Making the jump from Science to cosmetics

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INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE: Tan Ee Von, a Bachelor of Food Science and Technology (Hons) graduate, may not seem a typical candidate for employment at a cosmetic company. But entering L’Oreal’s Brandstorm — a creative interactive marketing game for undergraduates — changed that.

The 23-year-old, who participated in the contest twice, is now a management trainee at the multinational attached to the Consumer Products division where she handles three of the company’s brands.

"I first heard about the competition as a freshman in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in 2009, the year that a team from my university won the national title. Hearing of the team members’ experience throughout the event as well as of their time in Paris, where they represented Malaysia at the International Finals, motivated me to give it a go in the 2011 edition," says Tan.

While challenging, she values the experience and the skills she picked up.

One of her team members, Teh Eve Lynn, who also graduated from the same course, is now a management trainee in the cosmetic company’s Luxury Products division.

"I was inspired to join by my seniors who represented Malaysia in the 2009 cycle; they were a great source of support and mentorship during my sophomore year when I was in a leadership role in AIESEC (a global youth organisation)," says Teh.

Teh was no stranger to marketing concepts as she took up modules in the subject as her minor and was happy to see what she learned put to practice.

"After the contest finale, I walked out equipped with such priceless experience and skills that I could not have acquired elsewhere," she says.

Dr Serene Ng Siew Imm, a senior lecturer at the Department of Management and Marketing at UPM, sees the benefits students gain in competing.

The university was first invited to participate in 2008; Ng is among a group of lecturers who acted as advisers to teams in the latest cycle.

While Tan and Teh had already demonstrated leadership, creativity and resourcefulness during their AIESEC activities, the contest made them more confident, outspoken and knowledgeable in marketing concepts.

Some other teams showed greater differences after competing, such as improved English proficiency, presentation skills and innovativeness.

Aside from being able to showcase their ideas and assess their capabilities against other teams in Malaysia and meet counterparts from other institutions, participants are also more visible to the multinational company’s human resource department — which opens up job opportunities for them.

The chance to win a trip to Paris to represent Malaysia at the international stage is another incentive.

The contest — which has been running since 1993 — has a new twist for the 2013 cycle.

For the first time, the game is open to teams from non-partner universities under the Wild Card category.

The best international Wild Card team will join the country representatives at the International Finals in Paris in June 2013.

For details, visit www.brandstorm.loreal.com