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Nitin Deshmukh joins as D-G of ABLE

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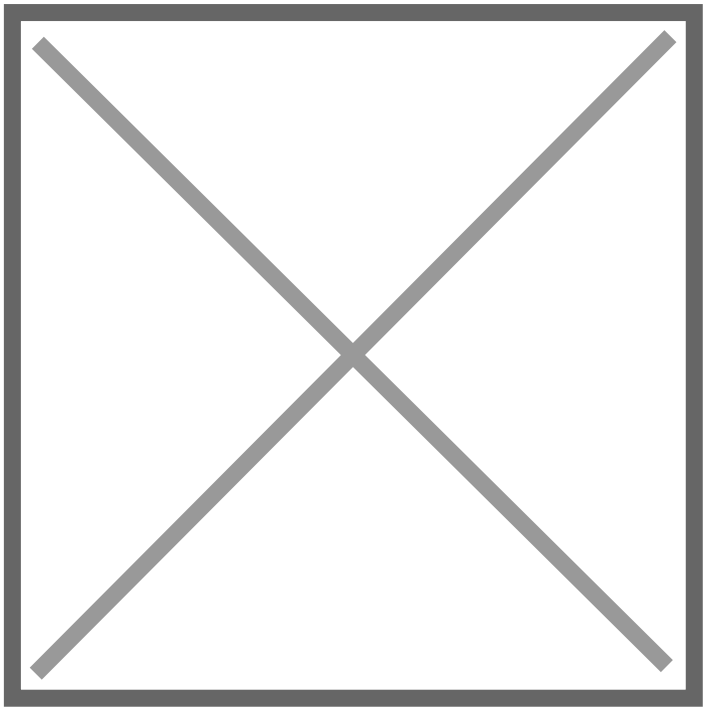
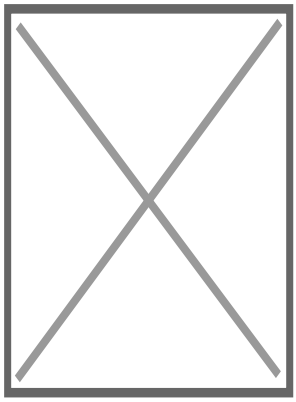


Nitin Deshmukh will be the public face of the biotech industry association, ABLE. Deshmukh has taken over as the first Director-General of ABLE (the newly formed Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises). He will hold this position in addition to his existing responsibilities as Director of a US based Venture Capital Fund, shortly launching its operations in India.



Deshmukh was until recently, Director, Private Equity at Dresdner Kleinwort Capital.

Prior to this, he served as chief of private equity investment at ICICI Ventures. During his 13 years of private equity investment experience, Deshmukh has been involved with several investments in the life science sectorÃ¢â?¬â?•Sun Pharmaceuticals, Morepen Laboratories, Medicorp, Newland Laboratories, Ajanta Pharma and Intas Pharmaceuticals in the Pharma sector and Avesthagen, Advanced Biochemicals, Biocon, Bangalore Genei and Syngene in the biotechnology segment. Prior to his association with private equity banking, Deshmukh had spent four years with CIPLA in various technical and management positions.

A few days after taking up the new job, Deshmukh shared his future plans with BioSpectrum's Executive Editor N Suresh.

Which are the priority issues that will be taken by ABLE immediately?

ABLE intends to work as a policy group to interact and partner with the government and policy makers to determine policies that would help the growth of the industry. The priority issues before us are intellectual property rights (IPR), regulatory affairs and encouraging investments all of which we believe are critical to creating the right image for the sector.

What are your plans to get ABLE off the ground quickly with national presence?

ABLE has just had its first meeting. We have initiated steps to drive the membership at the national level so that there is active participation in our various policy groups and activities from across the country.

The formation of the Executive council is now complete where we now have the President-Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, four regional vice presidents- Varaprasad Reddy (south), Rajesh Jain (north),Raju Barwale (west) and Dr Anil Ghosh (east).

We have regional co-ordinators identified for various cities/regions who would drive the interests of ABLE in these various regions along with the VPs. The association's General Secretary is Prof. Vijay Chandru and the treasurer is Dr Villoo Morawala-Patell. Similarly we have additional members of the executive council co-opted from different parts of the country. We have also formed special interest group committees for agri biotech (Dr KK Narayanan), pharma biotech (Dr Krishna Ella), industrial biotech (Dr P Babu), research services (Dr Swaminathan Subramaniam) and bioinformatics (Dr Pravin Kini), all headed by experts and having special invitees again from different regions of the country.

ABLE is modeled along NASSCOM, the software industry association. How do you intend to acquire similar profile for ABLE in the shortest possible time?

Well we certainly have NASSCOM as our role model. Interestingly, but for the size, the biotech sector is in a similar state of affairs vis-a vis issues as was the software sector in the late eighties when NASSCOM was formed in 1990. So in a sense ABLE formation is timely. We now have the challenge to put together the right building blocks whether they are in terms of getting the entire biotech community on board, identifying the right measures to determine progress or determining the roadmap for growth. Given the vastness of the sector and the complexities this is a huge task and the next three years would be critical to laying the foundation of ABLE.

How many members are you targeting to enroll in ABLE? Any wish list?

As I mentioned earlier, we have the executive council in place which has a national face and we have our immediate task cut out for a membership drive which will also help us to put together a good database eventually. We expect to have at least 75 percent of the biotech companies in the country on board by March 2004. Apart from that we are also targeting for associate membership from the biotech support community which would include all the associated technology players, biotech equipment manufacturers, the investors, executive research firms, consulting firms and the research institutions. We therefore expect to have a very healthy membership in the next 12 months.

Personally, where do you visualize ABLE will be in two years?

In the next two to three years, I would expect ABLE to be not just a strong face of the Indian biotech sector but with a clear vision of a fairly well defined roadmap for a long term sustainable growth of the sector.