

“It would depend on the location,” she says, adding that she is also eye- ing jobs overseas.

Kaviraj still joins a company despite them not meeting my expected salary.
she explains.
She also says her future expenses would include a car loan, depending on how far she has to commute for work, insurance and meals, as her parents take care of the food expenses right now.

The industry is booming

Kevin Rames, 23, says the exponential growth of his chosen industry means that companies can afford to hire him at his expected salary. He says he expects to receive between RM2,500 to RM3,000 a month and wants to become either a sports journalist or sports psychologist.

"I think companies would be able to pay me this much, especially with the mixed martial arts industry booming right now," says the sports enthusiast.

"I'm qualified"

Nabilah Hiliya Hashim says she deserves to be compensated accordingly considering that she has both academic and industry experience.

"As a junior counsellor or therapist, I am expecting a range of RM2,000 to RM2,500 considering multiple aspects such as my expertise, resume and to cover my living expenses."

"Realistically, I don't think companies can afford to pay a fresh hire RM2,000 to RM2,500 a month but ideally, I would love for the company to actually meet my salary expectations," she says.

The 21-year-old adds that her job market research for human resource positions, the position she thinks hires the most psychology graduates, paints a very bleak future.

She says jobstreet has shown that salaries only range from RM1,700 to RM2,400 for fresh hires in the field.

"Seeing the low salary does put me off wanting to join this field but I guess for me, my passion lies in psychology," she adds.

She says she discovered that many companies offer lower-skilled positions.

"Opportunities for high-skilled jobs are very limited and competitive," she explains, adding that she needs a Master's degree to reach a goal of becoming a therapist.

Nabilah Hiliya says she wants to specialise in arts therapy which uses performing arts to treat patients.

"I chose to study psychology because it stems from a passion of interacting with human beings."

"Even though she may not earn her ideal starting salary, Nabilah Hiliya says she would not immediately turn down a job offer.

She, like most others her age, want to be in a friendly working culture that encourages career growth.

"I'm a psychology student so of course I would want an environment that fosters interactions with colleagues."

"I think the kind of work culture that I'm looking for in a company is one that emphasises on work-life balance and on mental health well-being or emotional wellbeing," she says.

"However, I think the salary does play a role, especially when the living expenses are just too high," she adds.

Nabilah Hiliya currently spends about RM1,500 a month as a student with most of her expenditure going towards rent and transportation.

"I'm living outside of campus, away from my parents and renting a room. I think I'll be doing the same when I start working."

"However, at my expected salary, I don't think it's enough as a living wage."

But she also acknowledges that the budget will need to be expanded once she starts working and things like loans, pocket money for her parents and personal savings coming into play.

"I don't think I will have a lot of savings left at the end of the month. I think I'll probably have RM100, which is not much per month."