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Talent Crunch

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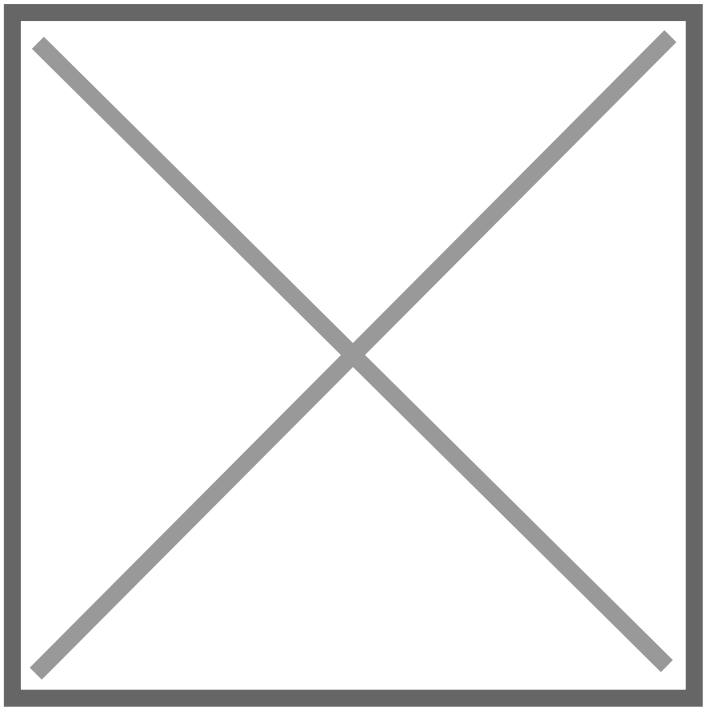
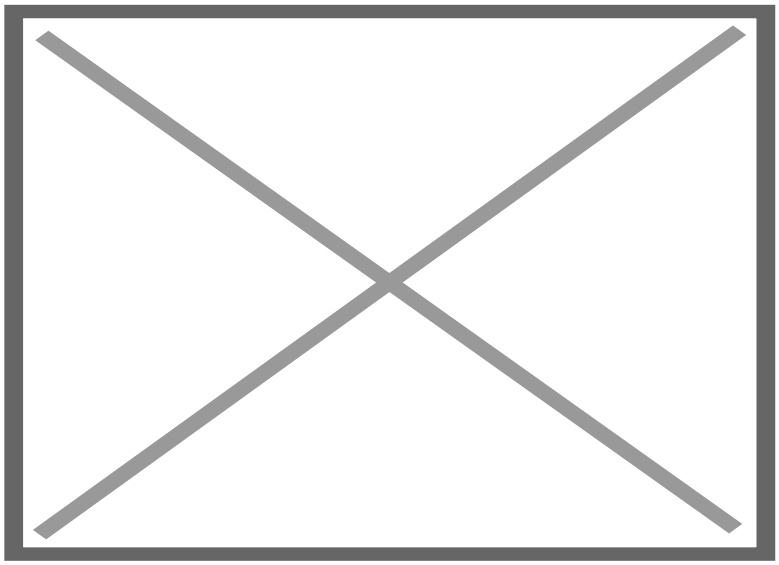


Talent Crunch

The Indian biotech industry is all set to reach the $5-billion mark by 2010. It has been growing at a CAGR of 30 percent since 2003-04 and at this rate the industry will touch the $25 billion mark in 2015. However, the industry and policy makers are ambitious to clock $40 billion in revenues by 2015. Clearly this means a lot of human resource requirement. BioSpectrum spoke to several key people in the industry to find out the status of the current requirements of manpower, quality of manpower, and the expectations from the industry, cutting across various sectors to gauge the mood and sentiments of the industry. We used the data collected during our surveys-BioSpectrum Top 20 Industry Survey and BioSpectrum-ABLE Top 20 Biotech Schools-to substantiate the overall feeling. The news is not so good. Though the demand is high, the supply is low. There is a huge gap between the industry's expectations and availability of quality manpower. The ensuing pages will tell the story.



Dr MK Bhan, secretary, department of biotechnology (DBT), sees creating people for science and technology as the most important concern. "We failed in creating the human resources. We are way down in numbers. I see that as the biggest challenge. We can build many centers but there must be institutional leadership. They should also be engaged. The institutes

need a new kind of drive and excitement. The old system and structure is not sufficient," Dr Bhan said. Though India's science budget is growing at 30 percent, it can grow much faster if there is a demand by the new structure. The scientific community itself needs out to reach out more.

The sentiment expressed by the industry too is same. Almost all the respondents to our questions have the same concern that there is an absolute shortage of qualified workforce and that our university education is still not at the cutting age. While the issue of quality of education can be debated, there is unanimity about the existing shortage. Our recent survey on India's Top 20 Biotech schools showed that 60 percent of the students from the Top Public Institutions prefer to go abroad and study further rather than take up a job. This clearly suggests that the creamy layer is not joining the industry.

Further, it has been observed that a clear gap exists between the academia's assesment of their students as against the industry's requirements. According to a study done by Leader Prospects India (formerly Nobby Nazareth Associates), a leading HR consulting company, one of the largest gaps in the academia was the lack of innovation and entrepreneurship culture. Another major gap has been the isolated approach between the academia and the industry. There are hardly any research collaborations. And the study points out that symbiotic approach to education will be critical to achieve a holistic learning and development. The industry on its part has to look at academia as information warehouses and knowledge power houses and assist the academia in translating this knowledge into beneficial outcomes.

While the industry says there is a shortage of manpower, it was not able to quantify the extent of shortage. BioSpectrum estimates that the industry would need about 60,000 scientific people by 2010. This is a conservative estimate considering the fact that the industry is now shifting its gears.