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WoW fan? You'll still get hired here

Bosses here don't mind hiring gamers as long as they do their job well

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COULD your devotion to a video game cost you a lucrative new job?

Video gamers in the United States are now asking if their hobbies could make them unemployable, following news reports that some headhunting firms had been told not to hire World Of Warcraft (WoW) players.

The reason: WoW fans are reportedly less committed to their jobs and spend their nights playing instead of resting.

WoW, the world's most popular online game with over 11 million players, has more than 30,000 players here, according to its Singapore distributor, AsiaSoft.

In Singapore, recruitment firms and industry experts have not seen such an issue raise its head - yet.

There may have been "individual cases" of absenteeism and underperformance due to game addiction, but it is not a widespread problem here, said the Singapore Human Resources Institute's executive director, Mr David Ang.

Headhunting firm GMP Group has not had any clients turn down candidates who play WoW or other similar games such as MapleStory and EverQuest; no client hiring such candidates has complained about their performance either, said its chief executive officer Annie Yap.

This, she said, is because "Singaporeans are generally more pragmatic in thinking and attitude" and will not allow their hobby to get in the way of their work.

That said, the human resources sector is aware that gaming addiction can be a real problem, said Ms Yap, and as games get "more engaging" the problem may become "more pronounced".

While gaming in moderation is an "effective form of relaxation and stress relief", those who "lose control of the amount of time and energy" and stay up late feeding their addiction "would not be able to concentrate and deliver quality work", she said.

Undergraduate Eugene Neubronner plays EverQuest 2 for 11/2 hours on weekday nights, and from 2am to 6am every Sunday, which leaves him "in less than peak condition" the day after, he readily admitted. He intends to cut back when he finds a job, in recognition of the toll his hobby takes on him.

Mr Neubronner, who graduates next May, has “no problem” telling prospective employers he enjoys such games, citing benefits like how he picked up leadership, project management and improved motor skills, via gaming.

For now, telling a prospective employer that one plays video games “would not raise alarm bells”, and gamers “should not feel the need to lie...dishonesty is not a condonable way to increase one’s chances of landing a job”, said Ms Yap.

Ultimately, a candidate’s ability is far more important than how he spends his free time, she said.

Mr Ang agrees. “Employers should evaluate staff on their performance, whether the candidate meets the job expectations and key performance indicators.”

And, he added, many other things can get in the way of productivity, so it is unfair to single out online gaming.

In some cases, gaming can be the ticket to a hot job. Gaming peripherals maker company Razer, for example, hired a hardcore WoW player to front its online outreach programmes four months ago.

The candidate’s background, said the firm’s vice-president for marketing Ryan Chua, helped her reach out to the company’s target market on an “intimate” level a non-gaming marketer could not match.

That said, the firm is not keen to fill every other position with hardcore gamers, or those with an obsession for anything else for that matter, said Mr Chua.

Globally, online games have become increasingly popular and for some, their devotion does not seem to pose a problem. For example, Wharton law professor Kevin Werbach, a hardcore WoW player, has been asked by US President-elect Barack Obama to conduct a review of its technology regulator, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

But gaming has been blamed for health, career and academic problems.

In Sweden, a 15-year-old collapsed after playing WoW for 24 hours and last week, FCC head Deborah Tate said game addiction was “one of the top reasons for college dropouts”.

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