

Agencies finding it hard to help job seekers

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PETALING JAYA: Job agencies are facing "trying times" in this economic downturn, as more people are fighting for limited positions available in the market.

Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director Shamsuddin Bardan said agencies were seeing an increased number of job seekers while the number of vacancies had been greatly reduced.

"It will be more difficult for agencies to help job seekers secure new jobs as employers are not recruiting during the economic slowdown," he told *StarBiz*.

He said the economic downturn had resulted in employees being retrenched as other cost-cutting measures failed to show positive results.

"The main industry affected by the downturn is the manufacturing sector, especially electronics and electrical, textiles, automotive and auto-related industries and construction sector," he added.

He said jobs that did not pay any basic salary such as those mainly related to insurance and mutual funds (which are commission-based) would be popular during the downturn.

Shamsuddin said agencies could



Shamsuddin Bardan

direct job seekers to other industries such as plantation and services.

"Job agencies should also provide counselling so that job seekers change their perception of the plantation industry and are more willing to accept a lower pay compared with what they were getting from their previous jobs," he said.

MEF disclosed last month that more than 10,000 Malaysians have been made jobless since Jan 1 this year.

Talent2 International Ltd director for South Asia Leigh Howard said the major challenge facing agencies was



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the management of increased volume in candidates.

"They will need to be better at managing candidate expectations and assisting those urgently looking for work," he said.

Besides export-orientated industries, other sectors such as construction and banking would also find it difficult to get over this period without some sort of downsizing, he said.

He said recruitment consultants

had to be honest with job seekers on their job prospects. "It is better to tell the candidates during the interview if they are not suitable for the respective positions rather than give them false hope," he said.

Howard urged employees to be the "exceptional one" as being indispensable was always a good career strategy to prevent being retrenched.

"It is a good time to start monitoring your spending now and make

sure you are saving cash in case you lose your job," he says.

He asked people to clean up their resumes, update their details and think about a list of people they could send their resumes to if they got retrenched.

A spokesman for a local online job recruitment agency said fewer job advertisements would be put out during the hard times and this in turn would affect job agencies as many derived revenue from companies posting vacancies with them.

"Offering more value to the company and being more productive by being able to multi-task is one of the ways to prevent getting retrenched," he said, adding that being flexible about pay and bonuses, working hours and even location of work were some key things to keeping the job.

Consulting firm Watson Wyatt Malaysia human capital group practice leader Sunny Khoo said some financial institutions had already embarked on rightsizing with the potential view of downsizing their workforce.

He said companies should continue providing training for their employees as those that invested in continuous training (especially in areas that were critical to the business) stood to reap the benefits when the economy bounced back.