More undergrads bag internships on their own

Job agencies see 30% rise; say it's good way to gain experience

BY SHERMAINE WONG

MISS Ng Chuin Song and Miss Eunyce Yap are interns with a difference.

MISS Ng, a fourth-year political science major at the National University of Singapore, has spent the past two months doing academic research in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

MISS Yap, a third-year student at Nanyang Technological University's School of Communication and Information, has been working at Quotient SG, a public relations firm.

Nothing unusual there, perhaps, but they are not doing internships to fulfill a course requirement, or to earn pocket money during the holidays. They have chosen to do so to give their resumes some muscle.

The two girls appear to be representative of a growing trend.

Employment agencies Youthink spoke to confirmed that there is an increasing number of students — about 30 per cent more compared to two years ago — taking the initiative to secure their own internship placements.

MISS Yap, who cold-called several PR agencies and publishing firms before landing a position at Quotient SG, said: "I didn't want jobs like waitressing because that wouldn't contribute to the career direction I'm looking to move into."

To bag her PMO internship, MISS Ng had to be in the top 10 per cent of her cohort, write a paper on terrorism to test her knowledge and analytical skills, then go through an interview before finally being selected from a list of 18 applicants.

"This internship allowed me to see what the civil service is like. I was also able to apply the research skills I learnt in school to my job," said the 22-year-old.

Despite all the effort she put into landing her place, MISS Yap had low expectations, having been told that interns often end up doing menial tasks.

But instead of making coffee and idling the photocopying, she was pleasantly surprised that her boss was willing to show her the ropes.

"The 22-year-old said: "She even spent money printing name cards for me. Her efforts caught me by surprise and made me realise that, in this line, every impression counts."

MISS Yap's boss took her to client meetings so that she could network and observe how real-life negotiations are carried out.

She even got to attend a magazine launch party at Raffles Hotel, where she mingled with the Who's Who of the advertising and PR industries.

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