

ECONOMIST & SUN/SUN-TRIBUNE
BUSINESS

Employers face challenge to keep employees

Maintaining stable, effective workforce goes beyond wages

BY JEFF MITCHELL
 Staff Writer

When Sabrina Fried paused during her studies to envision her future beyond university, she saw herself ensconced in a secure job with a progressive publishing company. The reality of the working world has turned out differently, however.

Ms Fried, 24, has yet to land that long-term, full-time position. She has fallen back on retail sales, which sustained her through school, in addition to taking whatever editing work she can get — paying or non-paying — as a way to get her foot in the door.

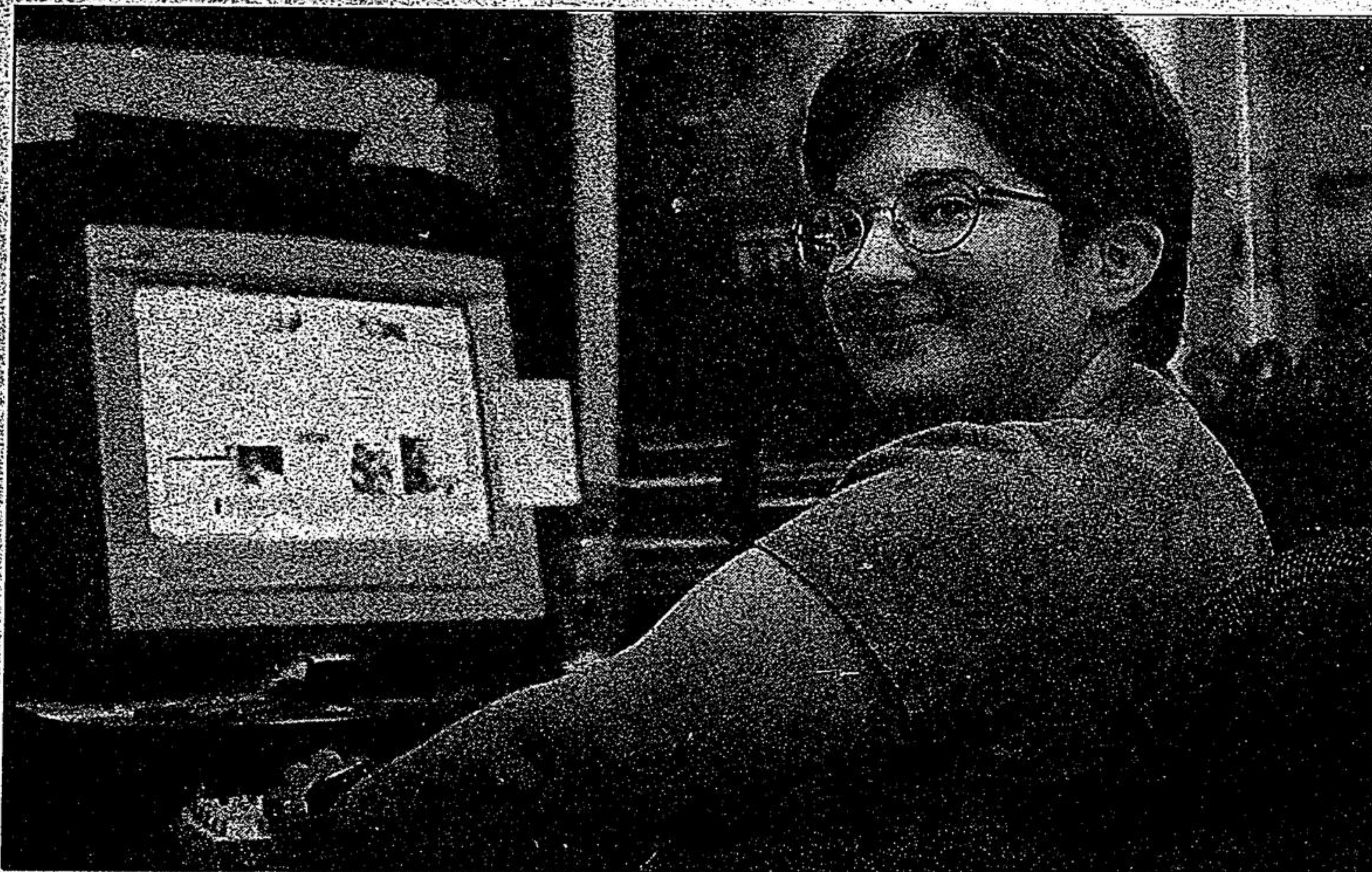
Lack of recognition is a big one. Everybody wants to feel as if they're doing a good job and they're contributing.

"To put it bluntly, I'm still working retail," she said in an interview from her Thornhill home. "I have two degrees and I'm still working retail."

Ms Fried's goal for a secure, full-time position is increasingly sought by workers, according to research.

A poll conducted for Robert Half International, an international temporary staffing agency, indicated 65 per cent of workers surveyed preferred the security of their existing jobs over the lure of taking a chance on the open market.

The result is surprising, perhaps, because of the way in which the question was present-



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Freelance editor Sabrina Fried's goal of a secure, full-time job is one that is increasingly sought by workers, according to research.

ed. Workers were asked, "If the economy improved, how likely would you be to make a job change in the next six months?"

Just 20 per cent of 630 randomly selected respondents said they would be very likely to search for greener pastures, with 14 per cent saying such an initiative on their part would be somewhat likely. The other 66 per cent of respondents said they would be unlikely to aggressively seek new employment opportunities.

But that's no reason for employers to become complacent, said Lara Dodo, manager of the Richmond Hill branch of Office Team, a Robert Half company. She predicts continuing improvement in the economy and, accordingly, more opportunities for workers.

"We need to do a better job of creating a stable workforce of people who want to stay with us,"

said Ms Dodo, whose agency matches employers and workers.

There are three parts to hiring: There's recruiting, training and retaining. I don't think we give enough emphasis to retaining.

Maintaining a stable and effective workforce goes beyond offering competitive wages, Ms Dodo said. Training, providing opportunities for advancement and recognizing staff achievements are all parts of the equation.

"Lack of recognition is a big one," she said. "Everybody wants to feel as if they're doing a good job and they're contributing."

Indeed, feeling you're part of a vibrant and progressive team is a benefit beyond the weekly pay cheque, said Carolyn Clegg-Brown.

The Aurora resident, a production specialist with the Ipsos-Reid polling service, has been with her company 13 years.

Ms Clegg-Brown loves the fast-paced and challenging nature of her job. And she appreciates the flexibility her manager shows in scheduling holidays, time off and other arrangements to accommodate her family.

"It is probably the most important thing you've got to have a life outside work," Ms Clegg-Brown said. "If your company places enough value on that, they're in line with you and you're not going to be fighting them on that."

Ms Clegg-Brown, 45, noted many of her co-workers have the same sort of lengthy tenure with the company she has. She wonders if the culture of mutual loyalty between employer and employee is lost on a new generation of workers.

"A lot of people we hire are

Centres help seasonal migrant workers

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
 Staff Writer

Every Thursday at 7 p.m. sharp, Emmanuelle Lopez walks into a Newmarket grocery store to be greeted by half a dozen men from Mexico.

As the co-ordinator of the Bradford-based Migrant Workers' Support Centre, part of Ms Lopez's job is to help the men do their weekly shopping.

Not only do migrant workers struggle with language issues while at the grocery store, the layout of an Ontario store is very different from markets in Mexico.

For instance, directions on cans and other goods are printed in French and English, both foreign languages to the average migrant worker.

Born in Nicaragua and raised in Brazil, Ms Lopez, 23, is fluent in Spanish, Portuguese and English. Ms Lopez and her sister came to Canada with their parents in 1988. A graduate of the University of Guelph, Ms Lopez is familiar with the agriculture industry, including its need to harvest crops and the difficulty of getting workers to do the job.

Migrant workers have been coming to Ontario for 40 years. For some, it's a way of life, leaving Mexico to work on an Ontario farm for 20 consecutive years.

About 1,500 offshore workers arrive in this part of Ontario every spring. They remain here until about the end of October. The paper work, enabling the workers from South and Central America to gain employment, is handled through Canada's seasonal agricultural workers (SAW) program.

Meanwhile, Ms Lopez handles concerns ranging from Canada Pension Plan contributions to loneliness and homesickness. As well, she works with community partners to provide resources for workers.

"There is a good-sized Spanish community in York Region," Ms Lopez said. "Our migrant workers are especially welcome in this community."

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