Never too late to learn

It is not impossible to juggle work and studies

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Most of us have probably thought of furthering our education at some point in life, but how many of us actually take the plunge? It may sound daunting, but studying while working part time takes some disciplines.

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

Firstly, consider why you are thinking of going back to school in the first place.

American professor Trung Tu Ching, the director of the Centre for Continuing and Professional Education and head of the General Studies Programmes and University Core Curriculum at USM said "Nothing skills usually yield modular courses to deepen their skills and knowledge in their current position or to prepare them for the next phase of their career.

Mr S. Vithakumaran, the executive chairman of PHE Academy said "Working adults often upgrade academically because they are keen on switching to a new career or exploiting a new job function. Hence, it makes sense to pick courses that are relevant and aligned with the company's requirements.

EXPAND YOUR OPTIONS

But if you are wondering if your current career suits you, or feel stuck or turned out, take the time to consider taking up other courses that are unrelated to your job.

Next by thinking of your interests, skills, interests and hobbies that could perhaps give you an alternative career option with some investment on your part.

Mr Vithakumaran said, "Thinking about what you really do will make the journey less arduous as there is an innate motivation to overcome challenges."

Dr Trung said, "The course you choose should be relevant to your profession. Learning is a lifelong journey. Some adults choose courses for personal development and interests. Taking up a course for your career is only one aspect of personal growth.

ADVANCE OR TRANSIT

To make a more informed decision, it is necessary to be armed with relevant and timely knowledge about one's industry, and for Trung, "My advice about your career’s trends. Decide if you’re going to be a master in this, or if there is going to be a shift in focus within the industry. If so, see if you’re ready to go back to school to pick modules that prepare you for that shift.

"You do not necessarily need to take up a degree again. Bite-sized modular courses are useful for furthering knowledge or transitioning to new careers.

Mr Vithakumaran said, "Many individuals take up a course that complements their work. But there are also those who decide to make a mid-career switch. If you have chosen a course that is completely unrelated or different from your current job, you have probably decided to make a conversation.

Upgrading academically gives access to new opportunities. Whether you are seeking over a career transition or thinking of furthering your education, being ready when the opportunity presents itself gives you an advantage.

HOW TO BALANCE WORK AND STUDY

1. Pace yourself. Do not be too ambitious. Choose a minimum of four modules so as not to feel too overwhelmed.

2. Understand what is required. Always check how flexible the course is, as you can make adjustments later on and required.

3. Check if the curriculum scheduling before enrollment. Courses with less flexible enable you to devote full attention to one subject.

4. Go online. Take if course modules are available online. This comes in handy if you are unable to attend lessons.

5. Plan and prepare. Pay to spend some time mapping out your activities and schedule. This will make it easier to pursue your learning effectively.

6. Stay positive. You have not studied for many years, the going could be tough initially. Do not give up.

7. Form a support network. Keep your family members, friends, colleagues and bosses informed about your destination return to school. They will be more understanding if you need to cancel family or work commitments due to your studies.

Dr Trung said, "Support from your family and co-workers is crucial, as you will have deadlines for assignments and examinations that will affect family and work time.

Success and course completion does not come easy.

Mr Vithakumaran said, "Having supportive family members, colleagues and supervisors, and classmates and becomes definite assets.

Contact Selinda Wan on bwansg@phc.edu.sg for more information, and be willing to work closely with classmates and lecturers, and seek counsel or assistance."