

## Freshers and SMEs can make for a happy marriage

*Hiring fresh graduates can be a win-win situation for both SMEs as well as just-out-of-college job seekers, finds out **Gunja**.*

Nupur Maheshwari, just out of B-school, was in a dilemma. She had two job offers to choose from – one from a large listed company for the post of management trainee while the other was from a much smaller private limited company for the post of head of marketing. While the smaller company was offering a position of great responsibility and challenge – they were ambitiously expanding from being a local brand to spreading wings as a pan-India brand, the larger company was promising a substantially heftier pay packet. Which one to choose?

After much head scratching and a few phone calls to a close aunt, a senior HR professional, Nupur opted for joining the SME. “I have no regrets,” she says three years down the line. Graduates joining SMEs rather than corporate biggies or SMEs picking up qualified freshers to man posts of responsibility make a lot of business sense both ways, say hardened HR experts.

“Though SMEs cannot offer high salaries compared to large corporations, they can still offer a situation where a fresher can learn a wide range of skills and handle more responsibility compared with large corporations,” says Shafali Bahl Shah, Senior HR manager, PL Engineering Limited, Gurgaon.

“Graduates are looking for an environment in which they can polish their skills and SMEs can provide it as they require multitaskers,” says Rajesh Butta, MD, Takshila Learning Pvt. Ltd. “While working for SMEs, fresh graduates can get direct access to entrepreneurs and senior management which they may not enjoy while working in a large corporation,” he adds.



**Shafali:** Hiring freshers more cost effective for SMEs

The arrangement works well for SMEs too. “Hiring fresh graduates is a win-win situation for both freshers and the SMEs,” claims Shah. “Hiring freshers rather than more experienced personnel is not only more cost effective for SMEs but there are other benefits as well,” explains HR Consultant Anusha Seth, a post graduate in psychology who advises corporates on such issues as recruitment and training post.

“Freshers don’t come with preconceived ideas and they value the experience gained even in a small company. These graduates can be easily sculpted to the culture of the workplace. It’s, however, important to supervise them during the transition from student to full-time employee,” she says.

“Flat structures of SMEs are less bureaucratic and more informal which benefits fresh graduates as they can to intermingle with senior professionals and learn from their experience. Learning from such professionals is a major advantage to fresh graduates since this almost never happens in large organisations and is never taught in universities,” says Shah. The opportunity to take on major responsibilities in smaller companies also helps freshers to gain confidence and become more self-assured as managers, say both Shah and Seth.

“We can easily showcase our talent and creativity in a smaller company as compared to a larger one. Fresh ideas and thoughts are always welcomed by them and this can lead to a situation where they can entrust us with more responsible roles thereby helping us to grow as employees and individuals,” says Noopor who should know having already benefited from joining an SME rather than a larger listed company when fresh out of college.

Moreover, in big companies, senior employees are barely aware of the existence of new recruits, says Noopor. “Sometimes they ignore us whereas we can get first-hand experience from employees in small companies,” she says.

Not only do freshers come cheaper from a salary point of view, they often become vital contributors to the overall success of SMEs in the long run, points out Shah.

Whether hiring freshers will be a happy marriage for both bride and bridegroom – in this case SMEs and fresh graduates – ultimately depend on whether the SME realises the value of talent and how to leverage talent to achieve growth, the HR experts point out. “Hiring freshers only to get cheap labour can only end in a bitter divorce,” both Shah and Seth point out.

(The author is a staff reporter of *The FISME Factor*)