

## Students: Take this job and shove it

By MARK SCHREIBER

Flash (June 19)

Each year, Japan's major corporations recruit university students through a system known as *naitei*, which ensures that the best and the brightest already have jobs lined up well in advance of their graduation.

After the collapse of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, however, corporate hiring entered a decade-long decline, during which new graduates outnumbered positions available. But with the recovery of the Japanese economy and imminent retirement of large numbers of baby boomers, hiring has picked up, and students, benefiting from a seller's market, have begun turning down prearranged jobs left and right.

These "naitei resignations," reports **Flash**, have risen to a staggering 68.6 percent in the consumer credit and leasing sector. And even prestigious firms such as banks and securities brokerages are aghast to be getting the boot from about half their new recruits.

One reason, according to Tokyo-based job consulting and recruitment firm Gusiness K.K., is that over half the students it surveyed conclude naitei agreements with more than one company; 15 percent said they signed up with three or more.

In its own survey of 800 such students, the magazine found that rather than such factors as salary, company reputation or fringe benefits, the reasons for turning down the jobs included "company lacks a good future," with 14.8 percent and "job appears boring" with 14.6 percent.



Even more bizarre, perhaps, was the response cited by 7.8

percent of the students who felt the company's interviewer "made a poor impression." Talk about the shoe being on the other foot . . .

"Starting with the reception, the company left me unimpressed," sniffs one, a senior at Hokkaido University, about his decision not to join a member of the NTT Group. "I felt pessimistic about its future."

Be as it may, this surge of refusals is playing havoc with personnel managers.

"If more than half of the new recruits turn down job offers, personnel managers are put on the spot," remarks Norifumi Mizogami, a journalist who covers employment issues. "So they have no choice but to put their own personal feelings aside and fervently try to sign them up."

To win over the new recruits' hearts and minds, some companies have resorted to innovative tactics.

"Before the second-stage interview, one manufacturer of construction materials has arranged for a 'reverse interview,' " says Mizogami. "The prospective recruits go out drinking and discuss the company one-on-one with 'old boys,' (i.e. veteran workers). If the students like what they hear, then they proceed to the second interview."

Other firms, however, don't appear the least bit inclined to change their ways just to coddle these young whippersnappers.

"We're not interested in kids who think they can start raking in 10 million yen a year while still in their 20s," a personnel manager at a major trading house tells **Flash**. "We'll make them serve a 10-year apprenticeship doing menial tasks. This is how we nurture a *shosha-man* (trading-company employee), and we've no intention of changing how we do things."

A personnel manager at a financial institution, meanwhile, lamented the declining quality of the young people he's expected to recruit.

"These kids leave a lot to be desired in terms of their ethics, morality and sense of public duty," he complains. "Unless they're interested in something, they have no desire to do it."

The Japan Times: Sunday, June 10, 2007  
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