Reskill to Survive: Tech Firms Retrain Staff on War Footing

Accenture, Infy, TechM, Cognizant, MphasiS investing to make workforce future-ready

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Mumbai | New Delhi: Indian IT and IT services companies, including the ones that have been in the news for layoffs, are reskilling employees on a war footing.

Companies such as Accenture, Infosys, Cognizant, Tech Mahindra, Mphasis, among others, are making an effort to reskill and prepare employees for the future.

Accenture has reskilled 85% of its technology workforce in India in the last three years. Employees are being taught "new IT" skills such as digital, cloud and security, with artificial intelligence at the core. Their model is simple: invest the savings realised from automation and AI back into skilling.

Every year, the technology and consulting major — one of the few that has mostly remained insulated from layoffs — has been re-injecting 60% of its savings from automation to retrain employees, spending over $1 billion globally each year to train people in new technologies and professional skills. "We identified the mar-

New on the Job

New IT skills/technologies
Big data/analytics, cloud, data science, IoT, mobility, design thinking, gamification, AI/machine learning, natural language processing, DevOps, cybersecurity

Jobs getting automated
Voice-based services, data entry operators, document processing, F&A (accounts payable), system administration

ket shifts taking place much earlier than the rest of the industry and established a goal to rotate our business to the new," said Mohan Sekhar, senior managing director and global lead, Accenture Advanced Technology Centers in India. Talent transformation was a key element in this "rotation to the new".

Accenture has over 170,000 people in India and a significant portion of this is part of the Accenture Advanced Technology Centers in India.

Industry body Nasscom said in a recent report that about 40% of India's IT workforce has to be reskilled over the next five years to cope with emerging trends like AI, IoT, machine learning and blockchain. "Reskilling is a top priority for the industry, at present. The adoption of new technologies across various industries will eventually result in a widespread transformation of almost all currently established job roles," said Amit Aggarwal, CEO, IT-ITeS Sector Skills Council of Nasscom.

Demand is rising rapidly for emerging technologies like big data analytics, AI/ML, cybersecurity, IoT and robotics. Nasscom's FutureSkills platform is an initiative aimed at reskilling and upskilling two million professionals.

One of the top employment generators, India's IT industry has laid off thousands of people in the last 2-3 years as automation and digitisation disrupted several existing roles. About 20-35% of the jobs in the IT-BPM sector are threatened due to automation, according to a Nasscom-FICCI-EY Future of Jobs in India study.

At the same time, however, a lot more job roles will be created. According to the WEF's Future of Jobs Report 2018, technology disruption will create 133 million new jobs.

IT major Infosys has created more than 75 new courses for its employees to be future-ready. The company has adopted several strategies, including creating full stack workforce, power programmers, enabling niche design skills and domain skills, said Krishnamurthy Shankar, executive vice president and group head of human resource at Infosys.

Mphasis has developed the Mphasis Technology Council and Mphasis Architecture Council. The aim is to make the crucial leap from traditional IT services to digital IT services and transform every employee into geeks, said Srikanth Karra, chief human resource officer, Mphasis.

In the last 18 months, Cognizant has reskilled and upskilled over 110,000 of its associates via Cognizant Academy, enabling them with high-end skills in areas such as data science, design thinking, cyber security, interactivity and gamification, the Internet of Things, automation, analytics, cloud technologies, AI, machine learning, and enterprise technologies such as Salesforce and SAP.