

# Talent exists, only companies need to look farther

Ask a person stranded at sea or a recruiter looking for talent, and they will tell you exactly that - 'Water water everywhere, not a drop to drink'.

## Engineering and MBA in India

For engineering education, India is home to some 113 odd universities with around 2,088 colleges affiliated to them, churning out over 400,000 engineers a year. Compared to India, China is the world leader – producing 600,000 engineers a year, the United States producing another 70,000 and the whole of Europe put together, producing only 100,000 engineers a year. Talk of MBA and here again, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has recognised nearly 953 institutions, which send out over 75,000 graduates a year – second only to the US.

## The recruitment paradox

Compare the above statistics with the technical jobs created in India in 2005 – around 125,000 and also to the technical jobs expected to be created in 2006 – around 210,000 and you will notice that the supply clearly exceeds the demand. Despite these stark figures, we see recruiters and HR strategists raising hue and cry over the so-called shortage of talent. We are no doubt, facing a recruitment paradox and to add to our woes, there are over 30 million educated unemployed youth registered with employment offices across the country.

## Where is this talent?

There are three key issues that fuel these conflicting perceptions on talent.

### 1. Pond Vs Sea mindset

Firstly, it is the companies who are primarily responsible for this perceived shortage of talent. Companies repeatedly try to fish for talent in the same pond of pedigreed institutions like the IITs, RECs or IIMs. There is a vast sea of talent out there that goes unnoticed because companies fail to look at the bigger picture. There are scores of other institutions that do not figure in the coveted list of 'preferred institutes' but nevertheless produce talented graduates.

An important development here is that large number of new institutions are springing up – not in the metros but in other cities. Organisations like TCS and Infosys have begun recruiting from tier II and tier III cities as well as non pedigreed institutions but it is about time the others started to follow suit.

### 2. Strategic Approach

Fishing in the sea makes it imperative to apply a whole new set of recruitment processes with exhaustive validation strategies. Fishing in the vast sea with the limited knowledge of fishing in a pond will prove worthless and will only increase the cost per hire.

### 3. Best fish Vs Right fish

Organisations need to ask themselves if they want to hire the best from the available talent or the one who is the right fit to the organisational culture, mission and values. Graduates are increasingly looking at how best they can milk their degree, rather than looking at how best they can contribute to an organisation. Therefore, hiring a graduate with the right attitude is essential.

### **Need to change mindsets**

The need of the hour is not to get bogged down by the perceived talent crunch but to change our mindsets, get our acts together and take the challenge head on. The first steps in this direction are:

#### 1. Downscale fitment specs

It is time to review our entry level competencies because suddenly, we have a lot of 'right' people in the talent pool. Given the change in the market dynamics and organisational structures, companies need to understand that the entry level competencies also need to change accordingly. For one, companies are more process oriented today resulting in a considerable decrease in the decision making needs of new recruits. The fitment specifications therefore, should correspondingly reduce.

For example: A MBA in an unstructured organisation can now be replaced by a regular graduate in a structured organisation.

#### 2. Throw the net farther

Talent is out there in the vast sea. It is up to us to spread our net in a wider area. Provide a systematic recruitment process and the right resources – companies need to widen their reach not just academically but also geographically. Recruitment drives spanning the width and breadth of the nation are increasingly becoming common.

The war for talent is never going to stop. It is now time to bridge the gap between the growing talent needs and the existing talent pools. The focus now is on reducing the cost of hire without compromising on quality. We are certainly headed in the right direction, and it will not be long before the saying goes – 'Talent, talent everywhere, nothing out of reach'.

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