

THE 2017 WAR FOR TALENT

Even in a challenging placement scenario, top recruiters made a beeline for the cream of MBA talent across campuses to drive the next wave of digital transformation. **Sreeradha D. Basu & Varuni Khosla report**

For the 7,000-plus MBAs graduating from India's leading 26 business schools, the 2017 placement season came with its own set of challenges in the immediate aftermath of demonetisation. Companies went cautious on the hiring front; salary packages across campuses saw an average 5-10% increase and the mood, in general, was more subdued than in the preceding few years. Amid all this, however, for blue-chip recruiters, MBA talent continued to be a key driver of their India growth story. Digital transformation of businesses and the emerging opportunities that arose from the current dynamic business environment was one of the primary areas B-school graduates were hired for this year.

"For us, digital transformation continues to be a strong driver for demand," said James Lennox, chief people officer at Cognizant, which snagged the numero uno position once again in the top recruiters list, after losing out to Deloitte last year. "As physical value chains give way to more agile value chains, where data and digital capabilities are infused at every step of the process, winning requires a new engagement model and different capabilities," he said. "This trend is creating significant opportunities for B-school graduates, as clients look for advice on leveraging next-generation technologies to optimise their businesses and drive innovation."

The company said it had hired close to 600 MBA students from the 2017 graduating batch. Over the last three years, in fact it has hired more than 1,700 MBAs to help propel business growth across roles as varied as management and business consulting, client relationship management, business analysis, analytics and insights, solutions portfolio expansion, corporate development, M&A, change management and business integration. Cognizant Consulting has been the biggest recruiter of management graduates, with more than 6,000 consultants globally.

"Our consulting business continues to take a lead role in many of our transformation deals, helping architect the deals and driving change in our clients' businesses," Lennox said. "We have been a pioneer in having realised the value that B-school graduates bring to the table and have constantly reinvented ourselves to engage in the best possible ways to identify premium business talent that is relevant for Cognizant."

Rubbing shoulders with Cognizant in the top three were ICICI Bank and Deloitte, both of which have been fixtures in the top 10, since 2011.

"As we embark on the next wave of transformation and strengthen our culture of being dynamic, agile and customer-centric, we will continue to hire top-quality talent from premier business and engineering schools as a part of our strategy," said TK Srirang, head of human resources at ICICI Bank. The bank said it has recruited 223 candidates from B-schools this year.

Now in its seventh year, the ET Top Recruiters survey was based on data collated from 26 leading business schools across India: IIM Bangalore; IIM Lucknow; IIM Indore; IIM Kozhikode; XLRI-Xavier School of Management; Management Development Institute (MDI) Gurgaon; Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Delhi; Faculty of Management Studies (FMS), Delhi; SP Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR); IIM Shillong; Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS); IIM Trichy; IIM Rohtak; IIM Udaipur; Xavier Institute of Management (XIM), Bhubaneswar; Shailesh J Mehta School of Management (SJMOSOM), IIT Bombay; WESchool; National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE), Mumbai; Great Lakes Institute of Management; Goa Institute of Management; Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (earlier FMS-BHU); IIM Kashipur; International Management Institute (IMI), Delhi; Symbiosis Centre for Management and Human Resource Development (SCMHRD), Pune; Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), Pune; and Department of Management Studies (DoMS), IIT Madras.

CONSULTING, TECH RULE

Consulting giants dominated the list this year, a testimony to their growing need for MBA talent that can be rapidly deployed to meet clients' needs.

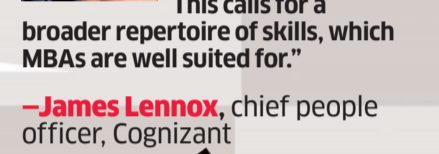
"Increasingly, several firms continue to explore options to set up global development centres in the country, and this too could be fuelling this metric," said SV Nathan, chief talent officer at Deloitte India.

Deloitte slipped to third position on the ET Top Recruiters list, but the company said it has hired over 1,000 graduates from the Class of 2017 across business schools as in past years. MBA graduates were hired across business verticals and services.

B-school hiring has increased by over 45% at IT services consultant Capgemini, a move that has catapulted the company into the top five of the top recruiters' list after a four-year gap. Nearly 25% of the offers made



"Clients' expectations from consulting have evolved — they expect consulting companies to not just provide advice, but also deliver the promised benefits. This calls for a broader repertoire of skills, which MBAs are well suited for."



—James Lennox, chief people officer, Cognizant



"We have restructured our engagement with B-schools to ensure that our efforts are aligned to our business goals. We aim to create higher brand awareness and deeper connect with the institutions."



—Anil Jalali, chief human resources officer, India, Capgemini



at B-schools include students from the IIMs.

"Capgemini in India is today a 100,000-people organisation and is the delivery backbone of the group. As we grow in India, it is important for us to identify and train young potential leaders for the future," said Anil Jalali, chief of human resources for India at Capgemini.

Digital disruption today needs companies to approach client needs in a very different manner. "Management students come trained with business acumen and a holistic understanding of the industry and have a perspective of various functions due to specialisation in key subjects like marketing, finance, operations etc. This allows us to train them for key roles across sales, pre-sales, consulting," Jalali said.

IT company Wipro, which hired more than 200 students from premier B-schools this year said demand is primarily driven by business needs and organisational dynamics.

"IT / ITeS industry is going through a transformational journey of providing higher-value services to their clients," said a spokesperson. "Wipro has been making investments in emerging technologies so as to enable clients to become future-ready in this era of digital transformation. To fuel this investment, we continue to attract and retain MBA graduate talent who contribute in the disruptive fields of consulting, digital, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, etc."

AMAZON UNRIVALLED

Even as e-commerce hiring fell sharply, Amazon continued its upward journey in the top recruiter rankings. Rival Flipkart went off campuses, but Amazon, which visits about 30 campuses yearly, stepped up its hiring from campuses by 15-18% this year.

"As we grow, we have made significant progress in attracting top MBA talent from top B-schools in the country. Our MBA hiring is not only about numbers but also the quality and diversity of talent we bring in. We hire in triple digits every year and that number is only increasing," said Priti R, director, talent acquisition, APAC. "Our focus is to offer students career choices in multiple areas. We offer career choices across 20+ roles which is unique to Amazon. Our focus is also on diversity with 25% of our hires being females."

Amazon hires for roles in retail, operations, HR and finance and said it's not the pedigree of the institute that's critical but a combination of student interest and ability to meet the company's hiring bar.

"Our offer decline rate is about 6% today, a testimony to the fact that we are focusing on building careers and not just offering jobs," Priti said.

According to her, students make for the customer base of Amazon and the company wants to provide them multiple career options. For this, it has also expanded ACE — its top B-school competition for schools in Asia, thus building a community that goes beyond India and allows MBA students to get to learn more from other schools in the region.

Consulting firm EY, which entered the ET top recruiters list for the first time in the seven years of the survey, said it had hired around 300 MBA students, up 15% from last year. Consulting companies have played a strong role in hiring this year and EY has hired for roles in advisory, transactions and digital and analytics.

The company is focusing strongly on summer internships, which becomes the future hiring pipeline.

"We have a robust summer internship programme with an outlook to convert pre-placement offers and so far, we have seen a conversion ratio of 60% at our target premier schools," said Sandeep Kohli, talent leader, EY.

"B-school hires form an integral part of our overall strategy and bring in fresh insights relevant to the ever-changing business, customer and technology landscape," he added.

For professional services organisations, the current market presents a range of opportunities in light of the fact that the dynamic business environment, changes in law and regulation, evolving business models, and the impact of technology related innovations and disruptions, has most industries and companies working toward addressing the emerging opportunities and challenges.

In order to respond to the market needs, skilled and agile talent continues to be a requirement that drives the need for management skills across specific growth areas, said Shalini Pillay, head, people, performance and culture at KPMG in India.

In keeping with the trend of consulting firms soaking up big numbers across B-schools this year, KPMG, too, has recruited a sizable 350 students from the 2017 graduating batch. In the past two years, across all businesses, B-school hires have increased by more than 50%, Pillay said.

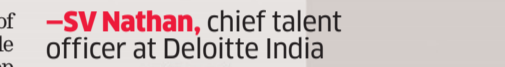
The company hired for management consulting, risk consulting and deal advisory. These teams work across a wide spectrum of clients — large multinationals, promoter-driven companies, startups, the government and regulators.

"Our MBA hires represent diversity of academic backgrounds, work experiences and skills," Pillay said. "To be able to respond to the market with innovative solutions to complex business challenges, one does require good diversity of skills in the talent repository. The MBA talent certainly enhances our ability to do this and they play an important role in our growth strategy."

—Additional Inputs: Rica Bhattacharyya, Brinda Dasgupta, Prachi Verma Dadhwal



"A bulk of our hiring could be attributed to the prevalent marketplace shifts and the growing need for MBA talent that can be rapidly deployed to the consulting needs of clients' across the world."



—SV Nathan, chief talent officer at Deloitte India



"As we embark on the next wave of transformation and strengthen our culture of being dynamic, agile and customer-centric, we will continue to hire top quality talent from premier business and engineering schools as a part of our strategy."



—TK Srirang, head, HR, ICICI Bank



Finance Pays the Best; First-Timers Make a Mark

TOP 10 SINCE THE SURVEY STARTED

2017	2016	2015	2014
1 Cognizant	1 Deloitte	1 Cognizant	1 Cognizant
2 ICICI Bank	2 Cognizant	2 Wipro	2 ICICI Bank
3 Deloitte	3 ICICI Bank	3 Deloitte	3 Deloitte
4 Capgemini	4 Infosys	4 HCL Tech	4 Wipro
5 Wipro	5 Wipro	5 ICICI Bank	5 HCL Tech
6 Amazon	6 Accenture	6 KPMG	6 Accenture
7 EY	7 KPMG	7 Amazon	7 Goldman Sachs
8 HCL Tech	8 TCS	8 Vodafone	8 RIL
9 Accenture	9 Amazon	9 Snapdeal	9 Flipkart
10 KPMG	10 IBM	10 Accenture	10 Amazon
2013	2012	2011	
1 Cognizant	1 IBM	1 ICICI Bank	
2 Capgemini	2 Cognizant	2 Infosys	
3 Deloitte	3 Infosys	3 Deloitte	
4 Wipro	4 Deloitte	4 P&G	
5 Bharti Airtel	5 ICICI Bank	5 Cognizant	
6 ICICI Bank	6 Accenture	6 Accenture	
7 Accenture	7 Airtel	7 Wipro	
8 TCS	8 BCG	8 Yes Bank	
9 BCG	9 HCL Tech	9 JP Morgan Chase	
10 Goldman Sachs	10 Yes Bank	10 Axis Bank	

Money Matters

While salary packages at some B-schools remained more or less the same as last year, at most others, it went up by an average of 5-10%. The average salary at IIM Bangalore was Rs 21.42 lakh (versus Rs 21.03 lakh), while the median salary went up by Rs 1 lakh to Rs 21 lakh per annum.



The highest annual salary offered at XLRI was Rs 43 lakh, Rs 5 lakh lower than the previous batch, while the average salary went up to Rs 19.2 lakh (up by Rs 70,000). IIM Kozhikode had a maximum salary of Rs 37 lakh, unchanged from last year. XIMB Bhubaneswar had an average salary of Rs 13.18 lakh, up from last year's Rs 12.44 lakh. The maximum salary offered at IIM Kashipur was Rs 53 lakh, the same as the year before. But the average salary rose by Rs 1 lakh from last year to Rs 13 lakh.



Gainers included IIM Trichy, which saw a big jump in maximum salary from Rs 23.8 lakh to Rs 33 lakh this year. The average cost to company (CTC) offered at the Shailesh J Mehta School of Management, IIT Bombay saw a rise from Rs 16.5 lakh to Rs 17.63 lakh. At DMS-IIT Madras, average CTC went up from Rs 10.83 lakh to Rs 12 lakh.

National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE) saw an average salary of Rs 15.86 lakh, while the maximum domestic package was Rs 39.5 lakh. WESchool saw a sharp dip in maximum salary from Rs 21 lakh to Rs 15 lakh.

Domains In The Limelight

At IIM Shillong, finance emerged as the highest paying domain with annual CTCs of up to Rs 26 lakh and 25% of the entire batch opting for the sector. In FMS-BHU, BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance) had a 47% share. At MDI Gurgaon, the human resources function saw a surge in demand from industry this year. The financial sector too saw substantial growth this year in niche roles such as investment banking, insurance, securities, risk management and more.

Pre-Placement Offers

Companies increasingly opted for the pre-placement offer (PPO) route, preferring to hire students they had tried and tested as summer interns. There was a significant increase in pre-placement offers at XLRI over last year. At Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, 42% of the batch received PPOs and PPIs (pre-placement interviews), a 20% increase from 2016. At IIM Trichy, pre-placement offers/interviews shot up by 19%. Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Pune, saw 37% of the batch bagging PPOs.

Sectors Gaining Prominence

E-commerce, IT, operations offers rose even as international offers doubled at FMS Delhi. Digital profiles being offered at IIM New Delhi rose. There was a sharp change in marketing profiles of fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies from classic sales and distribution profiles to digital advertising. At IIFT Delhi, companies were conservative and hired for established roles only. For them, FMCG was a sector where growth was aggressive. There was an increased trend toward digital marketing and business analytics at WESchool. At IIM Kozhikode, there was an increase in offers made by healthcare companies.

SBI Emerges Prominent Recruiter

India's biggest bank was in aggressive hiring mode across campuses. State Bank of India was the top recruiter at IIM Kashipur, hiring seven students, with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation a close second with six offers. Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB) had 10 offers from SBI, and IIM Trichy and IIM Udaipur had six offers each.

First-Time Recruiters

In keeping with a trend that has steadily been gaining momentum, more new recruiters entered the fray, as institutes tried to balance out the drop in individual numbers per recruiter. IIM Lucknow had as many as 52 first timers including Societe Generale and UAE Exchange. There were 42 new companies that came to XLRI while SP Jain Institute of Management and Research had over 30 new recruiters including Cipla and Cummins. At IIM Indore, close to 20 new recruiters showed up. At IIM Rohtak, first-time recruiters included finance companies like Muthoot Fincorp, IDFC as well as Alpen Capital, among others. At Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, new recruiters included Adobe, Grant Thornton, Larsen and Toubro as well as Shell, while at Goa Institute of Management, first-time recruiters included ITC, Welspun and Alstom, among others.

Startups / E-commerce Hiring

Despite e-commerce/startup hiring plummeting across campuses, some companies made their presence felt. Among the big names, Flipkart stayed away but Amazon more than made up for this by increasing recruitments by 15-18%. Ola Cabs and Paytm hired three students each from IIM Bangalore, while Uber and Swiggy hired one each. Culture Machine and Bluestone, among others, hired from IIM Lucknow. At XLRI, recruiters from this space included Paytm, Rivigo, Uber, Oyo as well as Shopclues. Next Education hired seven students from MDI Gurgaon, while Rivigo hired three. Pharmeasy hired one student from IIT Delhi.