

Continued from p. 9

“So I think for those young people, it’s quite important for them to actually check contracts ... just to make sure that they are in compliance and are not breaching anything.”

This Week in Asia spoke to the region’s side hustlers to find out their hopes, fears and determination to make work, work for them.

THE PAMPER PARTY ORGANISER

For five days a week, Meg Rutherford is a commercial lawyer, but come the weekend she styles children aged four to 14 at “pamper parties”.

The 26-year-old has worked as a lawyer for two-and-a-half years, and has been working at a mid-sized law firm in Christchurch, New Zealand, for a year. But after buying a house with her partner last year, she felt the financial burden begin to weigh heavily.

“Things are more expensive now than ever, and, no doubt, buying a house increased our expenses, even if it was for the better,” she said.

“The thought of looking for more income was also just spurred on by the fact that we are going into a recession and things are just so uncertain at the moment.”

Rutherford reached out to an old employer who used to organise pamper parties for children.

When the employer told her she had stopped the business, Rutherford took a punt on starting it up on her own.

“I thought to myself, ‘I could do that,’” she said. “It wasn’t that expensive to set up, and I already had some experience doing it before, so it made sense to start it up again as my own business.”

Rutherford launched an Instagram page to promote her pamper-party business in March, offering at-home manicures, pedicures, hair styling and other services to children between the ages of four and 14.

Social media was the hook for anyone starting a new business, Rutherford said, and had been a crucial tool to expand her reach.

“I can advertise that I’m doing these pamper parties but unless someone gets a visual of what I offer through photos and social-media posts, then it is quite hard to get people to engage with you,” she said.

BEATING THE RAT RACE

“For me, school was not the priority,” said Singaporean final-year business student Chang Cho Yew, 24. “I wanted to venture out and do something by myself.”

And so PropUp was born, a firm that produces promotional real-estate videos.

PropUp was not the first idea he landed on with his partners, Chang said, but after several setbacks and failed attempts, they finally found something that stuck.

“We are a real-estate video production company today but when I started the company, we were trying to do other things like [leveraging] virtual reality in marketing,” he said, adding that it had taken a long time to carve out a niche for himself.

One of the toughest challenges for Chang was having to juggle his studies and work, which resulted in his grade point average taking a hit, prompting him to consider taking a year-long leave of absence from school.

But Chang backed himself to make a good go at his business, not only for the extra income but also as a step up the ladder in the city state’s competitive job market.

“I got myself out of the rat race. I got myself out of competing with a bunch of undergraduates fighting for the same job,” he said. “There is always money out there, as long as you can communicate with people and you can sell.”

Now Chang does not want to stop at PropUp and he has several new business ideas. And he said those meant he might even drop out of school.

DESIGNING A DREAM

A drama teacher at a secondary school in the Indonesian city of Bandung, 25-year-old Rizky said his real passion lay elsewhere.

“I wanted to do a job in something creative and use my (visual arts) degree,” he said.

But after receiving job rejections for graphic-design roles for almost a year, he decided it was time to switch gears and find a steady income. He got a job at a local secondary school, teaching theatrical arts.

“My father has passed away, and my mother makes a small income from a food-catering business,” Rizky said, requesting to go by his first name, as secondary

RIGHT:
ASPIRING
SINGER-
SONGWRITER
JOSHUA
BARTHOLOMEW;
BELOW: CHANG
CHO YEW
(CENTRE) WITH
TEAMMATES
FROM PROPUP;
VANESSA NEO
AND CALVINA
THENDERAN
OF HOM.

Photos: Handout

