'Automation not to cut jobs but to help in doing new things'

Infosys, India's second largest IT services exporter with an employee base of little over two lakh will continue to hire and plans to add 20,000 people during the current fiscal, but ruled out possibilities of any layoffs. Richard Lobo, executive vice president, Head HR – Infosys in an exclusive interaction with FE's P P Thimmaya said that automation is not about how many jobs one can reduce but about how many new things companies can do. Excerpts:

How do you see the hiring trend in the Indian IT industry?

The industry is now much bigger than before when it was recording a double digit growth rate. The businesses of most companies are now divided into two parts. There is one half which is doing exactly what the industry was doing a few years back which is the traditional IT services. This is directly connected to the number of people added every year and that has a bearing on the revenue. The other half consists of the new kind of businesses which are not directly linked to people addition. What we see in this changing scenario is that each employee will be billing much more than before.

What kind of talent will Infosys be hiring?

A large number will be at the entry level. However, now we are doing things differently in terms of training. Today it is much more agile, flexible and we are training people in more than one technology. We are also investing in people who have deep programming knowledge or specialised skills like artificial intelligence, machine learning or people who can handle large and complex programmes. We are also looking at how we can put people faster onto projects. The single biggest change in training is that we are more closely connected to business demands. We are also teaching people the skills of today like innovation, design thinking. Reskilling has become important and people now realise they have remain relevant.

Will automation bring down the hiring numbers?

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of jobs but the demand is shifting to a different kind of a area where the same kind of skills may not be relevant. We believe that the net result of automation will be a positive trend. There might be a temporary dip but it will not take away opportunities. We are not looking at automation on how many jobs you can reduce but at how many new things we can do.

Is Infosys taking any steps in laying off its employees?

Hundred per cent there are no layoffs. We are very clear that the company will not be doing any layoffs and there is no real reason to reduce people. We will reskill people and give them opportunities. We will have a small percentage of people who have not been performing but they are not layoffs. This year is no different from the previous years. This year number of non-performers is just a fraction of the total employee base which is about 0.25%. Nobody has a reason to worry about their jobs as long as they are doing fine. We will continue to hire.

How will Infosys go about its US hiring plans?

We will open delivery centres in most of the large geographies where we have our operations. We are doing it because it is easier to deploy people from those areas. What we will do in US will not be in the scale of India but will be a mini-scale duplication of our centres. Earlier we had everyone working from a client location but now work will be done out of a delivery centre which is closer to the client's location. The kind of people we are going to hire will also be no different from what we have been doing in India. Both the models – offsite and onshore – will keep functioning and the idea is to operate them efficiently.