

RE, agri investment seen improving job quality

By John Victor D. Ordoñez
Reporter

THE government's best bet for improving job quality is to let in more investment in renewable energy (RE) and agriculture, after the indicator used as a proxy for job quality worsened in April, labor groups said.

"These investments, coupled with strong linkages to manufacturing, have the potential to

create decent, productive, and sustainable jobs," Jose G. Matula, president of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), said in a Viber message.

The jobless rate fell to a four-month low in April at 4.5% from 4.7% in March, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on June 9.

The underemployment rate, a measure of the degree to which workers are seeking more employment or longer hours, increased to 12.9% from 11.2% a month earlier.

Mr. Matula said the government should also provide more public sector jobs and halt the retrenchment plans of government corporations like Duty-Free Philippines Corp. (DFPC).

In March, DFPC released the implementing rules and regulations for its rightsizing plan, which the FFW said could lead to the retrenchment of over 700 rank-and-file employees.

"Truth is, we should be generating more jobs than what

we are getting," Josua T. Mata, secretary general of Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa, said in a Viber message.

"The government has to discard its outmoded thinking that it has no business generating jobs," he added.

The PSA estimates that agriculture was the second-largest employer in April, accounting for 21.9% of the workforce, trailing only services, which had a 61.1% share.

In April, the Department of Trade and Industry's Board of Investments said the renewable energy sector accounted for the most investment approvals during the first quarter, rising 156% increase to P440 billion, followed by manufacturing, which surged 416% to P17 billion.

During the period, agriculture had P929 million in approved investment. The approvals in the first quarter were expected to generate at least 16,719 local jobs.

Last year, the Philippines opened its renewable energy industry to full foreign ownership. Prior to this policy, foreign ownership in renewable energy projects had been capped at 40%.

The Department of Labor and Employment has said it is working on upskilling the workforce ahead of the expected increase in foreign investment this year.

Mr. Matula said that "enterprises in these sectors must be subsidized in order to provide living wages to their workers."

OPINION

Etiquette for rejecting a job offer

I received a job offer from another company giving me better pay and perks. I'm having second thoughts in accepting it because of my 15 years of service with my current employer, plus the fact that I'm comfortable with my boss, who is treating me like his own son. I'm also enjoying the company of my colleagues. Now that I've decided to reject the proposal of a prospective employer, I find myself at a loss how to reject such lucrative offer. Please help. — Triple Dimple.

It's your call. You know too well about your current situation, where you've proven that money is not everything. Maybe, you're still unmarried and are not yet thinking of the material demands of family life? Or maybe, you're married to someone who can provide for almost everything? Or your family is sufficiently well off to provide for the whole family.

Whatever, you've made a decision and can't be faulted for your choice.

Before doing anything, ensure that you don't burn any bridges with the prospective employer and your current

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ELBONOMICS: If you're not motivated by rejection, that means you've not done enough.

employer, who may see things differently. You should be thankful to your prospective employer for offering you that much and to your current employer who can't afford a similar package. But you don't have to tell your current boss about the offer as it can easily be misinterpreted.

Get on with your decision. And do it in style by keeping things professional. This means being physically present when you say 'no' to a

prospective employer. You must be face-to-face with the offeror to show your genuine appreciation.

Send them an e-mail beforehand. Offer to discuss the matter in person. It's not for you to request a higher bid or anything; instead, express your sincerest gratitude. You may also want to invite the prospective employer to dinner. If the employer doesn't want to spend any further time with you, then cut cleanly and gently. The other party may not feel right after wasting considerable time and effort in conducting a series of interviews with you.

SUBSTANCE

The essential counterpart to style is substance. Using diplomatic words and phrases, you can express your rejection, which should be clear and upfront. That means finding a better way of writing an e-mail. Try the following recommendations as appropriate to your personal circumstances:

Opening statement: Be authentic in expressing your appreciation. However, express your gratefulness without using any clichés or words that can be perceived as bland and insincere. Try this: "Just a short note of appreciation for your trust and confidence in my ability to help your organization in connection with your current job opening ..."

Middle statement: Explain your decision clearly and decisively. Convey appreciation for the offer. Then proceed with a brief explanation of your decision to decline the offer. For example: "You have an excellent compensation package that is difficult to resist. However, after weighing everything about my current job, I must respectfully decline your offer."

Closing statement: Express goodwill. Wish them well in one brief concluding sentence, such as: "Thank you for accommodating me during the hiring process. I wish I could meet you personally to relay this message. But if it's no longer necessary, I hope you find the right person for the job."

FRUSTRATION

Remember that when you decline a job offer, there may be an adverse impact on other applicants in the shortlist. What if the number two and three candidates have already received their rejection letter? Imagine the complexity of such a situation. This means the prospective employer will be left holding the bag.

The disappointment can be much bigger for that employer.

This is also a valuable lesson for employers. Never release any rejection letters to the other candidates on the short list until you've received the acceptance of the number one candidate. Better do it after one month after the lucky candidate has acclimated with the new work environment. Sometimes, it's better not issue any rejection letters at all, so that employers would have a fallback later on.

In conclusion, a rejection letter is a double-edged sword. It can create disappointment in the rejected candidates and in the employer whose job offer was rejected by the number one candidate. While the intention is to create goodwill for both the employer and the applicants, there are times you may get the opposite result without warning.

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US labor board ruling could spur unionizing by gig workers, others

THE US National Labor Relations Board on Tuesday made it more difficult for companies to treat workers as independent contractors rather than employees, handing workers in the gig economy and other industries a potential path to join unions.

The Democrat-led board threw out a more business-friendly standard for classifying workers adopted during the Trump administration, which had said workers who operate their own businesses should generally be considered independent contractors who cannot join unions.

Instead, the agency reverted to an Obama-era test that considers a broader array of factors such as the amount of control companies exercise over workers and the degree to which workers depend on a single company to make a living.

The board's ruling came in a case involving a union campaign by makeup artists and hairstylists for the Atlanta Opera. The board said the workers were the opera's employees and could hold an election over whether to join a union.

Lawyers for the opera and the union organizing its workers did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The opera cannot immediately appeal the decision. If the workers vote to unionize, the opera could refuse to bargain and bring the case back to the labor board and ultimately a federal appeals court.

Worker classification has been among the most contentious employment-related issues in the US over the last decade. The US Department of Labor is expected to soon finalize a proposed rule opposed by business groups that would narrow the circumstances in which workers qualify as independent contractors under federal wage laws.

Any change in policy is expected to increase labor costs for many industries including trucking, retail and manufacturing. But the effect on the "gig economy," which relies heavily on independent contractors, has received the most attention.

Kristin Sharp, CEO of gig economy trade association Flex, said on Tuesday's ruling was

out of step with an increasingly tech-driven economy defined by worker flexibility.

"This decision will only generate greater confusion and uncertainty, while undermining the independent work that millions of Americans have chosen, often in lieu of traditional employment," Ms. Sharp said in a statement.

In a 2014 ruling involving FedEx Corp. drivers, the labor board said a worker's opportunity for profit or loss is only one factor to be considered in determining independent contractor status.

Five years later, the Trump-era board ruled that so-called "entrepreneurial opportunity" should be the main factor in evaluating classification, narrowing the ability of workers and unions to prove employee status.

The board on Tuesday said that ruling was too narrow. Entrepreneurial opportunity should be considered, the board said, but only in tandem with other factors that speak to whether workers are operating truly independent businesses. — **Reuters**

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