INSPIRING WORK EXPERIENCE

Alumni Sharing Session

On the 29th December 2020, a talk titled "Inspiring Work Experience and COVID-19 Pandemic Challenge" was held and organized by the Technology and Information Systems (TIS) Department, School of Computing, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) from 10 A.M. to 11 A.M. The sharing session was hosted and moderated by Dr Johanna Ahmad, a senior lecturer of UTM and the speakers were Tan Yong Keong, Qistina Batrisyia bt Azman Shah, and Mohamad Zamarul Akmal Bin Mohd Hussin. In this talk, the 3 alumni from School of Computing shared their work experience, the techniques in getting a job, and the challenges that they face as employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The poster about the alumni sharing session by the TIS department.

Purpose of the talk

The aim of the talk was for the speakers to share their experiences with the students about how they became good in their careers. Therefore, they expressed how they managed to follow their vision and get that dream job. Other than that, the speakers also their tips about how to pick up new skills during the pandemic that will be useful on getting hired as companies especially those in the technology field value skills more than actual academic results.

In addition, the speakers also discussed on how they continue to gain inspiration to concentrate on their careers and pursuing their jobs. Therefore, it can be said that overall this talk was very motivating and important for all the students to get a glimpse of what they will expect when applying for jobs after graduating.

How to get hired?

Qistina reveals that being proactive, take initiative in whatever we are doing and not limiting ourselves when it comes to learning new things are some of the important tips that she gave on getting hired. Her way of learning new things is to voluntarily help other people and contribute to a lot of other projects.

Tan Yong Keong and Zamarul on the other hand suggested that the students should learn new technical skills and not just the fundamental knowledge which you can learn in university. Tan also said that understanding the concept of programming languages is key. Once one is able to master the concepts, they can apply them on other languages without any issues. Zamarul further explained that by gaining new technical skills from online courses such as Data Stars, edX, and LinkedIn Learning, he managed to stand out among the other interns during his internship period and landed a permanent job at that company.

Furthermore, Zamarul encourages the students to improve their soft skills as they are very important in every company. Having good communication skills, build teamwork with others and voice out opinions any discussion are key soft skills in successfully landing a job.

Is CGPA Important for Employment?

As for Dr. Johanna's experience, a private company typically prioritised technical skills compared to CGPA as her technical skills were tested during her interview. Therefore, in that context CGPA is not important. On the other hand, both CGPA and skills would be taken into account if a person was applying for job from a government agency. Meanwhile, the speakers who are working in the private sector agreed with Dr. Johanna.

However, Tan stated that CGPA was still an important criteria that the private companies would not consider any candidate with a CGPA less than 3.0. Therefore, it is also important for us to get somewhat decent results as Qistina also says that private sectors value attitude and practical skills more than CGPA but she suggests getting above 3.0 is a good start. Zamarul also stated that In his current company, they value more technical skills and soft skills instead of a top-notch CGPA.

Does CGPA Matter?

Reflection

Overall this sharing session has given us a brief overview of the challenges we may face after graduation in trying to get hired for a job. The speakers had given us many tips in order to succeed and the importance of being proactive in activities and doing tasks. This talk has also motivated us to do well in our studies as it may lead us to a brighter future. However, some weaknesses of the talk is that the talk was held for only a short period of time as we could have asked many more important questions regarding how our future could be shaped after graduating. But, alas, the strengths of this talk heavily outweigh the weaknesses and it has cleared many of our doubts and worries after graduating. This talk really motivated us to keep doing what we are doing and to not give up.

Competitions and Success

All 3 speakers especially Tan have joined numerous competitions such as hackathons during their university days that made them gain valuable experience and learned a lot of new things along the way. Tan loves to participate in competitions during university. With that he gained many achievements during that period and was able to get some professional skills and presentation skills that he ended up landing him a job as a Data Science engineer.

As being emphasized by all of the speakers, joining a competition was never about winning or losing but rather the experience gained from the process of the competition. Therefore, the speakers greatly encouraged the audience to give a shot in any kind of competition to earn new experience as when we lose in a competition, we win in terms of experience, expose to new skills and learn more from the winners. Tan also recommended some resources online that he used to use to polish his programming skills before a competition which includes the ever so popular website leetcode.com which he also used to prepare for technical interviews when applying for jobs.

Motivation for daily basis

Zamarul:

"Telling myself to always be grateful for having this chance to show my skills as not everyone can get this chance. Besides, I e drink lots of coffee to keep myself stay motivated and awake"

Tan:

"I always try my best to create something in my project so I could dedicated myself to contribute for the others"

Qistina:

"My love for the job always motivates me to do better".

Summary

It can be summed up that the current COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone under the sun no matter what background they are from. During this sharing session, each speaker has shared their experience from graduating leading up to them entering the workforce to have successful career. One of the overlapping themes that can be observed by all speakers is to be rather proactive by speaking out our opinions ,and not just let those opinions sit on the shelf collecting dust. Basically, they encouraged the audience to have proper soft skills which can be useful in getting hired. Therefore, it can be seen that communication, skills and experience is the key to success when it comes to working or getting a job and being successful.

WONG HUI SHI   A20EC0169

OMAR MOHAMED   A20EC4047

MOHAMAD HAZIQ ZIKRY   A20EC0079

CHEAH YAU KHIN   A20EC0185

LAI CHEE YEE   A20EC0199