

Two of a kind

Recruiters say that while there are differences between B-school graduates from India and abroad, there are many similarities too

Indian companies have traditionally been wary of foreigners heading their businesses and whenever they ventured abroad to expand their empires, they typically posted loyal Indian executives to oversee their interests there. That is no longer the case. They are now increasingly seeing the value that a global workforce brings to the table – diversity, international experience and local knowhow – all of which is becoming critical for growth.

So even as Indian businesses are aggressively expanding their footprint globally, they are also becoming more amenable to recruiting foreigners to head their overseas operations. David Smith, for instance, continued as the CEO of Jaguar Land Rover after Tata Motors acquired it in 2008. (Smith recently quit the company.) Last year, John Lenze took over from Jayant Pendharkar as the global marketing officer of Tata Consul-

tancy Services (TCS). There are other examples too.

The change is not just at the top level; it is happening even more at the entry, junior and middle levels. Indian MNCs are increasingly reaching out to foreign business schools to recruit MBAs for their operations abroad and in some cases, even for their domestic operations.

Take the case of TCS, which derives about 51 per cent of its revenues from overseas. In 2006, S. Ramadorai, then CEO of TCS and now vice-chairman, announced an aggressive drive to reach out to academic institutions abroad to attract a global workforce. TCS went to Harvard, Wharton and New York University in the US to hold pre-placement talks. It also hired students from Europe, Africa and South America through the student-led organisation AIESEC's internship programme. Since then, TCS has been gradually growing its non-Indian workforce. This year, of the 160,400-plus employees TCS has globally, around 10,400 are non-Indians

It's a similar story at other IT majors, for whom the bulk of the revenues comes from overseas. Infosys Technologies currently has a non-Indian employee ratio of under 5 per cent, but plans to raise it to 15 per cent by 2012. Wipro wants to double its international workforce over the next few years. Isaac George, general manager, talent engagement and development at Wipro, says, "With each passing year, we are seeing increased hiring from business schools abroad." George adds that typically, the new recruits join in the same geographies.

Outside of the IT sector also, Indian groups recruit MBA graduates from abroad. The Mahindra group, for instance, has initiated a 'Global Recruit Programme' to attract talent at the undergraduate level. It has tied up with career service centres at Yale,



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Gurjar: different roles for Indian and foreign graduates

Brown, Cornell, Columbia, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania to offer international students a 24-month structured full-time programme. Tech Mahindra, the IT company of the group, also recruits from the London Business School, Warwick Business School, Manchester Business School and others for its operations in the UK.

Comparing B-school students from India and abroad, Mahindra & Mahindra's Rajeev Dubey, president,

Indians are actively hiring abroad

While IT companies like TCS, Infosys and Wipro visit overseas campuses for MBA recruitments, and Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki, technical universities for fresh engineers, other Indian companies hire a mix of fresh and experienced overseas professionals for their growing global operations.

Aditya Birla Group ♦ Essel Propack ♦ Infosys Technologies
♦ ICICI ♦ Mahindra & Mahindra
♦ Maruti Suzuki ♦ Tata Motors
♦ Tata Steel ♦ TCS ♦ Wipro

Source: BI research



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George: sees increased hiring from abroad

♦ RECRUITERS ♦

group HR and aftermarket and member of the group executive board, says that Indian MBA students are as smart as any others. Prasad Medury, partner at Amrop India Consultants, puts it succinctly, "Indian universities are known for the kind of students that graduate from them, while foreign universities are known for the kind of professors they have."

Indeed, international investment banks and consulting firms have been flocking to the IIMs and the Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad for the past few years to offer MBA graduates overseas placements.

Similar curriculum

Recruiters, in fact, point out that the curriculum of MBA programmes across the globe is becoming increasingly similar over the years. There is also a lot more interaction by way of visiting faculties from foreign universities and exchange programmes with universities abroad. All of which result in many similar traits in B-school graduates across the world. "The most significant similarity amongst B-school graduates (Indian and foreign) is that they are adaptive, keen on working in a multi-cultural environment and addressing the needs of global customers," says Nandita Gurjar, senior vice-president and group head, HR, Infosys.

George of Wipro adds, "If we compare graduates with prior industry experience from premier Indian B-schools with their peers in the US or Europe, we see similarities in their domain knowledge, seriousness about their career and clarity about how they would like to build it. Most B-school graduates also exhibit a high level of ambition." According to George, the differences one may find between the average graduates from different countries are mostly cultural, "by way of work style, articulation and so on".

These differences come primarily from the culture of the institutions, the diversity of the student pool, the quality of professors and other intangible nuances which make each MBA programme unique.

Medury of Amrop points out that a major difference between a foreign



SANJAY BORADE

Shrikanth: 'Indian MBAs focus on short-term objectives'

MBA and an Indian one is the prior work experience that students in a foreign B-school have. "Most foreign universities mandate that students have three to five years of work experience, which makes it easier for them to relate to industry practices, whereas 60-70 per cent of Indian students come without any exposure to industry, therefore their knowledge is bookish," he says. Sonal Agarwal, CEO of executive search firm Accord India, adds that because of their prior work experience, which is usually in a global environment, foreign B-school students tend to have a better global perspective, whereas Indian students have a grasp of just the on-ground Indian context.

Gopal Shrikanth, CEO coach and strategist who has been a recruitment panellist for various corporates, points to another difference.

"Indian MBAs focus on short-term objectives like placement, brand, salary, perks, etc, rather than on sustainable long-term objectives like knowledge, skills, multi-disciplinary approaches to problem solving, emotional quotient, networking, etc," he says. "In a foreign B-school, if you do not question the professor, you are viewed as a bad student. In an Indian B-school, if you do question the professor, you are viewed as a bad student." Medury, meanwhile, feels that foreign MBA holders are far more individualistic than their Indian counterparts.

These differences have led companies to look for different attributes in foreign graduates versus Indian ones. For instance, Infosys focusses more on aspects like learnability in Indian B-school students. In foreign students, however, it focusses more on prior relevant work experience and adaptiveness to working in multiple geographies. "The roles we typically offer people from Indian B-schools are in the process and consulting streams, while the roles we typically offer people from foreign B-schools are in the client services stream," explains Gurjar.

At Wipro, too, the focus while hiring from foreign B-schools is on industry domain. "We find that B-school graduates in the US and Europe (who have prior work experience) undertake a management programme to complement their industry knowledge with management and leadership skills. They usually want to get back into the same industry they worked in earlier and in management or client-facing roles. So on these campuses, we look for people from industries that we are focussed on. They often bring rich experience and this is valuable for us in building domain or client relationships," says George.

Going global

Share of international business in total turnover of select groups and companies (%)

Tata	65
Birla	60
Vedanta Resources	45*
Mahindra & Mahindra	25*
Infosys Technologies	85
Essel Propack	80
Bharat Forge	78
Wipro	74
Wockhardt	70
Dr. Reddy's Labs	51
Cipla	50
Maruti Suzuki	17
Asian Paints	17
ITC	15*

*Estimated
Source: BI research

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