



Unions want say in upskilling, protection in event of layoffs

By John Victor D. Ordoñez
Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT needs to consult with unions in reskilling and upskilling workers and ensure worker protections are in place in case of layoffs, a labor federation said.

“Social protection mechanisms should be in place as well so that as the upskilling process takes place, those that can’t cope (with new technology) ... may be assured of unemployment insurance and placement services,” Federation of Free Workers Vice-President Julius H. Cainglet said in a Viber message.

“The gap that should be addressed is in the strengthening of workplace-

based training to ensure that those already in the workforce are not left behind by these rapid changes in technology.”

American companies last month committed to invest over \$1 billion in the Philippines, including digital upskilling programs that are expected to benefit more than 30 million workers.

The US Department of Commerce announced that Google will roll out a career certificate program in 50 virtual campuses in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Microsoft Corp. has also committed to partner with the DTI, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Department of Budget and Management to train jobseekers

and students in artificial intelligence (AI).

Labor groups have urged the government to ensure these investment pledges materialize and that these programs improve the employment prospects of the workforce.

Mr. Cainglet said the Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority must ensure students are prepared to face higher skill requirements when they start looking for jobs.

“Preparing the workforce for digitalization, the fourth industrial revolution and the emergence of artificial intelligence has long been in the labor agenda,” he said.

“In the end, these investments should directly result in generating

decent and productive jobs that are sustainable and climate friendly.”

The International Monetary Fund has said adopting AI in the Philippine service sector could raise productivity.

Last year, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed into law a bill authorizing the creation of a national employment roadmap and an inter-agency body to draft a national strategy for job generation.

The law also aims to boost the competitiveness of the workforce through upskilling and reskilling programs.

In a report published July last year, the Asian Development Bank said 20% of Philippine workers face a “high risk of losing their jobs” due to automation.

OPINION

Coaching poor performers

Last month, I started coaching all my 10 direct reports one-by-one and in private, with no significant improvement after three weeks. Am I doing it wrong? Please help. — Blue Star.

You need to tell me in detail how you’re doing it, except that we don’t have time for that. Whatever you’re doing, I’m sure you’ve communicated your expectations in clear terms. If not, that’s the first red flag.

Before I continue, let me tell you the experience of Mario (not his real name), a department manager in a medium-sized corporation.

Mario’s preferred coaching method was barking orders, frequently embellished with four-letter words. Mario was always in an agitated state even when taking a 30-minute nap during lunch. You could hear him snoring loudly in his well-lighted small room facing the glass windows where everyone would silently laugh at his facial distortions.

Given Mario’s style, do you think the workers listened to him? Obviously not. The workers would perform according to their perceived understanding of Mario’s instructions and expectations. The results were often disastrous. Why?

One reasonable guess is Mario’s combative and loud personality. His workers would often reject his direction due to his insecurities and lack of trust in the workers’ abilities. People also simply vary by learning style.

LEARNING STYLES

Some individuals are experiential learners who do not require close supervision. They can do the work independently and thrive on the opportunity to discover better ways of doing things. Others are bookish and must be guided by written policy and procedures. The rest are best guided by work instructions with cartoon illustrations showing the best result and also possible bad results.

If you can cater to individual training needs, you can adjust your coaching style to suit their orientation. Let us explore what adjustments you can make:

IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

ELBONOMICS: Solicited and unsolicited feedback is the best way to learn.

Self-discovery. People who prefer this type of learning are rare. They are independent-minded and like unbridled freedom to experiment. They prefer to challenge the status quo and thrive on “aha” moments. As long as you describe to them the issues, parameters, standards, and timelines, they will surely deliver superior results.

Regular feedback. Giving performance feedback is a tricky approach. Many don’t want to be judged wrongly. However, they tend to accept negative feedback if the work expectations are clearly communicated and objective. Frequency of delivering feedback can be

an issue. Some people prefer to be told every week while others like it monthly.

Engagement learning. You can’t do engagement without motivation. You could start with a casual engagement dialogue to explore possible answers to the following questions: What are the difficulties of the job? What kind of resources are needed? How does this job help achieve career goals?

Facilitated learning. People learn on their own if their boss acts like a training facilitator. This can be frustrating to some managers who don’t have the patience for training. However, in the long run, this approach becomes effective as people become accustomed to a facilitated learning environment.

REWARD AND RECOGNITION

Poor performers will respect you if you give them reasonable recognition, which may not be limited to material rewards. This presupposes agreeing with your direct reports on clear targets and expectations at the beginning of the process. Obviously, we

can’t measure performance against standards that have not been mutually agreed.

It is in the measurement of performance and proper rewards that we often find managers failing their people. You may have experienced it before. How many times have you labored long and hard over certain regular tasks and special projects that go unnoticed by your own boss?

This is happening every day. When you got no feedback on the quality of your work, you’re not sure if you did well or how you can improve your failings. If this has happened to you, chances are, it will happen again. The cycle goes on and on, until you break it with a reasonable reward system appropriate to the performance level of your workers.

Bring REY ELBO’s leadership program called “Superior Subordinate Supervision” to your management team. Contact him on Facebook, LinkedIn, X or e-mail elbonomics@gmail.com or via <https://reyelbo.com>



Jobless, from SI/1

The job quality in February improved as the underemployment rate went down to 12.4% from 13.9% in January. This was also lower than the 12.9% recorded a year ago, and the lowest in two months or since the 11.9% in December 2023.

The ranks of underemployed Filipinos — employed persons who want more hours of work or an additional job — fell by 318,000 month on month to 6.08 million in February.

On an annual basis, the number of underemployed Filipinos declined by 210,000 from 6.29 million in February last year.

Year to date, underemployment inched down to 13.2% from 13.5% in the same period last year. The country’s labor force reached 50.75 million in February, increasing by 2.65 million from 48.09 million in January.

On an annual basis, the labor force slipped by 526,000 from 51.27 million in February last year.

This translated to a labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 64.8%, higher than the 61.1% in January but lower than the 66.6% in February last year.

Average LFPR in the January-to-February period reached 63%, lower than the 65.5% last year.

The average Filipino employee worked for 40.1 hours a week in February, down from 42.1 hours the previous month and higher than the 39.5 hours in February 2023.

Robert Dan J. Roces, chief economist at Security Bank Corp., attributed the easing unemployment rate to the “expanding economy, which has created more job opportunities.”

“There might also be a shift towards jobs with more guaranteed hours or full-time positions, leading to a decrease in underemployment (currently at 12.4%),” he said in an e-mail.

PSA data showed wholesale and retail trade gained the most jobs on a monthly basis in February after adding 1.61 million, bringing the number of workers to 10.66 million.

There was a 1.03 million month-on-month increase in workers in agriculture and forestry to 9.36 million, while workers in accommodation and food service activities increased by 325,000 to 2.45 million.

On the other hand, the biggest monthly job losses were seen in fishing and aquaculture (down 402,000 to 1.09 million); followed by information and communication (down 137,000 to 370,000); and professional, scientific and technical activities (down 82,000 to 405,000).

ANNUAL DECLINE

“However, it’s important to consider a caveat. While the overall rate was lower, the year-on-

year growth particularly in sectors like agriculture and retail trade were down, offset by construction and hotel and accommodation sectors,” Mr. Roces said.

On a year-on-year basis, construction added the most with 470,000 workers to 4.77 million in February. It was followed by transportation and storage (up 444,000 to 3.85 million) and administrative and support service activities (up 344,000 to 2.52 million).

“The construction sector will likely continue to be supported by the government’s infrastructure program. On the other hand, demand prospects for private construction will hinge on inflation and interest rates coming down. A key risk would be the possible emergence of La Niña or above-average rainfall this year as it would disrupt construction activities,” China Banking Corp. (China Bank) economists said in a note.

However, agriculture and forestry recorded the largest annual job losses that month after shedding 834,000 workers to 9.36 million. It was followed by fishing and aquaculture (down 490,000 to 1.09 million) and public administration and defense (down 418,000 to 2.68 million).

“Adverse weather conditions still cloud the outlook for the (agriculture and fishing) sectors, with the impact of El Niño expected to linger until May and La Niña potentially developing this year,” China Bank economists said.

Despite the improvement in jobs data, Sen. Pangilinan said that a huge chunk of the jobs generated are in the informal economy.

“This is where you find a huge decent-work deficit as most workers don’t have social protection,” Mr. Mata said in a Viber message.

The employment share of the wage and salary workers decreased to 62.9% in February from 67.1% in January, while self-employed without any paid employee workers increased to 27.2% from 25.7% the previous month.

Looking forward, China Bank economists said the jobs market is expected to continue its robust performance, although inflationary pressures such as high oil prices and possible wage hikes could weaken labor demand.

“Looking ahead, the future trend in unemployment and underemployment will depend on the ability of the economy to create more jobs and keep unemployment low amidst a high inflation and interest rate environment.”

Mr. Roces said. — **Karis Kasarinlan Paolo D. Mendoza**

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