

IT firms look for digital skills in changing times

AYAN PRAMANIK & KIRAN RATHEE

Bengaluru/New Delhi, 29 May

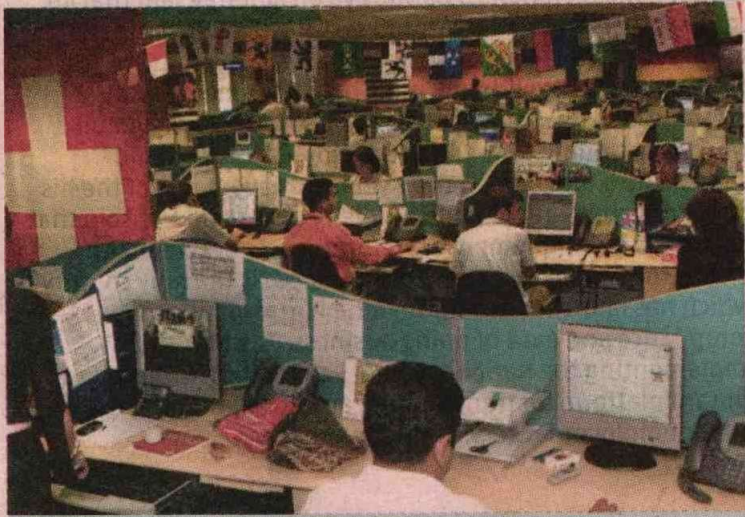
India's information technology (IT) services industry is hiring engineers with skills in cloud computing, analytics and digital — the segments that clients are spending money on — even as companies tighten performance appraisals of employees working on legacy services where budgets are shrinking.

Industry lobby group National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) says the sector is expected to hire 150,000 people this year, with the top two firms — Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys — making public that they intend to recruit more than 20,000 engineers each.

IT firms are also undertaking a massive exercise to reskill the existing employees, nearly half of the 3.9 million people the industry employs, in emerging technologies as the industry faces its worst crisis in nearly a decade. Wipro, HCL Technologies, and Tech Mahindra did not disclose their hiring plans.

Nasscom says the industry is witnessing an increasing demand for services using new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), internet of things, machine learning and big data analytics. "While reskilling is imperative, there is a clear shortage of talent in skills, both in India and globally," R Chandrasekhar, president, Nasscom, said in a telephonic interview. "But it is hard to give a number."

Today, clients are seeking services in digital, where applications need to have better designs for users to access on smartphones or shift them from existing IT hardware on premise to a secure place on the internet. This technology shift also means that firms need to work with clients jointly or even consult them, as against the traditional model of building software based on specifications.



CHALLENGE AHEAD

- IT sector employs 3.9 million
- Industry body Nasscom aims to help 1.5 to 2 million IT employees re-skill in five years
- TCS gets 10 per cent of the specialised talent from campus for niche skills through contests on Campus Commune
- TCS and Infosys intend to hire more than 20000 from campuses this year
- The most sought after new skills include big data analytics, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cloud computing, social & mobile, internet of things etc

Clients also spend smaller amounts initially for the new work before scaling up, unlike multi-million dollar contracts they bid for in the past.

"The IT industry is surely witnessing a change in hiring patterns with unconventional, high-value graduates with differential skills likely to be more attractive," said an Infosys spokesperson in a recent email.

TCS is engaging with engineering and science students through a platform called Campus Commune, which offers games for students to crack before they are hired. About one-tenth of the specialised campus recruitment for niche skills takes place through various contests on Campus Commune. This platform also gives students access to the company's contests such as CodeVita, TESTimony, Enginx and Hackquest.

Nasscom has teamed up with Boston Consulting

Group to help reskill 1.5 to 2 million employees in the sector over the next five years. Nasscom and BCG looked at job postings and identified eight new technology areas and 55 jobs with those specifications.

This, Nasscom says, is a preliminary identification of the future technology demand. "In the the second part, we will enable our member companies to reskill more people and curate courses depending on the member company's demand. We will play the role of curated aggregator and identify courses on digital technologies from global institutions such as Udacity, Stanford University etc," said Sangeeta Gupta, senior vice-president, Nasscom.

While efforts are on to hire people with newer skills, analysts say companies need to reskill existing employees if they have to increase the scale of engineers in newer technologies.