



Investing in young talent

BY JANICE LOW

The management of Leeden Limited, a Singapore-listed company, believes it is vital to invest in young employees and to nurture them – an approach that sets it apart from many companies who feel that recruiting fresh graduates and training them can be a time-consuming affair.

companies and contractors, shipbuilding and ship repair yards, oil rig, platform, jacket and floating production storage offloading systems as well as steel and pipeline fabricators from across Asia.

Headquartered in Singapore, Leeden Limited has grown with its customers, extending its footprint to Malaysia and

Mr Steven Tham (left), Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Leeden Limited, talks about one of the most important assets of the company – its human resources.

Leeden Limited, however, hires about eight to nine fresh graduates each year. Its Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Mr Steven Tham believes that as a corporate citizen, he has a responsibility to groom the next generation of employees as "human resources is of upmost importance to the company".

Incorporated in 1964 and listed on the Singapore Exchange Limited since 1975, Leeden Limited has progressed over the years from a reputable distributor of welding and safety products as well as a downstream industrial gas manufacturer and distributor, to become a value-added integration specialist for the marine, oil and gas industries.

Its customers include major oil and gas

Indonesia. The company has over 1,200 employees, and is aware of the importance of hiring the right candidate for each and every one of these roles.

Last year, Leeden Limited took the unprecedented step of hiring such a candidate and holding the position open for her until she finished her final year examinations (see box story). It was the first time in the company's 35-year history that it had made such a move.

SIM-RMIT Business (Management) graduate Carolyn Chong, who specialised in human resource management, had undergone a six-week internship with the company, where she impressed Mr Tham with her "can do" spirit and her ability to work both in a team and individually, and

continually pushing herself to give her best.

"During Carolyn's six-week internship with the company, she consistently showed that she was hardworking, committed and a fast learner. She completed the assigned tasks given despite the tight deadlines," said Mr Tham, who was convinced Ms Chong would be an asset to its human resources team.

Mr Tham believes that the SIM programmes tend to churn out students that are better able to fit into the workplace. "They are generally able to apply theoretical concepts to their workplaces," he said. This adaptability is due not just to the syllabus but also to SIM's efforts to expose its students to the corporate world through internship programmes, he added. ▽

The Leeden experience

For SIM-RMIT student Carolyn Chong, a six-week internship with Leeden last year led to a firm job offer, even though she had yet to complete her final examinations at the time. Ms Chong's internship was part of an ongoing initiative by SIM's Student Life and Services (SLS) Department to help interested students secure job placements relevant to their field of study. To ensure a good fit for both the student and the employer, SLS first assesses the students based on their grades, leadership skills as well as their records in co-curricular activities.

The programme was launched in 2003 and it has become a great hit with both students and employers. "I found the internship programme most helpful as it has provided me with an opportunity to learn

about organisational structure first hand," said Ms Chong. "I learnt a lot during those six weeks – things that text books do not cover, such as dealing with people."

The Leeden experience was not all about work. "It was great fun. The team was really tight and company events such as 'durian sessions', the annual dinner and Chinese New Year 'lou hei' dinner were most enjoyable," she recalled.

Ms Chong was not the only SIM graduate to join Leeden last year. With her was Mr Alvin Yeoh, who joined the company as a Finance Executive in August 2008. Mr Yeoh had graduated with a SIM-UOL Bachelor of Banking and Finance degree. "Looking back, I was pretty lucky to secure a job before the economic conditions

deteriorated," he said.

For Mr Yeoh, working life has been "very challenging and enjoyable so far". Having helpful colleagues and supportive bosses has helped tremendously, he said.

"Each day is a new learning experience where I am able to build on my knowledge and skills, as the job exposes me to a variety of different projects and tasks. It is wonderful to be finally able to put what I have learnt to good use."

Though fresh out of university, Mr Yeoh had some work experience through an internship with Molex Singapore, facilitated by SIM. "The internship programme allowed me to have a first hand experience of working life, enabling me to pick up skills and knowledge not found in textbooks," he said. ▽

The SIM Internship Programme

The SIM Internship Programme presents organisations with the opportunity to identify industry-ready talent to address their manpower requirements. Employers who are keen to participate in the programme can contact Ms Violet Tay at 6248-9204 or studentlife@sim.edu.sg.