

# A positive mindset is key to seizing opportunities from reskilling programmes

Companies favour factors like having a growth mindset, willingness to learn, related domain knowledge and the ability to connect with current employees and other stakeholders

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**Singapore**  
THE disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic could boost employers' willingness to consider unconventional employment formats – including taking advantage of the huge hiring incentive for workers 40 years and above, announced during the Fortitude Budget.

But industry watchers said job seekers too have to be willing to adapt their mindset to grasp these opportunities.

While digital disruption has been a mainstay in recent years, the Covid-19 pandemic has further led to many job functions being made redundant, Kelvin Seah, a senior economics lecturer at the National University of Singapore, said.

The silver lining, however, is that many more job opportunities are likely to arise from these developments, Dr Seah said.

Siddharth Mehta, partner and business leader at human resources consultancy Mercer Singapore, noted that the pandemic has accelerated many employers' mindset change about a digitised workforce and a digitised business model.

This means there will be more jobs with a digital element in the near future, and these will either be newly

created or transformed from existing jobs, in terms of how products and services are delivered, Mr Mehta said.

"So to that extent, what it's done definitely is spurred the employers and the workplaces to be different, and that therefore means new skill sets will be required," he said.

It's timely then, that close to 100,000 opportunities in jobs, traineeships and skills training will be created with the help of a S\$2 billion SGUnited Jobs and Skills Package announced at the Fortitude Budget.

Among them are more than 14,000 reskilling opportunities for mid-career individuals. Employers will also receive a 20 to 40 per cent wage support for six months if they hire a reskilled worker.

In fact, reskilling programmes have in recent years become a regular feature in Singapore's employment landscape.

About 14,500 Singaporeans have benefited from "Place and Train" programmes since 2016, while some 31,000 local job seekers have found work through the Adapt and Grow initiative in 2019, according to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM). More than half of those in the latter group were aged 40 and above.

Observers are thus optimistic that the government's latest support targeted at mid-career individuals will



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bear fruit. Dr Seah believes these programmes will go some way in reducing structural unemployment in Singapore.

Wong Wen Shun, managing director for South-east Asia at tech consultancy ThoughtWorks, is hopeful that the measures will create a pipeline for tech talent, since demand

for them is likely to continue growing.

Mr Mehta said the government's wage support is particularly helpful. He said: "At the end of the day, (employers) are taking a risk on employees that have had very little job experience. They've certainly done training, but that training itself is not evidence

of demonstrable skills."

Although newly trained mid-career professionals are likely to cost more than fresh graduates, employers gain other advantages when hiring them, as they would have transferable skills from their old careers, industry watchers said.

"These are likely to include general workplace skills, including project management, presentation and communications, and leadership, all of which typically fresh graduates have yet to learn," said Walter Theseira, an economist from the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

The Singapore Management University conducts an international trading professional conversion programme, which finance professor Annie Koh said has yielded positive feedback from employers in the last two and half years. Prof Koh said companies favoured factors such as having a growth mindset, willingness to learn, related domain knowledge and the ability to connect with current employees and other stakeholders.

What's more important however, is that mid-career switchers adopt a positive mindset. Jaya Dass, managing director for Malaysia and Singapore at recruiter Randstad, said what employers are looking for is their readiness to unlearn and learn.

Those who are bitter about having

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to change will end up raising doubts about their dedication and willingness to accept the new normal, Ms Dass said, and this is what makes such candidates difficult to place.

"The people who are able to look at what happened to them, put it behind them, move and grow from it and use it as an opportunity to learn new things and experience new things in life, they come across with a completely different energy and attitude, and as a result, employers and recruiters alike are very attracted to that," Ms Dass said.