



PHOTO: NUS

Returning to her first love

A Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis allows Ms Teresa Siah to switch from her human resources job to a career in information technology

Lynn Seah

MS TERESA Siah always had an interest in information technology (IT) but she was unable to get a place in the computer science programme when she was doing her first degree at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

So she studied economics and statistics instead, and after graduation, she drifted into a career in human resources where she spent the next decade or so.

However, her love for computers stayed alive.

In 2009, she decided to take a part-time spe-

cialist diploma in web development technology programme at a polytechnic for personal enrichment.

She did well in the course, boosting her confidence in her ability to hit the books again despite having left school many years ago.

"More importantly, I also realised that I still have a passion for IT," she says.

During that period, her husband learnt about a Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis programme that was designed for non-IT graduates like her, and encouraged her to go for it.

Conducted by the Institute of Systems Sci-

ence (ISS) at NUS, the programme was a full-time course for 11 months.

At that time, she had already been at her human resources job for more than 10 years and wanted a change, so with the support of her husband, she signed up for the course in 2010.

She graduated in August last year and has been working since as a software engineer at NexLabs, a provider of intelligent technologies to manage digital content.

She got the job offer in June, before she even completed the course.

The break she took from work to go for further studies has turned out to be a worthwhile investment.

"I have always wished that I could be in the IT industry, and this course has made it possible," she says.

Her advice to those who are thinking of doing the same to make a career switch is to take the plunge sooner rather than later.

"It is always easier to do a switch when you are younger. The opportunity cost would be lower," she says.

For those who want to make a switch to the IT line, she recommends the Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis programme at ISS.

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— Ms Teresa Siah (above left), software engineer, NexLabs

She enjoyed the assignments and projects in the course, in particular the ones in the Application Development Life Cycle (ADLC) and the programming modules.

She explains: "In ADLC, we got to design systems based on a specific case study. The same case study was used throughout and we could see the connectivity from one module to the next."

She also liked the hands-on experience in coding that the programming modules gave her. "The projects set were practical and meaningful," she says.

The projects included developing an e-commerce website and web inventory system.

Students had to work in teams for projects. "Besides learning the technical skills, we also learnt some soft skills, for example, teamwork, presentation skills and the cultural differences when working with teammates from different countries."

Her class of about 70 comprised students from a mix of nationalities.

She is impressed with the lecturers in the programme, who were all full-time staff of ISS.

"They were very knowledgeable and sincere in wanting to help us succeed," she recalls.

"If you took your work to a lecturer and asked for feedback, he would take the trouble to read through and tell you which portion was well done and which portion could be improved, and then share ideas on how it could be improved."

"I'm impressed with their level of commitment."

Apart from lectures, workshops and projects, the programme included a five-month industry attachment coordinated by ISS. Some of the students ended up with job offers from the companies they were attached to.

Ms Siah is now looking forward to carving a future for herself in the IT industry.

"While ISS has given me the basic skills, there's still a lot to learn. So my focus now is to learn as much and as fast as I can, and do a good job," she says.

PROGRAMME

Graduate Diploma in Systems Analysis

ORGANISED BY

Institute of Systems Science,
National University of Singapore

SUITABLE FOR

Graduates who want to equip themselves with the latest IT knowledge and skills, including those from non-IT disciplines who wish to enter the IT industry

DURATION

11 months, full-time

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS

April 30, 2012 for August 2012 intake

WEBSITE

www.iss.nus.edu.sg/postgrad