

# IT sector hiring: Hunt for in-demand niche skills

Experts say bulk hiring and traditional IT skills are on the wane, with over half of the rise in hiring focused on those with expertise

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Although the Indian information technology (IT) services sector has seen some slowness in bulk hiring, those having niche skills are in demand as clients narrow their focus to specific areas.

According to personnel and recruitment experts, over the past two quarters, a majority of the recruitment by IT services companies has been of professionals with niche skill sets. Fresher hiring, too, many say, is focused on bringing on board engineers to train them on new technologies such as social, mobility, analytics and cloud (termed).

Along with SMAC, in high demand from clients across industry segments, mobile application development is another specialisation where professionals are in demand.

"There has been a surge in demand for niche skills by 50-60 per cent across our clients (including tier-1 and tier-2 cate-

gories) from the first quarter of 2014 (April-June 2013)," said Prashanth Vaidyan, director of business and strategy at Bangalore-based MapleCode Consulting, which caters to several large and mid-size IT services companies.

Adding: "Professionals must learn add-on skills quickly to stay in business. It is important that professionals constantly understand the demand for their skills and update themselves. Professionals will lose their growth index in the medium and long run if they continue with (only) their traditional skills."

The high demand for non-traditional skills was first reflected when India's second largest IT services company, Infosys, said in April that performance during January-March 2014 took a hit due to a "mismatch between skills that clients need and what we have".

Infosys took a step back from its traditional practice of hiring in huge numbers from campuses, and recruited only 6,000 fresh graduates in FY13, down from 19,000



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- 50% rise in hiring focused on niche skills in past few qtrs
- Niche skills attract 50% premium in remuneration
- Campus hiring focused on training freshers in new tech
- Infosys hired 6,000 graduates in FY13 vs 19,000 in FY12
- Wipro said highest increments to those with niche skills

freshers it had hired in FY12. Infosys had also decided to reduce the number of colleges it visits for campus hiring.

High focus and demand for niche skills was also highlighted earlier this year when Wipro's chief executive, T K Kurien, said employees who already have niche skills or

those who train and upgrade to niche skills would be eligible for better increments.

Wipro's human resource head, Saurabh Govil, had also said the highest increments would be for software architects, programme managers, domain specialists, delivery heads and customer relationship executives.

Anurag Gupta, chief operating officer at staffing solutions firm Magna Infotech, said 60-80 per cent of the hiring in the IT services sector is in niche areas. "Companies are increasingly looking at niche technology skills and even narrowing the focus to domain-specific capabilities

of professionals," he said. "Earlier, companies looked at banking and financial services as one domain. They're now narrowing the search to focused areas such as payments solutions, insurance, cloud, etc."

Due to this trend, Magna Infotech is launching a 'high train and deploy' model, wherein it will hire professionals for clients and train them as required. It has been doing this for specific clients in pockets but would soon make this available as a service.

Kris LakshmiKanth, founder and chief executive at Headhunters India, said while traditional IT services skills will continue to see some traction, professionals with niche skills can attract around 50 per cent premium in remuneration. "Traditional IT will continue to see some demand because you cannot apply new technologies like cloud to every sector and industry; in banking, for example, there are regulatory guidelines that don't permit use of cloud," he said. "But it is certain that professionals with skills in new technologies are currently very sought after."