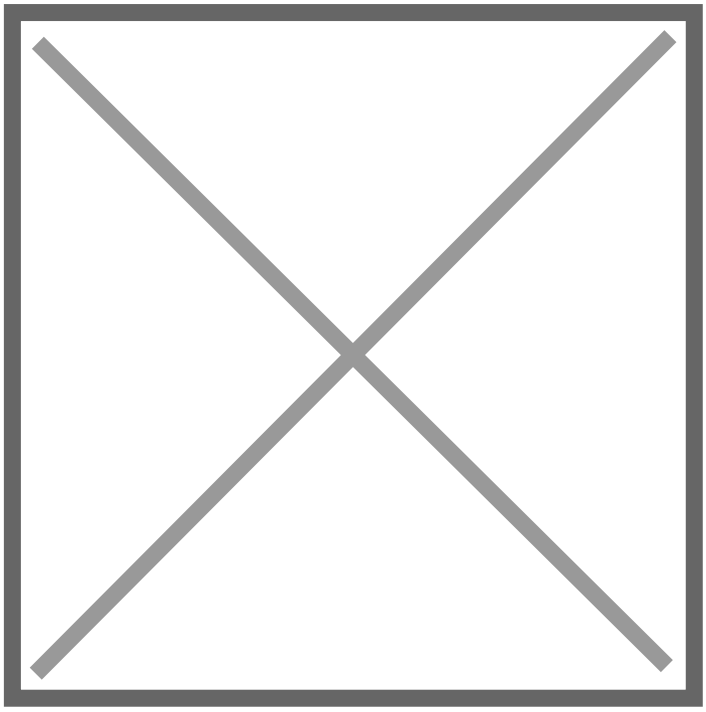
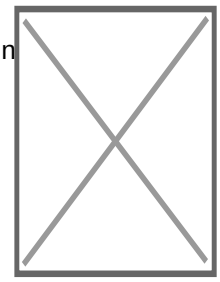
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$10 Billion Bioinformatics Dream

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Though small, the industry wants to be part of a $10 billion dream.



The global bioinformatics market was valued at around $697 million in 2001 and is expected to increase to around $1.7 billion by 2006. There are three areas of opportunities in bioinformatics for India.

- At the highest level is the integrated research application service providers.
- Then there are the providers of data base services and discovery software.
- The software requirements of the biotech industry include micro array analysis, database software, sequence analysis, visualization software, array management and testing in silico.

It is possible to achieve a 5 percent global market share [of bioinformatics] by 2005, [which is] a $3 billion opportunity in India," says a CII study published in February 2004. Ashok Kolaskar, who chairs the Department of Biotechnology task force on bioinformatics, is confident of the Indian bioinformatics industry earning $2.5 billion by 2008. "It is already earning $400 million and pushing it six times is not unrealistic," he says. Source: Nature Biotechnology 22, 933 (2004)

Companies in India

The bioinformatics industry is mushrooming around the IT services centers. That is why we see a lot of companies based in the South, especially in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai with few companies in the North. Accelrys, Bigtec, CytoGenomics Genotypic, Jalaja Technologyis, Infosys, Kshema Technologies, IBM India, SysArris Software, Systat Software and Strand Genomics are some of the leading names that have a base in Bangalore. BioMed Informatics, GVK Biosciences, Caliber Technologies, Bijam Biosciences, a company of the Nagarjuna group, BioMakro, Helix Genomics, Molecular Connections, TCS, Ocimum Biosolutions and Shakti Bio Systems are based in Hyderabad.

The industry is small and is estimated to be Rs 80 crore in size. The Indian players are also small but they have been developing global products and quality services. CytoGenomics, Helix Genomics, LabVantage, Mascon Life Sciences, Ocimum Biosolutions, SciNova Technologies, Strand Genomics, TCS, and VLife Sciences have come up with a suite of products, which are gaining global acceptance.

Today most of the companies in this segment are small to mid size, with employees ranging from 25 to 200 plus and the average man to women ratio is 2:1. The salary range depends on the experience and capabilities of the person and performers are recognized and well rewarded. While the starting salaries could be anywhere from Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 per month depending on the experience of the candidate, it can go up very high as there is a review every six months. The salaries offered can start from Rs 1.8-2 lakh per annum and can reach as high as Rs 12-15 lakh per annum based on the experience and type of skills.

Bioinformatics Policy of India (BPIÃ¢â?¬â??2004)

The Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, has identified bioinformatics as an area of high priority during the tenth plan period to ensure that this sector attains levels demanded in the international arena. The BPI has its focus on resource building in bioinformatics using the infrastructure already available and to ensure venture capital funding for public-private partnership in bioinformatics. The objective is that India should create a niche in bioinformatics industry and make bioinformatics a $10 billion industry by the end of 10th Plan period.

Dr Pravin Kini
Managing Director,
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