



Franchise vs a Job: The Career Hack No One Told You About?

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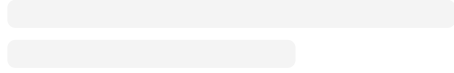
AI is making entry-level jobs obsolete, [leaving many fresh grads stuck and jobless](#). According to The Straits Times, [only half of Singapore's fresh graduates managed to land jobs](#). These aren't encouraging numbers.

For anyone who has exhausted months on and hundreds of resumes later, and still hasn't had any luck in getting employed, then it might be time to start thinking about *creating* your own job.

The AI Takeover Has Begun and entry-level jobs are its first casualties



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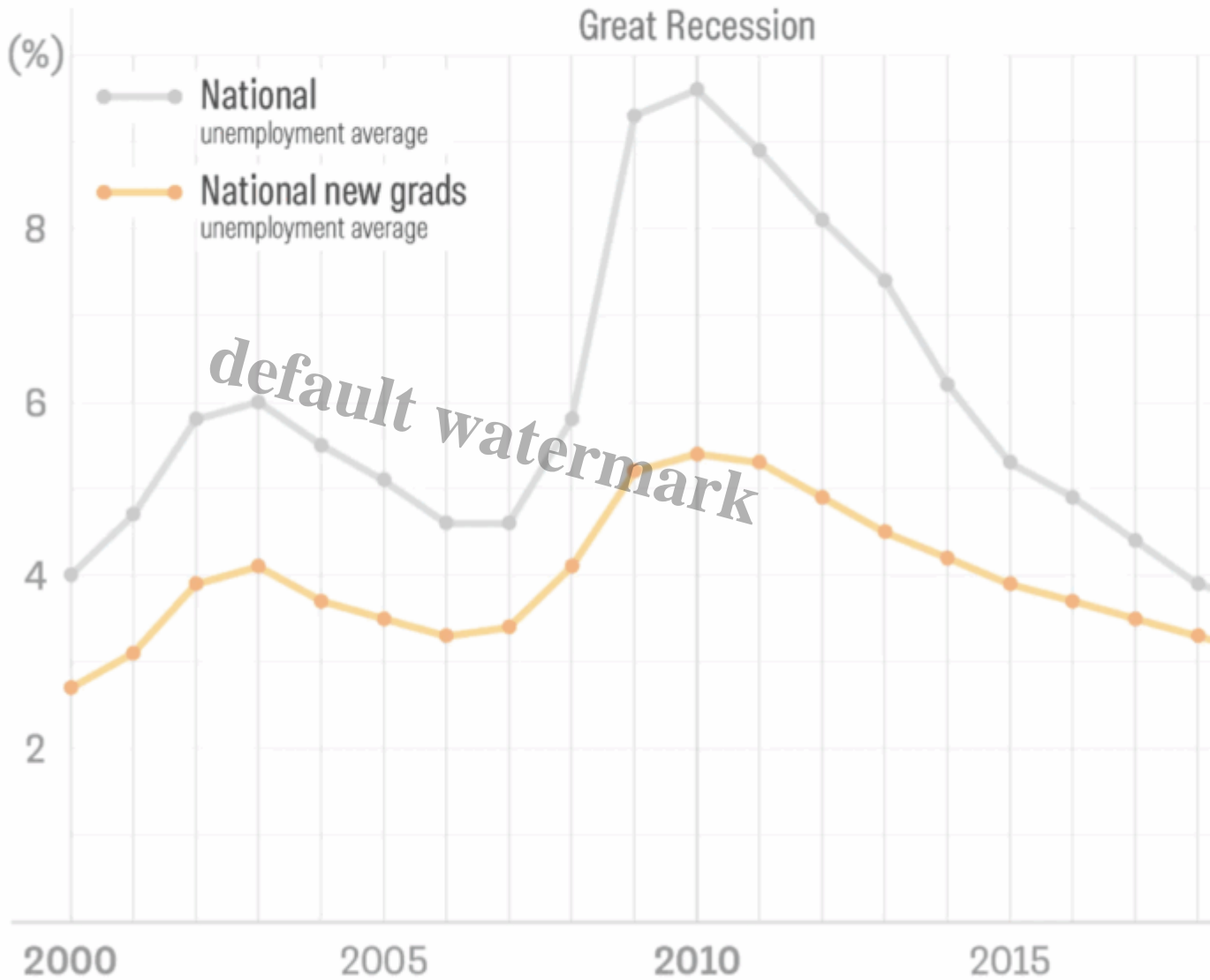
For fresh college grads today, even first-class honours and a LinkedIn profile full of internships no longer guarantee employment. You're up against hundreds of applicants, all fighting for fewer roles because entry-level tasks that used to be handled by junior staff like data entry, copywriting, even customer service are now being done by machines.

The result? Fewer openings for junior roles, fiercer competition, and more grads feeling like they're not good enough when the real issue is a structural change in the economy.

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College grads face higher jobless rate

A snapshot of turbulent times for graduates



*Average college grads unemployment from Jan-July 2025

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and New York Federal Reserve

Image credits: [Source](#)

Job postings have declined year over year and recent college grads are finding it harder to find an entry-level position with the rise of artificial intelligence. [Only 30% of those who graduated in 2025 and 41% of 2024 graduates have found entry-level jobs in their field, according to the Cengage Group 2025 Graduate Employability Report.](#) Another [Stanford report suggests that the AI revolution is beginning to have a significant and disproportionate impact on entry-level workers in the American labor market.](#)

So if you're wondering why you're stuck in application limbo despite doing everything "right" the problem isn't you. The job market has changed.

Should You Start a Business Instead of Applying for a Job?

Here's a radical idea. If you can't find a job, maybe it's time to stop applying altogether.

Think about it: instead of waiting for someone to hire you, why not hire yourself?

I know, **this isn't for everyone**. Perhaps you've not thought about being your own boss before. But for those of you who have the risk appetite, resilience and a way to raise capital (be it from your parents or your peers), then starting a business could be your fastest path out of job limbo.

This 27-year-old chose to become a business owner instead of searching for some [Cheryl Quak started her own business as a 7-Eleven franchisee, paying \\$80,000](#). The benefit? Her young age and lack of experience did not matter to customers.

When you start your own business, *you're* the boss. No more waiting for someone else to "give you a chance". You decide the product, the service, the brand, the strategy. It can seem terrifying, but it's also incredibly liberating. What's more, starting a business forces you to learn sales, marketing, customer service, financials, operations all at once. Even if you shut it down eventually and decide to go back into employment later, you'll be miles ahead of your peers in terms of skills and experience.

And ironically, the same AI that's making it hard for you to land an entry-level role in the workforce can now become an ally. You can use it to help run your business more efficiently - automating tasks, managing customer chats, creating content, and more.

Risks of starting a business

Of course, starting a business isn't for everyone and it isn't without its risks.

As an employee, you will seldom bear the full brunt (or costs) of your mistakes. Instead, you only need to do your job and wait for your month-end paycheck to be handed to you.

But as a founder or a business owner, there's no such thing. You'll be working around the clock (especially in the beginning) and there isn't anyone else to guarantee you a paycheck. You'll need to work for it, and **if there are problems, you have to resolve them. If the business fails, no one is going to give you your money back.**

But apparently, there can be a shortcut.

As I recently learnt, starting your business via a franchise can be an easier way to overcome the common obstacles that new business owners typically run into. While on podcast duties at the **Franchising & Licensing Asia Expo** last weekend, I got to learn from various business owners and master franchisees about the differences between building your own business vs. operating a franchise.



P.S. No, this is NOT a sponsored post.

I simply found my experience so insightful that I decided to document my take

As a new business owner, starting your own brand means you need to test everything â??product-market fit, R&D, safety tests or certifications, branding, sales and marketing channels, etc. That takes up time, money, and plenty of trial-and-error. Get it right straightaway and you could be rich. Get it wrong, and the costs are on you.

In contrast, when you start a business by going with a franchise, you're handed a playbook and a brand that customers already trust. Your age or (lack of) experience doesn't matter. Think about the franchises Anytime Fitness or Shilin Taiwan Street Snacks – their customers patronise them for the brand and can barely tell the difference between which outlets are HQ-owned vs. run by franchisees.

Aside from brand recognition and trust, most franchises provide operational guidance and manuals, staff training, marketing templates, supplier connections and discounts, as well as business coaching and more. This is gold, especially if you've never run a business before! Unlike being a solo founder, you get to be part of a wider network of franchisees. It's like joining a school alumni group, except everyone's building the same business as you and sharing what works. You don't have to build up your own brand and visibility because so many more people like you are on the same journey and building it together.

So if the idea of starting your own business (and brand) from scratch feels overwhelming, franchising might be worth thinking about.

But are franchising fees worth it?

There are always trade-offs when you run a business. Building your own does not involve having to pay for any franchising fees, but you have to do a lot of things from scratch and you probably won't be able to benefit from economies of scale. For instance, you'll have to figure out your own supplier networks (and negotiate with them, with less bargaining power too since you'll have smaller volume).

In contrast, when you franchise a known brand, you're buying into a recognised brand and a proven business model, together with securing business consultants for yourself who are there to guide and ensure you succeed. After all, their brand and reputation is also at stake. What's more, they have greater bargaining power with suppliers given their scale and combined volume, so you get to benefit from lower prices and higher quality rather than if you tried to pull it off by your own.

How much would all of this cost? Depending on the brand and industry, franchise fees vary widely. Here's a few examples:



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If we look at the price tag alone, a university degree from NUS or NTU already sets one back by the same costs of at least \$30,000 – \$50,000. That seemed like a worthy investment in the past when paper qualifications almost guaranteed students a job upon graduation. But in today’s job market, that is quickly disappearing to the point where a rising number of Singapore’s fresh graduates have decided to [spend even more money to get qualified](#) to [become a plumber](#).

No one knows what the state of graduate employment will be like in the next few years. But in the meantime, people still need to find a way to work and earn money.

To put this into context, franchise fees may seem expensive, but they often come with real-world business mentorship, direct income potential, guidance from others (or a team) who has *already succeeded*, as well as a recognised brand which customers already trust.

Will we see more people choose to invest in starting a franchise and forgo a degree in the near future? Only time will tell.

Should you set up your own business or operate a franchise?

Aspect	Franchise Business	Own Business (From Scratch)
Startup Cost	Higher upfront cost (franchise fee + setup costs)	Can start small with lower initial capital
Brand Recognition	Instant brand credibility and customer trust	Need to build reputation and awareness from scratch

Aspect	Franchise Business	Own Business (From Scratch)
Business Model	Proven systems, SOPs, and playbooks provided	You need to test and refine your own systems and model
Creative Freedom	Limited - must follow brand guidelines	Full freedom to innovate and pivot
Marketing Support	Often provided by franchisor (national campaigns, materials)	You handle all marketing, branding, and strategy
Product/Service Control	Fixed product/service offerings	You decide what to sell, change, or introduce
Training & Mentorship	Provided by franchisor, especially at the start	No formal guidance - you'll have to find mentors or learn as you go
Operational Support	Help with supplier contacts, tech systems, store design, etc.	You build all processes and supply chains yourself
Time to Profitability	Usually faster due to proven model	May take longer due to experimentation and marketing ramp-up
Risk of Failure	Lower - success rates are generally higher for franchises	Higher - most startups fail within first 2-3 years
Exit Strategy	Can sell or transfer franchise (subject to franchisor's approval)	More flexibility in selling or scaling, but depends on brand equity
Ongoing Fees	Royalty or management fees (e.g. 5-10% of revenue)	No royalty fees, but you bear all ongoing business costs
Ownership Feeling	Shared brand ownership (you're a licensee)	Full ownership and pride of building something from the ground up

For anyone keen to go down the franchising route, one way to think about it would be whether you're willing to buy a shortcut or pay for your own real-world tuition fees over the next few years of your business.

How much would you peg that value at?

Conclusion

Now, this article is not to say that getting a degree is no longer important. I'm a degree-holder myself, and I've picked up skills in university that have helped me land my first job and run this blog for the last 11 years. There's no denying that my qualification opened up doors that might have remained closed to me otherwise - my first employer probably wouldn't have hired me if I

didn't have my degree.

But for anyone who's still expecting their college degree to guarantee them a job, it might be time to rethink your expectations. While we're still in the early days of AI so its full impact on entry-level jobs isn't as clear yet, there's no denying that this generation of new workers have been the one to pay the price.

So if you're a fresh grad feeling lost in this AI-powered job market, know that you're not alone—and it is *not* your fault.

You can either continue to hold out for an employer to hire you, or think about whether creating your own work would be a better option at this point. Plus, if you have the capital means for it, then starting a business — be it your own or via a franchise — might be a better bet than sending out yet another job application that gets ignored.

You can build. You can create. You can franchise.

You can take charge of your career in ways our generation never could.

Of course, take note that starting any business — franchise or new — comes with risks. You'll need upfront capital (some franchises require six figures), manage people (hiring and staffing issues) and you'll ultimately be accountable for operations, marketing and customer experience. Whether you decide to start your own business or franchise a known brand, just know this: **your path doesn't have to look like everyone else's.**

In today's consumer economy, that might be an alternative path out than to just wait around to get hired by someone else.

The economy is changing. Maybe it's time we changed the way we approach careers too.

With love,
Budget Babe

Category

1. Career