



process. When we set up a cardiology division, we will employ 300 more. This is in addition to our health care business where we will have a similar number. The oncology sales and marketing team will grow by around 25 to reach 50 plus. There will be around 50 additions in R&D." For sales, Biocon is looking for graduates in pharmacy/life sciences with relevant experience. For quality assurance and R&D, the company wants people with MSc. and Ph.D.

Health care has always been growing on account of population rise, but now it is booming with corporates opening branded hospitals and spreading their network well beyond the metros. It is not just the shortage of skilled manpower and other resources that worries Dr Ashok Chordiya, medical director, Fortis Hospital, Mohali. "Highly skilled super-specialists, middle level and junior level doctors and nurses are required in ever increasing numbers. There is an urgent need to streamline the process of standardisation of training for nurses, technicians

SUMIT AHLUWALIA, 26, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, SUBHIKSHA TRADING SERVICES, DELHI

Sumit Ahluwalia joined the retail sector as restaurant manager after completing his diploma in hotel management. In a few days he will move up to the post of business development manager. "There are so many new players that many of my batchmates are moving from one to the other, getting hikes and promotions," says Sumit. He takes home a little less than Rs 3 lakh a year. The long hours don't deter him, for he belongs to a generation that believes in working hard and partying harder.

and paramedical staff. Fortis Mohali is adding 304 people this year, of whom two-thirds will be super-specialists and nurses." The rest will include engineers, front office staff, IT professionals and technical support staff.

Oil and gas exploration and production is a new hot area, with players looking high and low to find the appropriate people. Says Senthil Kumar, director, HR, Cairn India: "We are in the process of exploration in 11 blocks across the country. We need engineers in civil/structural, electrical, instrumentation, planning and scheduling disciplines." Cairn India is currently developing India's largest oil field, Mangla in Barmer, Rajasthan. With the Centre encouraging more exploration, Senthil expects the demand and the shortage of professionals in this sector to increase. To beat this, Cairn India recruited chemists for its operations in Ravva from a university in Andhra Pradesh. It hired 20 trainee engineers including four women from government engineering colleges of Rajasthan. The starting salary in the energy sector is in the range of Rs 6 lakh to Rs 8 lakh.

Even traditional small sub-sectors like public relations are hiring in a large way. Says Dhruvajyoti Gayan, country head, Brodeur India: "We are looking at hiring an additional 60 per cent of our existing workforce this year. More people will be added at the middle and lower levels." Till recently only big companies with brand equity hired PR firms. Now it is a necessity for players of all sizes,

HOW GOOD A CORPORATE EMPLOYEE CAN YOU BE?

"Every year our recruitment team spans across over 800 campuses in the country, providing employment opportunities to thousands of young Indians. An emerging trend we have witnessed is the large scale attrition of these youngsters from their first job. It is another matter that they show greater affection and continuity to their second job.

On a closer look, the problem of absolute mismatch in expectations from the first employer emerge. While on the one hand

corporates are increasingly averse to spending precious resources or time on developing managerial/behavioural competencies, on the other hand young students continue to be on the campus mode. They fail to understand that the corporate culture expects compliance, initiative and personal discipline from day 1."

Some of the initial problems have their root in expectations that the corporate culture imposes on its citizens. Understanding

these expectations help employees to easily adjust to the culture and demands placed upon them.

Often, textbooks fail to help students manage corporate expectations from their first job. The pressure to perform from day 1 hits upon us like a shock wave! The transition from the campus cocoon to the corporate flight is seldom exhilarating!

A short self-assessment questionnaire follows to analyse where you stand:

making it one of the high growth areas where fresh graduates take home over Rs 3 lakh a year.

If there is a slowdown in any sector, it is IT. Says T. Shamim, director, human capital consulting, Zinnov, a management consulting firm: "Other than organisations looking at India as an emerging market, hiring has considerably slowed down. Salary at the junior levels have stabilised. There is also a dip in the average salary for engineering positions by almost 3 per cent compared with last year."

But that has not led to any fall in the demand for talent. The emergence of successful offshore model in the product development industry has led to an increase in demand for talent. Job profiles such as technical architects or product managers are waiting to be grabbed.

According to the annual compensation and benefit study 2008 by Zinnov, Bangalore continues to be the highest in pay followed by Chennai, Pune and National Capital Region. The study covered compen-

sation and benefits data of 40 product development companies. Pune witnessed an increase of almost 15-20 per cent in the average salary since last year thanks to the growing demand for talent pool in the city.

According to a McKinsey report, the global clinical trial outsourcing to India in the pharmaceutical industry is estimated to reach around Rs 5,000 crore by 2010. This would open up 50,000 new career opportunities for life sciences and medical gradu-

HOT jobs

Remuneration offered by employers

Figures in %

	Base	Rs 20,000	Rs 20,001 to 25,000	Rs 25,001 to 35,000	Rs 35,001 to 50,000	Above Rs 50,000
IT/ITeS	57	33	49	14	-	4
BPO/KPO	57	75	21	2	-	2
Banking	38	74	18	5	-	3
Software engineering	34	38	50	9	3	-
Chartered accountant	27	48	33	19	-	-
Air hostess/Cabin crew	25	52	36	4	8	-
Hotel management	23	70	22	9	-	-
Advertising	22	64	18	9	-	9
Designing	21	48	43	5	-	5
Programming	19	42	42	16	-	-

ates in India.

According to Giovanni Bisignani, director-general and CEO, International Air Transport Association, 17,000 new pilots need to be trained a year to operate the 16,000 new aircraft needed by 2020.

Calling it India's demographic dividend, Smarajit says India is uniquely positioned, as it will have a workforce of over 46 million in 2020, while the rest of the world will face shortage. All these findings, and the current shortage of skills, have spurred the growth in the education and training sectors.

Right now, there are more jobs than people with the required skills. Says Rajan of Ernst and Young: "There is a dearth of talent for 'industry-specific

' roles, where skills from other sectors cannot be either 'transported' or 'transferred'. For roles where skills have a direct precedent in other sectors, the talent yield is manageable." And not all job profiles require an MBA from one of the IIMs. There is an unprecedented need for heavy vehicle operators, construction engineers, electricians, plumbers and associated skills in the infrastructure and housing sectors.

Also, nurses, physiotherapists and vets are emigrating in droves, even as the health care industry expands in India. The shortage of teachers, cooks, chefs and elder care assistants is expected to worsen.

According to Rajan, the sought-

after profiles have changed. The skill sets required now cover a much wider spectrum—from production to supply-chain management expertise, and from vanilla marketing to FMCG experience. "For production and R&D workforce, companies are sweeping the region rather than limiting their recruitment grounds to India," he says.

The year 2008 clearly has a lot to offer for final-year students, across streams. They have only to pick, and train for what they think is their calling. What a contrast with the not-long-ago days of extended queues outside employment exchanges!

With Harshikaa Udasi & Rekha Borgohain Dixit

countries range from automobiles, steel, engineering and chemicals to telecommunications, hospitality and ferrochrome. It is also eyeing the power and mining sectors.

"Today our revenue from Africa is \$400 million. This is likely to exceed \$1.7 billion in the next two-to-four years when many of our greenfield projects become operational," says Raman Dhawan, Managing Director, Tata Africa Holdings, a subsidiary of Tata International.

Others, such as pharma major Ranbaxy, have also benefited from their Africa sojourn. With operations in 43 countries, Ranbaxy has the largest geographical presence on the continent among pharma companies. It has come a long way since establishing its first factory in Nigeria in 1978, and recorded a turnover of \$126 million in 2007. Africa's large number of poor patients affected by HIV/AIDS has meant that Ranbaxy had to dig deep to become a leading provider of affordable, generic anti-HIV medicines.

"We were among the first companies to bring down the prices of basic first-line anti-retroviral regimens to less than \$100 a year, a far cry from the \$10,000 per year expenditure just five to six years ago," says Malvinder M

Singh, CEO, Ranbaxy. The company is now working to develop Arterolane, a low-cost synthetic drug for the treatment of Malaria in sub-Saharan Africa. It hopes to launch the drug in 2011.

Inorganic Route

There are others who have taken the acquisition route to enter Africa. Delhi-based Apollo Tyres, which acquired Dunlop Tyres International in April 2006, has already pumped in Rs 150 crore to create world-class products and increase manufacturing efficiency. Says Onkar S Kanwar, CMD, Apollo Tyres: "Post the acquisition, Dunlop's know-how will boost Apollo's R&D and market reach, enabling us to maintain our technology-driven product and market leadership in the tyre industry, and open up further global opportunities."

Expanding Africa's knowledge base and helping its people become computer savvy has also not escaped attention. NIIT, which has been operating in six countries over the last 10 years, has already produced more than 150,000 information technology professionals, many of whom have found jobs in some of the top multinational firms there, as well as elsewhere in the world.

"Our toughest challenge has been to capture marketshare from established players who have had a head start"

Raman Dhawan
MANAGING DIRECTOR, TATA AFRICA HOLDINGS

"With their English skills, analytical ability and willingness to move, Africans could become a low-cost talent pool"

G Raghavan
PRESIDENT, INDIVIDUAL LEARNING SOLUTIONS, NIIT

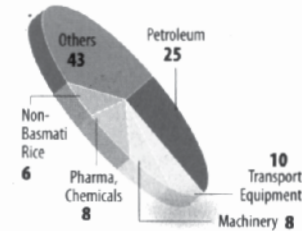


India's Trade With Africa

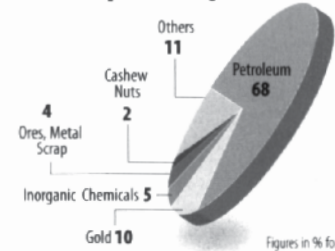
	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
Exports	3,137	3,861	5,578	7,013	10,255
Imports	3,444	3,202	4,006	4,878	14,722
Total Trade	6,582	7,063	9,584	11,892	24,978

Figures in \$ million

Top Five Exports



Top Five Imports



Source: Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Ministry of Commerce and Industry

"With their good English language skills, analytical ability and willingness to move, Africans could well become a low-cost talent pool for Indian companies," says G Raghavan, President of Individual Learning Solutions, NIIT. As Indian companies grapple with skill shortage, the choice will be whether to move operations abroad or get professionals from Africa. "It will be a choice that companies will have to make," he says.

But how difficult is it to do business on the Dark Continent? For Tata's Dhawan, getting trained and skilled manpower, and managing currency because of volatile exchange rates, are the major challenges. There are also issues of culture and the small size of some countries.

Clearly, the time for an African foray is now. As Das points out, "Africa provides a wide canvas for India Inc. Companies only have to put the right colours in the right places." It is just a question of seizing the initiative.

The Economics Times
New Delhi
April 21, 2008

Desi cos follow Dragon in challenging MNCs

Pramugha Mangain
NEW DELHI

INDIA has the second-largest number of homegrown corporate champions holding their fort against the might of multinational giants, according to a recent Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report. The country was ranked second behind China among the ten rapidly growing economies in terms of number of such homegrown leaders.

Consultancy firm BCG shortlisted 50 homegrown companies from developing economies such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and Thailand that are leading their

domestic markets and fending off fierce competition with innovative business models.

While 15 companies were shortlisted from China, 11 Indian companies made it to the list. The Indian firms include Apollo Hospitals, Bharti Airtel, Cavinkare, Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), ICICI Bank, The Indian Hotels Company, ITC, NIIT, SKS Microfinance, Subiksha and Tian Industries.

Of the 50 global homegrown champions, 21 had revenues exceeding \$1-billion in 2006 and the entire group's sales had risen by about 50% between 2005 and 2006, the report revealed. For instance, in India, Bharti Airtel has maintained its leadership in the booming telecom market by taking

on Hutchison Telecom, which later sold its Indian operations to Vodafone in 2007.

Among other examples, GCMMF, which markets dairy products under the Amul brand, has given tough competition to foreign majors such as Cadbury, Nestle and Unilever. ITC leads in the ready-to-cook segment in India.

In the banking sector, ICICI Bank, India's largest private sector bank, has maintained its leadership position, competing with the likes of Citibank, HSBC and Standard Chartered. There is a catch though: Indian laws don't allow foreign banks to expand their operations in the country beyond a certain limit.

IT education and training major NIIT has left US-based Lionbridge behind. Watch

major Tian is way ahead of its competitors, Japan-based Citizen and Swiss watch maker Swatch, in the Indian watch industry.

The report also throws light on successful strategies that the homegrown companies have in common. Unlike global companies, local leaders are not constrained by existing product offerings. Instead, they customise products and services to meet different requirements of the consumers. These leaders, the report said, turn globalisation to their advantage by deploying the latest technologies. Besides, many homegrown champions find innovative ways to benefit from low-cost labour pools and go national to prevent regional rivals from challenging them.

FORCE INDIA

India was ranked second behind China among the ten rapidly growing economies in terms of number of homegrown leaders. While 15 companies were shortlisted from China, 11 Indian companies made it to the BCG list



The Times of Times
Hyderabad
April 25, 2008

An increasing number of armed forces officers—mostly under 40—are seeking premature retirement, creating a huge talent pool of physically fit and mentally alert people. With around two decades of working life left in them, they are all ready to be tapped by India Inc, finds Padmaja Shastri



WG CMDR V SATYANANDAM,
SATYAM BPO

WAR ROOM TO BOARD ROOM

Around 15 out of the 25 Indian Army officers at a just-concluded general management course at the Military College of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering in Secunderabad are thinking of putting in their papers for pre-mature retirement (PMR) once they go back to their units, according to sources. In fact, they are even ready to let go of their pension benefits and shell out Rs 10-15 lakh, which they have to pay the government if they leave before completing their minimum required tenure. They do not seem to be the only ones wanting to quit for better opportunities even if it involves a significant cost, considering the growing pile of pending PMR applications with the three forces. It is around 250 with the army alone, say defence ministry sources.

Cash-in-hand, which is three-four times higher in sectors like IT and telecom, is a big factor in this decision. Typically, a Captain in the army gets less than Rs 20,000 per month in hand, while his cost to the government is around Rs 6.9 lakh per annum. In a corporate job, even if it pays 20 per cent higher package, his/her cash-in-hand nearly triples. And this trend is not entirely a result of the resentment among the officers and the ranks over the Sixth Pay Commission report, which the armed forces feel has given them a short shrift and made a career in the forces unattractive.

"What will I do with a six-room house and a batman, when I cannot give my children quality education and my wife cannot pursue a career, as I get posted at godforsaken places most of the time," a peeved serving mid-level officer asks. Lack of stability in family life due to relocations every two-three years has always existed. But what has changed in the past few years is the bounty of opportunities that have opened up in the world outside, making it easier for them to take off the uniform early on in life.

"Many officers take premature retirement to join the industry as the career progression in the services beyond middle level is very limited," observes Brig. (retd) K Hari Kumar, executive director of Hyderabad Software Exporters Association. Many short-service commissioned officers are also reportedly no longer keen on taking up a permanent commission and are leaving soon after completing their tenure.

Where Are They Marching To?

"I have a database of around 3,000 ex-armed forces officers. Around 60 per cent of them want to join the IT-BPO industry," says Capt R Venkat, CEO of Bridgehead, a Hyderabad-based HR consulting firm that assists Faujis make a transition to a corporate career. Among the other sectors where they are in great demand to fill middle to senior level jobs include infrastructure, retail, telecom, auto, manufacturing, educational institutions, civil aviation, port management and even media.

While some like the Reliance Group and Wipro have been recruiting ex-servicemen for a long time, others like Infosys BPO have begun a focused effort to do so in the past one year. "While it is difficult to put a number to it, we can clearly see that there is a big spurt in the intake of ex-servicemen in the corporate sector," avers Sanjay Shetty, director, operations, EmmayHR, a recruitment services company.

Changing Roles

"Traditionally, ex-servicemen were recruited in security services, administration and logistics departments. "Lately the role has expanded with more ex-servicemen augmenting their qualifications, including diplomas or MBAs, enabling organisations get mature resources with specialised skills," says Harsha Menon, working with CMC Ltd in its corporate human resources department. So, armed forces personnel are increasingly being tapped for almost all areas of business, especially human resource management, training, project management, sales and marketing. They are also being considered for core IT research and development functions.

Why Are Faujis In Demand?

"In an industry which is always looking for new sources of managerial talent, tapping the armed forces after their officers complete their commissions is a great opportunity. They bring great passion, commitment, flexibility and discipline to the job, a rarity among corporate civvies," explains Ganesh Natarajan, chairman of Nasscom and deputy chairman of Zensar Technolo-

gies, a Pune-based mid-size IT-BPO company. Excellent people management and communication skills, ability to withstand pressure, rich experience in crisis management, planning and execution, high integrity, balance and skill-sets would. "This happens as in lower attrition are among the various qualities that companies cite for lapping up ex-service officers and men.



Services have a lot of capability in building professional IT systems. When I joined the company, it was looking for specific skills in ICL mainframe technologies, which were available only with the IAF and army, apart from the railways

Wg Cdr V Shankar
ZENSAR TECHNOLOGIES



I wanted to exploit my potential fully and better utilise my talent. As for the uniform, my wife misses it more than I do

Lt Col Tushar Pitre
KPIT CUMMINS

"They understand that all business is also war," quips the CEO of an IT-BPO company who wants to notch up its share of ex-armed forces employees to 15 per cent of its total headcount from the present five per cent. "Many of them are trained in basic IT skills as most of the army operations today are computer-based. And, many also out-perform their civilian counterparts in development and delivery," points out Wg Cdr V Satyanandam, head of corporate services, Satyam BPO. The forces also give them exposure and experience in various functions like supply chain management, finance, logistics and technical operations. So the corporate sector views them as finished prod-

ucts, well-versed in systems, processes and adherence to rules, requiring little or no training. What's more, they usually cost the company 20-50 per cent less than somebody in the corporate world with similar experience and skill-sets would. "This happens as they initially are not so aware of salaries in the corporate world, unsure of where they will fit in and how to market themselves effectively.

Interestingly, placement cells of the three services and the Directorate General of Recruitment are also aggressively liaising with corporates, and facilitating tapping of talent from among their ex-servicemen.

Leading From The Front

As all their training is aimed at winning, they make successful leaders and they are now climbing the rungs of the corporate ladder with great agility. For instance, Satyam BPO has 14 ex-servicemen, including a Group Captain, two Wing Commanders and a Major; all of whom hold critical positions in HR, logistics management and general administration, according to Kulwinder Singh, global marketing and communications head of the company.

Similarly, CO Ajal Lal of NIIT drives its global channel development across 32 countries, with 250 international centres, from Gurgaon.

"When we interviewed Sqn Ldr Supreet Chandi, she did not fit either of the roles we were recruiting for - sales and business development. But she had this tremendous sense of purpose and goal-oriented approach that we just had to create a role for her," said P Rajendran, COO of NIIT.

Chandi now heads School of Employee Education and Development, NIIT's staff training school in Delhi. At Zensar Technologies, the company's heads of quality, commercial, administration, Poland and Nordic operations and its largest delivery centre are all from the forces. Similarly, Col Gowrishankar Rama Rao, with Sierra Atlantic for the last 12 years has played a major role in leading the company to its first ISO certification in 1988 and has designed and initiated Sierra Leadership Programme, while Indian armed forces loss seems to be increasingly becoming India Inc's gain, corporates however claim they do not still encourage people to leave the forces to join them.

ON A DIFFERENT TURF

The Spouse Factor

Unlike in the past, many of the officers these days have highly qualified and ambitious better-halves, who are not content just playing the lady of the house. "My wife has an M Phil in Microbiogenetics and a B Ed degree. But she could do nothing better than a science teacher's job at small army schools, as I was never posted at a good location. In fact, it was she who motivated me to quit the army three years ago," recalls Lt Col Ravi Srinivas. His wife today is head of ORS Kids', a chain of pre-primary schools run by the DRS Group. So, career aspirations of their spouses, many of whom have professional qualifications like MBA, MBBS and engineering degrees, is pushing officers to jump the fence. "In the last three years of our marriage, we have not stayed together for more than six months as my husband was first posted in Pathankot, then in Siachen and is now in Chandigarh. I can't just chuck my professional commitments, dismantle everything and move every two years," quips Sanya Singh (name changed for privacy reasons). She is a graduate of the National Institute of Fashion Technology and works in a garment export house in Delhi. Her husband - a Major in the army - is doing his best to get out. Finally, you know who is the boss!

Transition from uniform to civvies

As Faujis enter the corporate world, the transition involves not just challenges in the actual work they do, but dramatic changes at their workplace. "You get used to the fact that some of the perks and privileges of the armed forces are no longer there and fellows half your age call you by your first name. The fact that I have no ego, or attitude problem helped. In fact, I do not write my rank anymore, so that I can relate to the younger crowd better," explains Ravi Srinivas, head of facilities at Convergys, an IT-ITES company, who left the army in 2005. His reason to shift: transfers every two years, stagnation at one level, poor pay and perks and a desire to give his son a good quality education. A clarity that he had to simply leverage the skills he gained in the army, like contingency management, process-orientation, questioning status quo and taking a long-term view too helped Srinivas make a smooth transition.

"Once you have commanded a unit, you end up doing a staff-posting, which is not as challenging. I wanted to exploit my potential fully and better utilise my talents. As for the uniform, my wife misses it more than I do," avers Lt Col Tushar Pitre, senior manager, facilities and logistics at KPIT Cummins, an IT consulting company. He really enjoys his multi-tasking kind of portfolio.

Both Srinivas and Pitre also like the fact that they have a lot of freedom to take initiatives in their new jobs and there's nobody breathing down their necks. Moreover, with many organisations already having a few ex-armed forces people on board, they make the transition much smoother for newcomers.

Higher Education

Let a thousand flowers BLOOM

India must take the private route in a big way to promote higher education to make it effective, efficient and bring the focus on quality delivery.

Shreya Biswas reports

THE government may still not be ready to take the plunge. But private participation in education is an idea whose time has definitely come. In fact, in India there's no option but to take the private route for education.

Here's why! India, poised to be one of the next global superpowers, doesn't even have a gross enrollment ratio close to the world average in higher education, forget the best in the world. Of course, there's a close co-relation between development and GER or gross enrollment ratio, in higher education. India has a GER of 11% in contrast to world GER of 23.2%, while the developed economies have a GER of 54.6%. India is wide off that target. And that's after bettering the GER five times and adding around 18,000 higher education institutes in the last four decades.

According to the National Knowledge Commission, India still needs 1,500 more universities by 2013 to keep up the pace of development and fill up the gap in manpower requirement. Not rocket science then that to achieve a target of Rs 21,200 per capita outlay on higher education, up from Rs 13,000 in 2004, private sector participation and an evolved public-private partnership (PPP) model are going to be crucial inputs. Some of the success stories from the private sector institutions are clear signals of the way forward.

Consider Manipal University, which started with a medical college in 1953 and now has 24 colleges to its credit with massive expansion plans. The deemed university plans to expand both in India and overseas. In India, Manipal Education is planning to set up four more campuses with an initial investment of around Rs 100-130 crore for each campus. Proposals for these have been sent to UGC and talks are on with state governments. The overseas expansion will include entering countries other than ones the group already is present in (Nepal, Malaysia,

Dubai and the Caribbean), such as Oman, Indonesia and Vietnam. Discussions are on with them too.

Besides, on the infrastructure front, the university is spending Rs 400 crore to upgrade the facilities in Manipal itself which will continue for the next one or two years. Says Dr R P Wamer, vice chancellor, Manipal University: "It's because of the success of this university that the small town of Manipal has become an education hub and students from across the country and overseas come here."

The engineering and medical focused university now also has more programmes in humanities and social sciences as well.

In fact, the Manipal example fits the bill perfectly if the demand-supply gap across the education sector is taken into account. In 2007, there was a 90% shortage of doctorate scientists, 58% of engineers, 80% of wealth managers and financial analysts, and 20% of post-grads in biotech, according to the Emerging Directions in Global Education report (EDGE 2008). This represents huge opportunities for private players.

Institutions such as Amity have been quick to spot and cash in on the opportunity. It has spent around Rs 1,000 crore in the last 10 years for building up two universities and 700 institutions that cater to 50,000 students with 130 different courses, from sciences to humanities to media. It plans to invest around Rs 2,000 crore in the next two-three years and increase the student intake to 5,00,000 in the next five years. It claims it has been consistently growing at 50% for the last five years and will pace up the growth in the coming years. Says Anil Chauhan, chancellor, Amity University: "We aim to achieve a minimum growth of 100% in terms of student intake revenues; et al. It is absolutely achievable if you look at the Indian scenario."

The not-for-profit initiatives from corporates also give a great boost to the education sector.

Take the case of Vedanta which plans a foray into education with an investment of \$1 billion, opening doors for Indian students. The Vedanta university will be a full fledged varsity with seven-eight colleges. It will also cater to India's huge requirement for quality teachers. The first batch will come in by 2009 and by 2010 the entire university will be fully operational with the ultimate capacity of 100,000 students. Says C V Krishnan, CEO, Vedanta University: "We will make this a self-sufficient university, of international standing and a global centre of learning, spread over 6,000 acres, fully residential with all possible amenities that the faculty and the students may use, from schools to hospitals to entertainment."

Skills today are the most valued commodity and their demand is only expected to go up. There is an expected shortage of 56 million professionals in the working age group in developed countries by 2020. India, however, is expected to have an excess of nearly 47 million youth, who if skilled appropriately can help overcome the global shortage of skilled manpower. An estimated 300,000 engineering graduates and approximately 2 million general graduates, pass out from colleges, every year in India. Ironically, only about 25% of tech grads and 10% of general college grads are suitable for employment in offshore IT & BPO industries. Employability is what concerns everybody today and that's the segment that companies such as NIIT have been targeting for fast and aggressive expansion.

NIIT which started with three IT education centres in Mumbai, Delhi and Madras in 1982, today offers comprehensive learning solutions for individuals, enterprises and institutions across 5,000 locations in 32 countries. It was the first to introduce franchising in IT education and training in India and it has transitioned from an IT training company to a global talent development company now. NIIT and its business partners together have invested more than Rs 500 crore since inception in infrastructure itself. Last fiscal, the company set up three new businesses—NIIT Imperia, NIIT Institute of Finance Banking & Insurance (IFBI) and NIIT Lighthouse—with an initial investment of over Rs 30 crore for setting up infrastructure. Says Vijay Thadani, CEO, NIIT: "As our structure, says Thadani, has galvanised the industrial

economy, skills will prove to be the new oil reservoir for the knowledge economy." NIIT has invested around Rs 150 crore in the last two years creating new offerings for sectors such as insurance, banking and others. The spend will average around Rs 60-70 crore in the next two years too.

Companies such as Educomp and Career Launcher also show how private players are transforming the space. Educomp is growing at over 100% y-o-y. It works with over 7,000 schools and 4 million learners worldwide. It is working with 5,950 schools to set up learning labs, a virtual classroom and digital library. Its tutoring initiatives—mathguru.com and Learninghour.com—are registering fast growth among students. Mathguru has already become the largest education portal in India. It has recently forayed into formal education with the launch of Millennium Schools, Millennium Schools will use the Millennium Learning System (MLS), a fully integrated learning delivery system for schools developed by Educomp. In the next three-four years, there will be 130 millennium schools in the country which will be set up across cities by independent trusts and societies.

Career launcher, a leading test-prep company, plans a major expansion across Asian countries such as Singapore, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan and the US as well as on the home turf. It plans to invest close to Rs 200 crore in the next three-five years for the same. Besides, it will also launch job-oriented courses for emerging sectors such as retail and insurance in 2008.

Moreover, institutions that were developed for furthering social issues are also contributing towards an evolving economy and introducing courses to address the need. Says S Parasuraman, director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS): "We will be developing new teaching and research programmes in urban planning, governance, climate change and adaptation for livelihood security." But all this would work if there is a proper support system and the PPP models work well.

A case in point towards this end is Manipal University's association with the Karnataka government. It provides staff and lab support for Government Wrenlock and Lady Gocher Hospital at Udupi. This helps raise standards of care for poor patients and students and teachers increase the learning experience by giving them a different patient population.

Another major area that will help the sector is foreign direct investment (FDI). Allowing private participation and FDI in education will be positive steps. Not only will it serve to make the education system more effective and efficient but also bring the focus on quality delivery while bringing in the much-needed investment in the sector.

Vocational training, too, needs a great deal of attention. Says Satya Narayanan R, CEO, Career Launcher: "We need to bring in the vocational component into every school across the country. This can be addressed only by bringing VET along with the math and reading curriculum. In fact, they must have the same weightage as reading and arithmetic."

That's a lesson difficult to ignore.

WITH INPUTS FROM SREERADHA D BASU IN KOLKATA & MALINI GOYAL IN NEW DELHI



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NEED OF HOUR COMPANIES REQUIRE NEW AND INNOVATIVE HIRING STRATEGIES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

The million dollar question: how to retain talent

Ruchi Hajela
New Delhi, April 4

HEADHUNTERS NEED to identify innovative ways to recruit and retain talent in a market where demand often exceeds the supply. "Talent is the greatest challenge in today's business environment and new and innovative hiring strategies are the need of the hour if Indian companies have to succeed in the changing global scenario," said P Rajendran, Director and Chief Operating Officer, NIIT, and Member, Confederation of Indian Industry National Committee on HR, at a seminar organised by the CII on Friday.

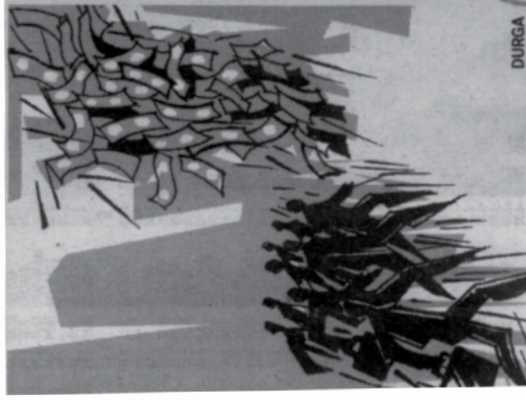
According to Rajendran, hiring teams and not just individuals, hiring from the public sector and recruiting experienced people looking for second careers could be some unique strategies.

From employee friendly HR policies to gripping campaigns, everything can play a role. "It makes sense to address a job campaign at the parent as they play a role in influencing a young person seeking a job," DP Nambiar, Global Sourcing Head, Tata Consultancy Services said.

While premier academic institutes and Tier I cities have been the traditional hunting grounds for recruiters, companies, especially in the Information Technology enabled services sector have already started picking up talent from Tier II and Tier III cities. "In terms of capability, candidates from smaller towns are as good as those coming from bigger cities," said Sandeep S Joshi, Group Manager, Human Resources, Head - Recruitment, Infosys BPO. The company hired over 9,000 people from Tier I, Tier II and Tier III cities last year. TCS made about 22,000

offers in 2007-2008 out of which only about 600 were to management graduates while as many as 4000 were made to BSc diploma holders. While employee referral is common in companies these days, Infosys BPO has a unique programme where you get incentive not just when you refer a person but also when that person in turn refers more people.

S Chandrashekhar, VP, People Relationships Management, Capgemini Consulting India, pointed out that while most HR professionals are struggling to identify efficient ways to recruit the best, not much is happening at the execution level. "How many employers return a candidate's call to confirm his/her application status, or how many companies even care to send a regret letter in case things don't work out," he asked adding, "Talent shortage is our own creation."



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