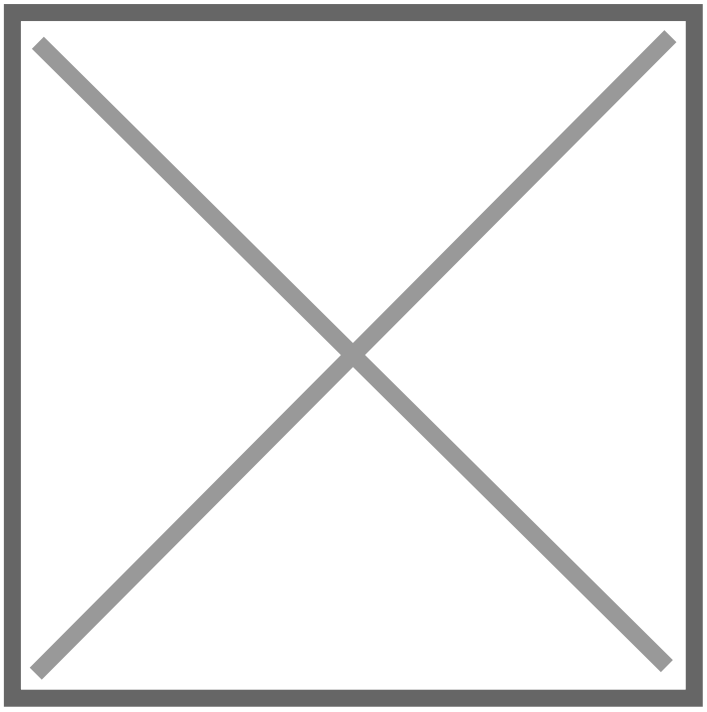
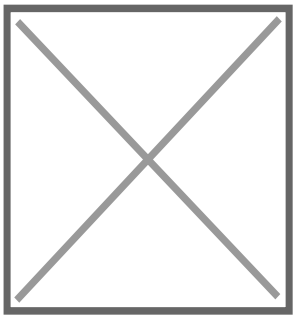
BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

How to gain experience in biotech

11 October 2011 | News





In the past few weeks, BioSpectrum has had face-to-face interactions with over 100 research heads of biotech companies during the two BS Technology Forum (BSTF) events held in Bangalore and Mumbai. A lot of extremely useful sharing of knowledge and experience took place in these sessions which will be distilled and disseminated widely in the forthcoming issues of the magazine.

During the same period, I have also had the opportunity to interact with more than 2,000 starry-eyed students who have hitched their future to the biotech sector. These interactions took place at Bangalore's Oxford Science College and Chennai's SRM University. Industry leaders explained the nuances of the biotech sector and provided useful tips to enable these future leaders to prepare right for entry into their favorite industry.

A major concern of these biotech students was about their prospects of entry as freshers into companies to gain work experience. This is the classical question. Companies want experienced professionals. But who will provide the opportunity to make them experienced professionals? As we all outlined at these interactions with the students, there is no right answer to this question. Mr Ravi Dasgupta, the HR head of India's top biotech company, explained to the students his organization's HR practices that allowed a significant number fresh graduates gain that work experience. The luxury of Biocon's size, which allows it to make such things happen after over three decades of existence, is not there with the overwhelming number of biotech companies that are still too small and far from becoming mature organizations in the near future.

However, some innovative solutions have come in. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) of the Government of India has been facilitating placement of promising biotech students, selected through a national test, for short stints in companies. The DBT reimburses the costs to the companies. The information technology industry, when faced with a similar situation a decade ago, started 'finishing schools' to train raw human resources into skilled professionals as quickly as possible.

A proactive Government of Karnataka, helped by the state's industry leaders, has adopted the best practices of the information technology industry and launched a Ã¢â?¬Å?biotech finishing schoolÃ¢â?¬? scheme in early September 2011. Nearly 200 biotech graduates selected nationally have started their industry-academia hand-holding sessions in September in 12 top academic centers in the state, each with an industry partner. The governments housing the other BioClusters are watching the Karnataka experiment with interest and the Ã¢â?¬Å?biotech finishing schoolsÃ¢â?¬? may, in the long run, provide just the right steps to narrow the academiaindustry gaps that exist in the biotech sector.

The two BSTF events in September focused on the technological and logistical challenges facing the drug discovery and development activities of Indian companies. Of course, that is not the only challenge the industry has to overcome. What better way than ask some of the industry leaders to pen their thoughts on the other major issues they are confronted with currently. The leaders have shared their insights and the solutions lucidly in this issue of BioSpectrum. I am sure these columns will force others too to put on their thinking caps and reflect on the status of the industry. Lack of marketing muscle

has emerged as one of the key challenges, irrespective of the size of the organization. This again is a universal problem facing the biotech sector.

Setting aside their competitive spirit, it may be time for Indian biotech companies to forge cooperative alliances to collective increase the marketing strengths of the sector as a whole. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain to usher in a bright future.

Narayanan Suresh
Chief Editor
sureshn@cybermedia.co.in