

■ Job aspirants now see a long term career growth in BPOs

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Vishaal Shah

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While BPO is a sought after industry the typical attitude amongst job aspirants is that it only constitutes voice based calling. Comment.

In the recent past, a large number of Indian BPOs have forayed into non-voice aspects of the outsourcing business, though volumes are still marginal compared to the traditional voice-based business model. With the emergence of KPOs job aspirants are well aware of the voice and non-voice based BPOs. Rather there have been talks that non-voice based BPO will soon take over voice based business.

One needs to understand that back-office work can be automated to quite an extent, but voice which is real-time can't be subject to automation. As much as 90% of the call centres that are focused on the US and UK market have voice as a perpetual activity.

What are the challenges an HR professional will face in the BPO industry?

The main challenges that HR professionals are facing today are:

- ☑ Attrition - Companies are investing a significant amount of time and money in recruitment, training, re-training, and retention processes that go a long way in targeting the right employee.
- ☑ Building and retaining talent - The middle management is responsible for bringing skill sets to the table. It helps in the execution of well thought strategies. If the top management is described as 'thinkers' then middle management represents the 'doers'.

Many job aspirants are reluctant to get into the BPO industry because they feel that there aren't any long term career growth opportunities in the BPO industry. Comment.

The BPO industry has grown rapidly over the past few years. During this period, the industry has survived proof of concept and established itself one of the largest employers. People working within the BPO industry, develop good domain expertise and have the benefits of exposure to international markets, which very few industries offer. Also, BPO companies have world-class training processes in place which help prospective/current employees to become well-rounded professionals in their respective functions. With all this, job aspirants now see a long term career growth in BPOs.

Do you think people today have made a distinct divide between a job as a BPO employee and a “call centre” employee?

Contact centre is one of many Business Processes that are outsourced to Indian vendors. BPO is an umbrella term that encompasses services such as call centre, email management, data-entry, back-office processing, payroll processing among others.

Many college students join the BPO industry for the hefty pay packet and not for the sheer liking for the job. Comment.

When the industry was new, it was true that people used to join the industry for the hefty pay packets but now as the Indian BPO companies move up the value chain, the employee profile at these companies is slowly but definitely changing both in terms of the educational qualifications of employees as well as their demographic profile.

Resultantly, employees have now started looking at BPO as a long-term career option rather than a stop-gap arrangement and get plenty of opportunities within the organization to move upwards in the value chain. People have now started realizing the kind of work being performed at BPOs and most of the aspirants join the industry to leverage the enormous opportunities available in the BPO sector.

Do you feel there is a lack for a standardized qualification to gauge employees in the BPO sector? Would the entrance test (similar to the one proposed by NASSCOM) or some other measure be the optimal solution to this?

The certification norms are currently in the pilot stage. Nasscom Assessment of Competence (NAC) programme is expected to enhance reach of the ITeS-BPO industry to tier II and tier III cities and spread awareness about job opportunities in the sector. The programme is aimed at enhancing skill sets of candidates willing to enter the industry, assess the skill sets of each candidate and award grades.

The overall effect of NAC and such programs will be good since it would help arrest attrition. Unless this is done, other competing countries will continue to attract investor and customer interest.