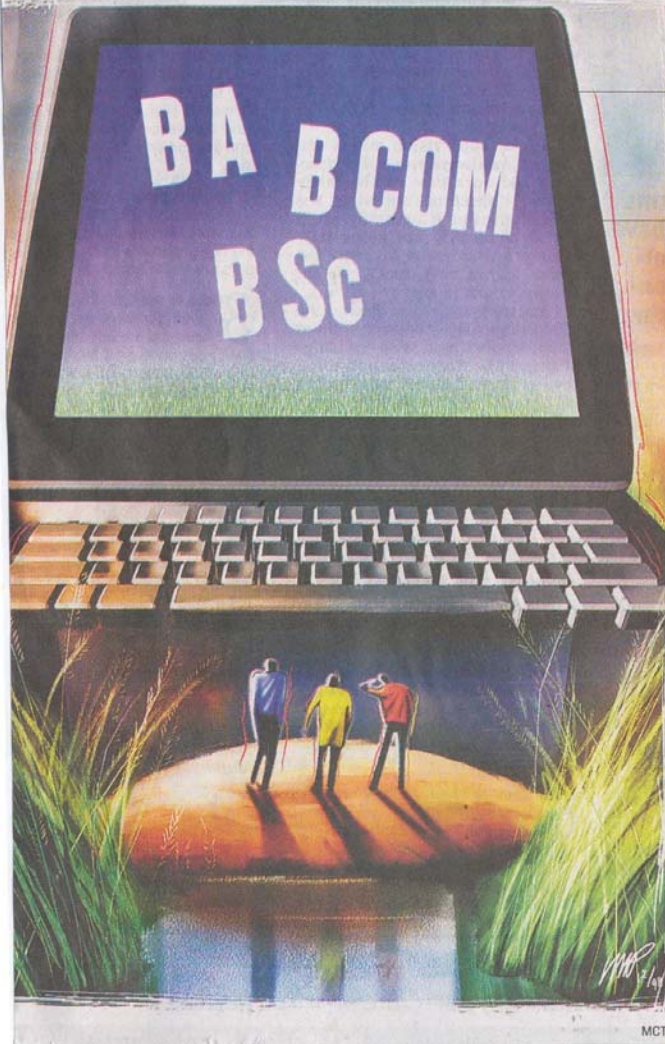


Tech vistas



Tech firms are looking at hiring arts and commerce graduates—even as they pick students from the pure sciences—to fill a gnawing manpower crunch, says **Venetia Fernandes**

Selva Muthiah, a BSc (Geology) graduate, heads the Computer Aided Facilities Management projects at Hyderabad-based Sat Nav Technologies. He has also been the architect of various CAFM projects, which cater to infrastructural needs of clients.

Mitalee Vedak, a BSc (IT) graduate, is leading a team of five engineering graduates on an assignment at Patni Computer Systems. The team is working on developing a software that will help a car leasing firm track its business growth.

MUTHIAH and Vedak were recruited as fresh graduates by tech firms that till at least five years ago focused on recruiting engineering graduates.

Science, Commerce and Arts colleges are the new hunting grounds for tech companies, who are looking to tackle a rising manpower crunch. According to the 2005 NASSCOM-McKinsey Report, although India contributes 28 per cent to the pool of knowledge workers globally, by 2010 it will face a shortage of five lakh such workers.

Human Resource firm, Summit HR, which services clients like HP, Flextronics and Sun Microsystems advises its tech clients to follow a "hire for attitude and train for skills" formula. "Many tech companies today have a number of jobs that do not require a deep knowledge of technology but call for hard working, smart, team-oriented people," says Chairman and CEO, Summit HR Worldwide Ranjan Sinha.

In November, Tata Consultancy Services unveiled their science-to-software programme. A pilot project currently underway has 500 BSc graduates undergoing training at Chennai. "TCS's ability to partner with engineering colleges has been successful in developing a good talent pool. Now, is the time to take this further by encouraging the vast pool of young science graduates to be a part of this global growth story," says CEO of TCS, S. Ramadoral.

ARTS GRADUATES TOO

But tech majors today are not targeting science graduates alone. There's good news for Arts and Commerce students as well. Tech Mahindra is looking to hire 1,000 Science, Arts and Commerce graduates at its recruitment drive which began on December 4. Candidates who have consistently scored 60 per cent and have a year's work

experience will be interviewed and face aptitude tests.

"There are a number of jobs that make up the life-cycle of a project. The recruits will work on programme testing, post-programme maintenance and tech support," says vice-president, Resource Management Group, Tech Mahindra L.K. Bhatia. "They will be put into teams and put under the guidance of a mentor," he adds.

TRAINING

Once hired as junior technical associates, the recruits will undergo training for three months in basics of software programming—usually taught in engineering courses—as well as soft skill modules.

Over the last three years, Tech Mahindra has also held campus recruitment programmes in 75 science colleges across the country. The graduate recruits undergo training for six months. Once complete, they do a Masters in Software Programming via correspondence through BITS Pilani for four-and-a-half years.

Non-engineering recruits at Patni Computer Systems (PCS) can do the BITS Pilani programme too. The firm, which has been recruiting science graduates with work experience for over a decade, launched a graduate recruitment programme in 2000 and inducts 150 to 175 recruits annually.

SALARY SCALE

Employees with a non-technical background often start at a pay scale that varies between 25 per cent and 40 per cent of that of their tech colleagues. But firms ensure that within two years the training brings them on par with engineering graduates.

"Then, increments are purely based on the individual's performance. We do not make any differentiation," says Sunil Kuwalekar, senior vice-president, Learning and Leadership Development, PCS.

But in addition to resolving the manpower crunch, it is also a long-term retention strategy that prompts firms to invest in training this 5 to 10 per cent non-tech segment. Says Bhatia: "We pick people, invest in their training and two years later they are part of mainstream processes."

MD, SatNav Technologies, Amit Prasad, says that post-Y2K, tech firms have taken on civil and bio-technical engineers. "Companies invest in training these individuals in software development. Why not give other graduates a chance too?" he adds. ■