

ROBERT WALTERS FMCG MARKET UPDATE

HALF-YEARLY MARKET UPDATE

ACCOUNTING & FINANCE

- High demand for candidates with tax planning and advisory experience remains, with strong tax candidates continuing to demand a premium in the market. This is due to recent changes in tax legislation and the fact that many companies have relocated their regional headquarters to Singapore due to grants and incentives provided by the EDB.
- Internal auditors are still highly sought after from junior to senior levels. This is particularly challenging for roles that require intensive travel.
- As many organisations face headcount restrictions or become more cautious about hiring, the market is experiencing an increase in the number of contract opportunities. It is also becoming more common for employers to start an employee on a contract basis, with the view of converting the role into a permanent position.
- Demand for candidates with FMCG experience remains consistently strong. This is because the fast-paced and demanding nature of the sector tends to mould its incumbents into highly adaptable and reliable candidates. It is therefore not uncommon for finance candidates within the FMCG sector to be hired by other sectors.
- Due to the nature of the industry, the FMCG sector remains very resilient and is not as affected by the current recession. In fact, some FMCG organisations have seen increases in sales. For example, many food and beverage businesses have seen increases in revenue due to consumers increasing household spend rather than eating out.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Hiring for HR professionals within the FMCG industry has slowed considerably despite slight pick-up in the last month. There has also been a stronger emphasis on internal transfers.
- There is a strong push for local / Asian HR talent in key strategic positions. Despite current market conditions, the pool of such candidates remains limited.
- While HR professionals emphasise on the development of talent within their respective organisations, they tend to neglect their own development. Senior HR leaders need to place greater emphasis on developing their own HR teams.
- The FMCG industry ranks in the top three favourable industry sectors sought after by HR professionals contemplating their next career move.
- HR Business Partners at junior to mid levels remain in demand and the HR market in general lacks candidates within the S\$100k and S\$120k salary range. As the market recovers, it is anticipated that there will be a talent war for candidates at this level.



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IT COMMERCE (PERMANENT POSITIONS)

- IT job opportunities continue to be strong at the mid to senior level, with salaries ranging between S\$100k to S\$200k.
- Opportunity is particularly prevalent for companies setting up Centres of Excellence (COE) for ERP in Singapore, therefore leading to an increase in roles such as ERP Program/Project Managers, Functional Consultants and Programmers.
- IT outsourcing to third party vendors also remains high as companies reduce overhead costs by delivering services with smaller headcounts. IT outsourcing is particularly prevalent in service delivery and vendor management areas such as desktop/helpdesk support, call centre, data centre and telecommunications management.
- Companies are also looking for candidates with experience across IT and business functions; with salaries ranging between S\$120k to S\$150k for positions such as Supply Chain Manager and Business Analyst.
- The overall outlook for IT professionals within the FMCG sector remains positive, with companies hiring for both new and replacement positions.

IT COMMERCE (CONTRACT POSITIONS)

- IT contracting staff continue to be a preferred recruitment choice for many organisations due to the flexible manner in which IT manpower resources provide their skills for projects, especially for IT services and consulting companies. In the first half of 2009, we observed a cautious approach towards hiring for IT contract staff, with many hiring decisions based on short to mid term plans rather than long term strategies. Skills in infrastructure, ERP, delivery and support positions have been the most sought after contract positions.
- Commerce industries that continue to hire IT contract staff include FMCG companies that have committed to long term projects prior to the current economic downturn in technology areas such as infrastructure virtualisation/consolidation projects as well as ERP system rollouts and migrations.
- Skilled contract staff with experience reviewing and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of outsourced IT operations have seen increased demand as companies look to review internal and external IT spend and cost efficiency in view of current market conditions.

SALES & MARKETING

- Companies that have traditionally outsourced the sales and distribution of their products are starting to establish their own direct presence, hiring for one or two key positions with the view of a full-fledged office in the mid-term.
- FMCG candidates continue to be sought after other industries. This includes both sales and marketing candidates who are valued for their strong channel management and rigorous marketing experience.
- We are starting to see increased demand for more specialised functions such as customer marketing as well as shopper insights and innovations.
- There is still a strong demand for sales and brand management candidates at the mid level.
- Organisations are generally hiring between the salary levels of S\$80k to S\$150k per annum.



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SECRETARIAL & SUPPORT

- With the market starting to show signs of optimism, demand for qualified secretaries and executive assistants is starting to increase.
- The demand for candidates with MNC experience remains high and in addition to secretarial skills, organisations are looking for candidates with stable career histories and solid secretarial experience.
- Due to head count restrictions, some companies are turning to temporary/contract and/or temporary to permanent hiring strategies due to the flexibility these arrangements offer. This approach allows companies to employ staff on a full time basis for a period of time and offer permanent employment later, when both parties are keen to continue the working relationship.

SUPPLY CHAIN, PROCUREMENT & LOGISTICS

- Many companies are starting to appreciate the importance of supply chain management (SCM). There is also a notable shift in approach as companies now focus more on the level of responsiveness, flexibility and adaptability involved in ensuring product availability to end customers instead of just focusing on lowering cost.
- Global trends like varied consumer patterns, expectations and income levels have also led to mounting competition, particularly in the rapidly evolving Asian consumer markets.
- The FMCG sector has experienced a heightened emphasis on transforming supply chain models to emphasise more on customer focused areas.
- Supply chain professionals who exhibit results in managing and optimising complex regional supply chains, and who are able to address and drive improvements in key areas such as inventory optimisation, enhanced planning and forecasting, competitive processes and best practices cultivation as well as strategic and coordinated sourcing are in particular demand. This is especially the case if he/she is able to understand the complexities and challenges within a global scale.
- Noticeably in Asia, most FMCG supply chain professionals who have risen up the ranks to senior management for their in-country supply chain functions are seen to have little exposure to other regional offices and practices. These professionals are often not equipped or primed for transition into a complex regional supply chain environment. Isolated within their own country functions, it is common for these individuals to be not as competent in terms of dealing with the multiple countries, cultures and complexities that a regional role entails. This has led to many FMCG organisations sourcing for regional candidates outside the industry. This also indicates that FMCG organisations should look to introducing learning and development programs that progressively prepare junior supply chain staff for regional roles in the future.



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