

EMPLOYMENT MARKET

'Over 40? Don't send us your resume'

With weaker job prospects, older job hunters turn to entrepreneurship seminars

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EVEN in good times, discrimination against older job seekers exists. So what more now that it is an employers' market?

Some recruitment firms told TODAY the trend has picked up. Some employers do

not want resumes from anyone above 40, said Ms Wendy Kwek, managing director of Career Express. Her firm has seen a "slight increase" in the number of such employers.

Two other employment firms, JobPlus and MDK Personnel Resources, confirmed that their clients prefer younger applicants.

"Some don't even want to see resumes from those who are 35," said Mr Kor Lai Hock, MDK's managing director. The company's clients include those in manufacturing,

engineering, and food and beverage.

The practice however is "nothing new", said JobPlus' director Alex Thong.

On the other hand, firms such as Adecco, Manpower, JobStreet and JobsDb said they have never received such requests from their clients who include multinational and blue chip companies.

Rather, would-be employers are now more demanding in terms of applicants having the relevant skills, said Adecco's strategic accounts director Yue Yin Mun.

With job prospects for older workers bleak, it is no surprise then that entrepreneurship seminars are doing a brisk business.

On Tuesday, there were three such events with turnouts of 120 and 100 for the two that were held by Executive Directions at International Plaza. The third was organised by Harriet International Network.

Those who were late — even if they had registered earlier — had to be turned away. It was standing room only.

"Compared to last year, I would say there's a 20- to 30-per-cent increase in the

number of people attending," said Ms Kwek of Career Express and a managing director of Executive Directions.

For two to three hours, the participants listened to various speakers extol the benefits of being their own boss. However, many balked at the cost of the courses which ranged from \$5,000 to more than \$7,000. More than half then left.

Mr James Chua, chief executive of Harriet's, said he was not surprised.

"Most people over 40 want something more stable. Asking them to suddenly become an entrepreneur may be too risky. They should start a small business, something that would give them \$3,000 a month and which they will be happy with."

One participant, Mr Sen — who only wanted to be known by his surname — was working in a bank before being laid off last year. He spent the past few months sending out resumes to no avail, so he decided to try the entrepreneurial route.

"What else is there for a 55-year-old to do?" said the father of a 16-year-old. "It's depressing being at home."

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(5 full days; 9am-6pm daily; excluding Sat / Sun)

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