

# BI-ANNUAL LOCAL INTELLIGENCE REPORT

## *Southeast Asia & Oceania*

### Recent Employer Interactions

- **Technology**
  - **Google:** Hiring remains highly selective, with limited headcount growth in the region. Strong emphasis on problem-solving ability, data literacy, and evidence of impact.
  - **ServiceNow:** Continued hiring in enterprise solutions, customer success, and digital transformation roles. Strong interest in candidates with SaaS exposure, process optimization experience, and stakeholder management skills.
  - **Grab:** Hiring cautious in Q1; priority on candidates with prior SEA market exposure
  - **TikTok/ByteDance:** Workforce reductions observed across several markets in early January 2026. Hiring appetite in the region has cooled, and ongoing recruitment processes may be impacted. Students should approach applications cautiously and avoid relying on TikTok/ByteDance as a primary target in the short term.
  - **Shopee (Sea Group):** Uneven hiring across functions with strong demand in commercial and operations roles, while central strategy and corporate functions remain highly competitive.
  - **Amazon:** Selective hiring continues, primarily for operations, program management, and business roles. Interview processes remain rigorous, with strong emphasis on leadership principles and data-driven decision-making.
  - **Amazon Web Services (AWS):** Hiring focused on cloud, solutions architecture, and customer success roles. Preference for candidates with technical literacy, client-facing capability, and exposure to cloud ecosystems.
- **Financial Services**
  - **HSBC:** Selective hiring for commercial banking, wealth management, and compliance roles. Emphasis on client-facing capability, regulatory awareness, and cross-border experience.
  - **Citi:** Early-career hiring remains active through structured graduate programs. Competition is high, with strong preference for candidates with prior internships and quantitative or analytical skill sets.
  - **J.P. Morgan:** Internship pipelines remain the primary route into the firm. Full-time hiring is limited and highly selective, particularly in markets outside Singapore.
  - **Airwallex:** Continued hiring in product, operations, and commercial roles. Strong preference for candidates with fintech exposure, fast-growth environment experience, and comfort operating in cross-border contexts.
- **Consulting**
  - **KPMG:** Confirmed openness to hiring candidates without accounting degrees or background, particularly for advisory, consulting, and transformation-related roles. Emphasis placed on transferable skills, analytical capability, and relevant project or internship experience rather than academic background alone.

- **Boston Consulting Group:** Selective consulting hiring with strong preference for local candidates returning to Southeast Asia and international candidates keen in building dept within the region, demonstrating structured problem-solving skills, strong analytical capability, proactiveness, clear long-term motivation for consulting.

- **FMCG**

- **Procter & Gamble (P&G):** Structured internship pipelines with existing work authorization remain the primary entry point. Strong conversion potential for high-performing interns, particularly in brand management and supply chain
- **Unilever:** Continued focus on leadership development programs and early talent pipelines. Emphasis on agility, cross-functional thinking, and sustainability exposure.
- **L'Oreal:** Early-career and internship hiring remains active, particularly in marketing, digital, and commercial roles. Strong preference for candidates with brand-building exposure, consumer insight capability, and local market understanding.

- **Healthcare**

- **Johnson & Johnson:** Early-career pipelines remain active across pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Strong interest in candidates with hybrid science-business profiles.
- **Siemens Healthineers:** Selective hiring in operations, digital health, and project management roles. Technical literacy combined with business acumen is increasingly important.
- **Zuellig Pharma:** Recently launched its Leadership Development Program – looking for candidates with at least 5 years of professional work experience prior to MBA studies and have work authorization in Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam. Regional hiring focused on commercial operations, supply chain, and market access functions. Strong interest in candidates with exposure to healthcare distribution and emerging markets in Asia.

### Hiring Signals & Market Sentiment (Local & Observed)

- **Actively hiring functions:** Strategy, digital marketing, data/analytics, operations, sustainability
- **Paused/slowing functions:** Pure finance, early-career consulting
- **Profiles in demand:** Candidates with regional exposure, immediate impact skills
- **Typical seniority:** 2–5 years' experience preferred; limited appetite for fresh graduates

### Changes in Employer Behavior

- Increased emphasis on **local market experience** over global brand names
- **Longer hiring timelines** due to budget revalidation post-year-end
- **More structured case and technical interviews**, even for non-technical roles
- **Limited openness to international talent** unless for mid to senior roles (e.g. with at least 5 years of experience and above)

### Upcoming Opportunities & Pipeline

#### Roles expected to open in the next 1-3 months

- Technology

- Incremental openings expected in customer success, program management, operations, and data/analytics roles at companies such as Amazon, AWS, Grab, ServiceNow, and Google, primarily from Q2 2026, aligned with new fiscal headcount approvals
- Healthcare & Life Sciences
  - Anticipated openings in market access, commercial operations, regulatory support, and medical affairs support roles, particularly as regional budgets are finalized post-Q1.
- Consulting & Professional Services
  - BCG and KPMG are expected to reassess hiring needs mid-year (Q2–Q3), contingent on project pipeline visibility.
- Fintech
  - Airwallex and selected SaaS firms are likely to expand hiring in H2 2026, particularly in product operations, commercial strategy, and regional expansion roles.

### Intern-to-Full-Time Conversion Expectations

- Conversion likelihood varies significantly by market and visa constraints; higher in home markets than in Singapore or Australia.

## Strategic Notes for Advisors & Career Team

### • Candidate Profiles

- **Realistic Profiles:** Candidates with prior regional experience, internships in Asia-Pacific, or niche functional skills (data, market access, supply chain, digital transformation) are currently the most competitive.
- **Challenging Profiles:** International students with less than 5 years of work experience and/or do not have existing work authorisations or experience in the region, seeking generalist roles without relevant experience, or relying solely on global brand appeal, face significantly lower conversion rates.

### • Geographic Guidance

- While **Singapore** remains aspirational, advisors should encourage exploration of opportunities in countries where students have existing work authorisations at the same time.

### • Visa Reality

- Right-to-work status remains a critical filter. Advisors should be transparent with students about visa-related constraints and steer international students toward markets with higher openness or countries where students have existing work authorisations.

### • Outreach Strategy

- Exploratory outreach to IE alumni or hiring managers is most effective when highly targeted and value-driven with strong showcase of skillsets relevant to existing or future job openings.

### • Timing Advice

- Q1 is primarily preparation-heavy, with application intensity increasing meaningfully from Q2 onward.

## Red Flags & Risks

- Oversubscription for brand-name employers in Singapore
- Visa sponsorship remains unpredictable and employer-specific
- Some open roles are pipeline placeholders rather than immediate hires