

BioSuppliers a hotspot for biomarketing skills

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Several companies Agilent, Alfa Laval, Amersham Biosciences, BioRad, Cambrex Chemicals, Kendro, Millipore, Sartorius, Thermo Electron, Waters India and others have set up their subsidiaries in India and are supplying equipment on a large scale to the Indian biotech industry. Besides, there are Indian companies like Ace Instruments, Andel Equipments, Bangalore Genei, Biotech India, Genetix Biotech Asia, Life Technologies, Pharmalab, Praj Industries, Span Diagnostics and Toshniwal Instruments, which are manufacturing/supplying key equipments, consumables, etc., to the biotech sector.

Employer Expectations

Qualifications Required

What are companies looking for? There is no one set pattern of job profile. "BioSuppliers could be both trading companies and manufacturers. Further, biosuppliers could be classified on the nature of equipments/instruments or reagents, enzymes and Research and Development. Postgraduate, doctorate, post-doctorate and even all the biosuppliers together. The segment is more niche unlike biopharma/bioagri," elaborated Dr. P. Balaji, CEO, Bangalore Genei. The opportunities vary from company to company. If the company is primarily into biology, biotechnology, tissue culture, plant breeding, seed manufacturing, genetics, genomics, proteomics, etc. of the leading manufacturers of engineering equipment and supplier of complete plants, then the main job functions will be pre engineering of the processes and products, preparing specifications and marketing procurement and execution of projects with documentation. Accordingly, the company will look out for chemical/biotech engineers. Similarly, if the core competency of the organization is making reagents, diagnostic kits, enzymes, etc. An undergraduate/postgraduate degree with relevant post graduation or doctorate degree in biochemistry, biotechnology, molecular biology, sales and marketing fields. And if the company is a distributor of biotech products then it will require candidates having sound technical knowledge about the products along with strong sales and marketing background.

Selection Procedure

Take another case. Cambrex Chemicals, a 100 percent subsidiary of the US based Cambrex Corp., assists the biotech industry in maintaining its product quality and also supplies ingredients used by the research institutions to develop new products. The job categories are business managers, technical service managers, etc. We require graduates with a basic biological background and any additional qualifications would add value. The candidates should possess integrity, team-playing capability and the ability to work independently," said Vivek Varma, business manager at biotherapeutics, Cambrex Chemicals.

Selection Edge

"At Genetix the job categories are business development executives, product specialist and customer care representatives," said Arun Prakash, managing director, Genetix. The company offers marketing and technical support to biotech and life sciences companies. "The qualifications required are MSc (for business development executives), PhD for product specialist (males/ females), graduates with computer skills for customer care representatives (females)," he added.

In Amersham Biosciences, a leading global provider of biotech systems, products and services used in gene and protein research, drug discovery, development and biopharmaceutical manufacturing, the different levels of jobs throughout the organization range from product specialists, area manager, product manager, sales manager, application specialists, service engineers and service managers. "We have defined key responsibilities and accountability for each position/functions. For example, a sales person or product specialist would assist in product management, key account management and be responsible for conducting seminars and demonstrations to customer. Good communication skills, teamwork, self-motivation, perseverance, technical skills and a positive attitude are a few things we look for in a candidate. Candidates with exposure to the western scientific arena are also welcomed," said senior managers from Amersham.

"In general, we look for candidates with a MSc or PhD degree in bio-related fields like molecular biology, biochemistry, and chemical engineering. A couple of years of either sales experience with a similar company or a couple of years of research experience in a lab or industry is a requirement. Specialization in a particular area is a definite plus. Being a technology-intensive company, a couple of years of either research or sales experience is a must," they added.

Wipro Health Science is one of the top service providers, offering both IT solutions and supplying equipment to the biotech industry. According to Wipro officials, "At present the job categories are consultants, solution architects and software engineers and also biochemists in the future. The job functions are conceptualizing, designing and delivering solutions to research laboratories in industry and academia. Wipro is also setting up a reagent kitting setup to deliver reagents for its hardware solutions at a better price".

Selection Procedure

trend

"The procedure for selection is recruitment either through manpower consultants (for more senior roles) or walk-in interviews (for junior roles). The qualifications required is laboratory background with masters or greater for consultants and B.E. for software delivery. We look for technical skills, customer focus and ability to envision solutions. Additionally, there are internal Wipro criteria for each hired person. Better communication skills and an ability to listen and comprehend what is being said clearly can give a definite selection edge, " they added. "Although internally there is a full-fledged training process and training courses on both technical as well as soft skills but it helps if the candidate has prior laboratory expertise and experience." Wipro is not currently recruiting but sees considerable scope in the next year.

The growth potential for employees is excellent. Plenty of opportunity is available for growth within India and internationally too. "We are around 700 employees, for bio process department we are 13 and expected to grow to 20 by year end 2004. Depending on our growth of business, we may plan to recruit next year," said MT. Rananaware. "The opportunity in the BioSuppliers segment is growing and in a manufacturing company like ours, there is a huge growth potential," commented Dr Babu of Bangalore Genei. "The person can become the head of his/her respective department along with improvement in job competence and personality development through good working environment and training programs. Supply is Packaging Genetix.

Rolly Dureha

- The total segment is expected to grow between 20-25 percent.