WHAT IT TAKES TO GET A JOB

By Sangeeth Sebastian

M. Ponnavaikko, SRM University Vice-Chancellor, with students in Chennai

LAST week, Tamil Nadu-based SRM University created news when more than 3,000 of its graduates were offered jobs by leading IT companies in the first day of placements. Closer home, Gurgaon based Management Development Institute (MDI) and XLRI-Xavier School of Management, Jamshedpur, too claimed to have completed their summer placements in record time.

So, is the veil of gloom on hiring finally lifting? If so, then what are some skills and attributes that are getting the lucky ones placed? EDUCATION MAIL talked to P Rajendran, the executive director and co-founder of NIIT, a global talent development company based in Gurgaon, to make sense of the hiring hype and find out what companies are looking for in a candidate.

"Campus placements this year have improved compared to the previous year. Internship opportunities too are better," says Rajendran. Though the skills a candidate needs depends on the kind of job roles which he/she is applying for, there are some general attributes which graduate recruiters are looking for across the spectrum, figuring it up before sitting in front of a computer to type your CV can certainly give you a competitive edge.

The most underrated skill which a candidate must have, yet often ignored, is having a good business sense. When the NIIT chief joined Keltron, Kerala's electronics corporation, as a product engineer after graduating from IIT-Delhi in 1974, little did he realise that his job profile would also require him to sell his company's products to the customers.

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> — P. RAJENDRAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER, NIIT

"A few months into the job, I was asked by my boss to sell calculators to officials in the government department," recalls Rajendran. "Graduates should learn to listen to the market and always be prepared for the unexpected," he says.

With Indian companies going global, more and more employers now want graduates with a global outlook. One of the best ways to do this is by learning a foreign language. Speaking a foreign language shows that a graduate has a "better" cultural understanding. "You cannot interact with technical people in a foreign country unless you know the native language," says Rajendran.

In his case, the realisation came after he was assigned for an overseas stint in France. "I spend the first three months of my stay in Paris learning French for five-hours a day."

Perhaps, nothing can make a more positive impression to your prospective employer in a tech-driven world than having a strong digital foot-

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print. "For hiring managers, Internet is the first port of call when it comes to knowing more about a candidate. Having a twitter account or a blog in your area of interest is an advantage," says Rajendran. But make sure you are careful about what goes online. If images of binge drinking parties are the only ones an employer can find in your Facebook account, then you will be in trouble.

Finally, for those who think a little bit of mentoring can enhance job prospects, NIIT is ready to help. The company in association with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), a global professional body based in the U.S., has started a special training programme to improve the employability of engineering graduates. The initiative launched last week is expected to train 40,000 software engineers in the first three years.

"Graduates will be able to apply for the programme through the 500-odd NIIT centres across the country," says Rajendran.