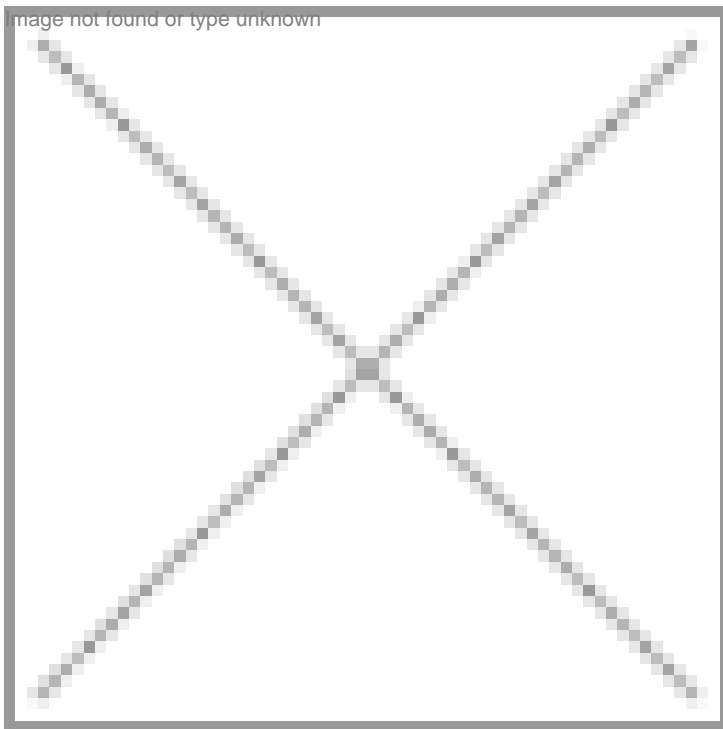


Onboarding talent-Recruitment Scenario

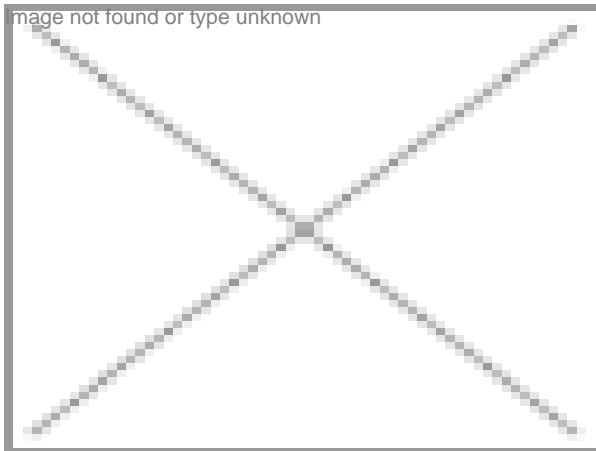
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With increase in competition and corporatization in the biotech space, HR heads are now on the look out for hiring not just good but the best young talent available in the country. BioSpectrum takes a look at some of the recruitment processes adopted by prominent biotech companies in India

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The success behind every company stems not just from its middle and senior management employees, but from a large section of its Generation-Y populace, the 'young turks' as they are often referred to, who bring with them not just the technical expertise and much-needed

HR heads from the life sciences industries have realized that a radical transformation within their respective organizations can be attained only by hiring 'not quantity but quality freshers'. They look for not just good performers but great performers. It is interesting to note that many companies in the life sciences space have gone the innovative way as

Indian CRAMS player, Jubilant Drug Discovery and Development, follows a stringent process for selecting the talent pool that covers every aspect of technical knowledge and behavioral attributes. To ensure that they are making the right choices, the HR team initiates an interview process that spans for over two days and the aspirants are required to undergo various rounds of scientific and behavioral evaluation. Though the

scientific interviews are straight-forward, the behavioral interviews test the rigor and mettle of each aspirant.

Kankana Barua, vice president and global head – HR, Jubilant Drug Discovery and Development (DDDS), says, “Jubilant uses a culture fitment tool to ensure that each aspirant meets the threshold criteria to ensure a faster and smoother assimilation into the system of the organization. Jubilant has been actively involved in attracting talent from the renowned institutions across the country and is leveraging its presence in Noida and Bangalore to build deep relationships with premier institutes located in Northern and Southern parts of India in the scientific streams like chemistry, biotechnology and microbiology, clinical research, and pharmaceutical sciences.”

Rammesh Patiil, HR head, Serum Institute of India, says, “Pune is the educational hub of the country and meets 75 percent of our demands. Some of the colleges we visit include, DY Patil, College of Pharmacy and College of Engineering.”

KV Subramaniam, president, Reliance Life Sciences, says, “Reliance Life Sciences provides young students with an opportunity to become part of the organization, on successful completion of the Advanced Diploma Programs conducted by our not-for-profit institution, Reliance Institute of Life Sciences.”

New Delhi-based Panacea Biotec visits campuses such as Punjab University, Guru Nanak Dev University, and Indian Institute of Packaging. Nuziveedu Seeds hires approximately 25 trainees every year and campuses of its focus are Osmania University, Andhra University, Badruka College, and National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE).

Hyderabad-based Indian Immunologicals prefers to visit campuses across the country for scouting young talent. Similarly, the team at Eli Lilly travels across the country and recruits around 80 employees every year from premier pharmacy colleges and management institutes.

Biotech companies now visit both technical-oriented colleges and universities and also started visiting some of the premier management institutes in the country like the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and Indian School of Business (ISB). “Agriculture is an upcoming sector in the country.

Rural India is on the strategy cards for most of the companies. Plus, students these days look for challenging roles that will lead to better growth,” shares Atul Sharma, head – HR, Monsanto India.

Sharma also believes that the MNC tag also helps in attracting talent due to the global opportunities that the company has to offer to the youngsters in terms of overseas placements and exchange programs. Monsanto in India primarily recruits Agriculture MBAs for sales-related roles via campuses such as SIIB, MANAGE, NIAM and XIM-B. The company is also connected with agri universities like GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Punjab Agricultural University, and GKVK-Bangalore.

Biocon does campus interviews for both technical and managerial positions. Biocon focuses on technical campuses such as IIT; BITS, Pilani; NIPER; and UICT; and management campuses like ISB, IIM Kolkata and XLRI.

Expected qualities

Domain-specific technical expertise is a criteria that HR heads look for in a post-graduate student during campus placements. Commenting on this, Patiil says, “We require a lot of freshers from the technical field especially for our R&D department. We look at clarity and strong foundation in basic technical concepts in students.” Every year, Serum hires around 80-100 students.

Reliance Life Sciences follows a similar route. “We look at excellent academic track record, sound conceptual knowledge in the relevant domain and good analytical and communication skills,” says Subramaniam.

Technical expertise and managerial skills should also be counterbalanced with high energy levels and enthusiasm, passion, right attitude, motivation, learning agility, communication skills, customer focus, drive for results and team spirit. Ravi C Dasgupta, group head—HR, Biocon, says, “At premier institutes one can take technical abilities as given. What we look for really is the right attitude and candidates with strong analytical, interpersonal and communication skills.”

While recruiting a prospective candidate, vaccine major, Panacea Biotec, has divided its competency evaluation into two categories: manager and below positions (E-6-E-8 grades) and senior manager and above positions (E-5 and above grades). The HR team looks for a fresher with a performance focus, customer focus, creativity, strong communication skills and team work skills.

Kallol Chakraborty, vice president – HR, Panacea Biotec, “In addition to all other skill sets, we also look at personality, family

background, attitude/traits, domain knowledge, analytical abilities and emotional intelligence.”

In India, the global agri-major, Monsanto look for freshers who are open to taking up cross functional challenges in the future.

Sharma says, “We look for individuals with educational and technical skills; in addition to entrepreneurial skills, creativity, and team-orientation. The candidate should be capable of stimulating cross-functional challenges, and should also demonstrate the right cultural fit.

A fresher might be given a particular function at the time of hiring but gradually as he grows in the company he might be given another job function. Hence a student should be open to such added responsibilities..”

Selection criteria

Life sciences being a knowledge and technical-driven industry, students are put through vigorous technical interview rounds, be it for companies in the biopharma, bio-agri or the CRAMS space. In addition to this, companies also evaluate behavioral skills and basic personality traits of a candidate. Monsanto India, has devised an interesting methodology. Sharma says, “Monsanto India has a behavioral interview assessment kit that provides behavior event interview questions as probes for the panel to understand the candidate in terms of values, respect, courage and business acumen. The panel usually comprises more than three interviewers who interact with the candidate to ensure the right cultural and functional fit.”

Some companies are also adopting psychometric tests in its methodologies. Mahyco’s HR team has developed competency mapping, attitude tests and will introduce psychometric tests. Commenting on this, L Gaekwad, vice president – HR, Mahyco, says, “We have identified six competencies and we gauge competencies at two levels, one at the organizational level and other at the individual level.”

Eli Lilly evaluates a candidate’s aptitude towards a job responsibility through Thomas Profiling. Under this, an interviewee has to tick the relevant answers on a questionnaire, a process that takes about 10 minutes. Based on the answers the strengths, skills, emotions and weaknesses of a person is evaluated. The results analyze individual’s skills and hints at whether the person is suitable for the specified job. “This apart, we also look at aspiration clarity, career and motivation perception, integrity and values, and persuasiveness,” says Sameer Bhariok, director – HR, Eli Lilly.

Above all, companies look at the stability factor in students. HR heads unanimously opined that today, the average work term of a fresher in one company ranges anywhere between 2-5 years. After getting the requisite years of job experience, freshers either opt for pursuing their higher studies or move on to greener pastures. “We ask candidates upfront during the interview about their long-term plans to gauge their stability factor and surprisingly many of them have been upfront about their long-term plans,” adds Sharma.

Attrition Rate

Company	Attrition Rate
Biocon	18.80%
Monsanto India	11-12%
Mahyco	9.50%
Serum Institute of India	8-9%
Indian Immunologicals	10.00%

Do universities supply right talent?

Giving practical exposure to students is the dire need of the hour, claim industry experts. Subramaniam says, “A large number of universities and institutions have, over the last few years, introduced several programs in biotechnology and pharmaceutical domains to meet the growing talent requirements of the pharma and biotech industry. However, the curriculum lags behind in providing practical exposure to students.”

Keeping this point in mind, Reliance Institute of Life Sciences aims to bridge this gap and equip students by providing them an insight into cutting-edge developments in the field of science and technology through an experienced faculty from the industry and a world-class set up at Dhirubhai Ambani Life Sciences Center, Mumbai.

“There needs to be more emphasis on developing industry-relevant skills. Key gaps are felt in areas like bioprocess engineering and bioanalytical skills for biologicals,” observes Dasgupta.

Another school of experts believe that the trend is gradually changing for the better. “The trend is improving and encouraging. University curriculum constantly need to adapt with the changing environment, and when it lags, it indirectly puts pressure on the organization to provide fresh candidates with on-job training,” adds Sharma.

In a nutshell, building strong knowledge foundation is what matters. “We invest our time in training these freshers and after six months, they give in good results. So, we cannot blame the university system of education,” concludes Patil.

Average Salary Packages

Company	Fresher	Junior level (2-5 years experience)	Middle level (5-10 years experience)	Senior level (11-20 years experience)	Management (21 years and above)
BioPharma Companies	1.05 lakh per annum	1.50 to 4 lakhs per annum	4.00 to 7.00 lakhs per annum	7.00 to 18.00 lakhs per annum	18 to 32 lakhs per annum (excluding directors)
BioAgri Companies	8,000 per month to 20,000 per month	15,000 per month to 25,000 per month	25,000 per month to 50,000 per month	50,000 per month to 3 lakh per month	2 lakh per month
Vaccine Companies	1.75 lakh per annum	3-4.5 lakh per annum	5-10 lakh per annum	10-25 lakh per annum	Depends on seniority

Nayantara Som Inputs: Rahul Koul & Jahanara Parveen