

SPOTLIGHT

Only the experienced need apply

Hands-on experience is a must if you want to get a job — and keep it — in the information technology industry.

Students enrolled in information technology (IT) courses, should stop treating it as a passport to a dream job, human resource consultants have warned.

"Recruiters count on-the-job experience as a must," said divisional manager of recruitment consultants TMP Worldwide (formerly Morgan and Banks) Lee Beng Khim. "IT training is considered a plus only if you have the relevant experience."

Ms Annie Yap, managing director of recruitment firm GMP Technologies, pointed out that there were those who had enrolled in IT courses "out of a mob mentality or desperation", especially in the face of retrenchments and a shrinking economy.

This learning frenzy has even led some students to amass multiple diplomas and certifications before

even securing a job.

"This is impractical as students miss out on the on-the-job training," said Ms Yap. "They should pursue the necessary certifications only after they have gained some work experience and are sure that IT is the career for them."

EXPERIENCE COUNTS

Experience is especially crucial for those wanting to make a switch to an IT career.

Said Mr Arthur Loo, the managing director of Cron Computer School: "We're aware that many of the trainees in the PC hardware and software technicians' courses may not secure relevant jobs as soon as they finish their course. So, we have arranged for some of them to work part-time at PC repair shops to gain crucial hands-on experience."

IT professionals who've completed many of the high-end courses are fearing for their jobs, too, as skills that were in demand six months ago have suddenly fallen out of favour.

"Professionals skilled in Web technologies and Java, for example, have been severely hit," said Ms Yap.

The drop in demand, according to Mr Kevin Liang, director of recruitment firm EPS Consultants, was largely due to the dot.com crash.

"Java jobs are still available for those with experience, but there has been a sharp fall in demand compared to a year ago," he said.

A Java programmer for the past 18 months, Mr Edward Chow, 38, feels pressured to pick up a new skill. Last week, he signed up for a Microsoft .Net course (see story on Page CT17), the



Recruiters see IT training as a plus only if you have the relevant hands-on experience.

newest certification in town.

Java technology experts, however, emphasise that Java is far more than a programming language and it would be myopic to conclude that its demand has fallen drastically.

Mr Anton Ravindran, managing director of e-services and training firm, Genovate Technologies, said: "Java technology includes three major areas: Java 2 Standard Edition, (J2SE), Java 2 Enterprise

Edition (J2EE) and Java 2 Micro Edition (J2ME).

"J2SE may be a mature technology, however, J2EE and J2ME are still evolving and there is a huge demand for skilled professionals in these areas."