Special Supplement

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN an employee and an employer is one that should last. You should hope that your union will work well and that you will be with the company for a few years at least. That being the case, you should invest time and energy in making sure that your intended employer can meet your professional requirements. Changing company is a time-consuming exercise and should not be taken lightly.

"Use print, online news, annual reports and independent surveys to find out everything you can about your potential employer," says Josh Goh, assistant director of corporate services at the GMP Group staffing and human resources consultancy. "Visit career fairs, recruitment drives and network to find out first-hand what people have to say about the company." You should be looking for information on the reputation of its products and services, its financial standing and its reputation with its staff, and should also have a good grasp of the challenges

the company might be facing, says Goh.

Find out how your prospective employer develops its people. Employees are a company's most valuable asset and training them is key to driving business goals. The more you can learn, the faster your career is likely to progress.

Good employers are those that provide employees with perpetual growth and development and allow them to take pride in their contributions and inventions, says Raj Kumar Paramanathan, director of executive placements at outsourcing, search and selection company CnetG Asia.

"The company should invest in its people and provide a range of development programmes," says Raj Kumar, noting that companies with the greatest shareholder value are those that have hired and developed innovative people.

Training is most effective when it's done side-by-side by an experienced mentor which gives the senior manager the chance to get to know the employee individually, says Neil Satterwhite, chief executive officer of employment services company Tiger Consulting Asia. "Training is an investment, and businesses must make the effort to reward and care for experienced employees so they don't take that investment somewhere else."

Open to feedback

Andreas Dorn, master coach with motivational organisation Asia Mind Dynamics, says that open communication with superiors should begin from the day the new employee walks in the door. This should involve regular discussions with next-level supervisors and ad hoc meetings with more senior managers.

"High-performing employees are in too much demand to let any opportunity for a discussion simply lapse. It is the ongoing conversation that keeps them engaged and valued," he says, adding that a good company will also welcome feedback from employees on how to improve itself. "If there is no feedback, there is no learning, and this ultimately leads to stagnation for both the individual and the company."

The size of your intended employer may not matter. A big company can normally offer higher remuneration, more security and more perks, but working for a smaller company has advantages too.

"Smaller companies usually have more freedom to implement creative solutions," notes Satterwhite.

"They also have other ways than remuneration to reward their staff," says Goh. He says that employees in smaller firms generally enjoy greater responsibilities, which in turn lead to a deeper understanding of the business and the development of valuable professional and personal skills in a shorter space of time. Achievements are more noticeable within a smaller company – when there are fewer voices, you get heard more easily, and when the small company grows, you will be well positioned for promotion to a greater role.

"Furthermore, the reporting line to the leadership is shorter and more visible," says Raj Kumar. "So the rewards can sometimes be greater and quicker."