

# @Campuses, IT Majors Fight For Day One Slot

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With ambitious hiring plans laid out for the coming year, information technology majors are not only making sure they reach the campuses early, they are also trying to fend off rivals by wooing universities for the fiercely contested "day one slot." Institute placements follow a hierarchical order where top firms are given the day one slot and the rest follow.

On Tuesday, HCL Technologies joined hands with Madras University for day one slot at colleges—even those in the tier I and tier II cities under the university's ambit. Meanwhile, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is attempting to fend off rivals at its traditional hunting ground, the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT). The biggest battle is for bagging the number one slot—usually the first day of recruitment—at top engineering colleges. TCS, Infosys, Wipro and HCL have locked horns with multinational rivals like Cognizant.

Firms conduct placement meetings with institutes where the latter negotiates on the numbers and branches from where they can be picked up. Only once the terms and conditions have been reached, are the companies given the slots. Subrat Chakravarty, IIR Head—Business Services, HCL Technologies, says: "This is just the beginning where we have recruited 300 students from 43 colleges. We have issued letter of intent to another 1,200 students and they will also be joining us shortly. One thing about this tie-up is we are not asking the students to sign any bonds."

HCL is also in talks with Madurai Kamaraj University for a similar tie-up. "We are looking at Madurai Kamaraj University in the next round. We are also working on a tie up with some colleges in North India," Chakravarty said. Cognizant, which has been growing at industry-leading rates and closing the gap with its closest competitor Wipro, has been fairly aggressive at the campuses.

For instance, in 2010, the company got the first slot in all the engineering colleges it recruited from—approximately 75. Recently, Cognizant made job offers to a record 1,643 students of the 2011 batch at the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) University. "We need to keep pace and tap talent. That's why we wanted to be the first ones to grab the best talent from these universities," added Chakravarty.

Colleges are also giving preference to companies which have better engagement with the campuses. Nandita Gurjar, IIR Head of Infosys said, "We are comfortable with sharing slots on day one but would not go if the



slots are given for the second day." Infosys will be going to the campuses in December. Siddharth Bhattacharya, Officer for placement and training at Jadavpur University says the placement process starts from July 30 and would continue till March next year. The manufacturing firms come early on and the IT product companies like Google, Adobe, Microsoft, PWC, Deloitte come in August-September.

According to the Nasscom rules the IT firms visit campuses in the 8th semester, or November-December period. Jadavpur University had Cognizant and Wipro on day one followed by others like IBM and Capgemini. Manufacturing firms have already contacted the institute, he points out.

Hyderabad-based Osmania University saw recruiters in droves. Cognizant made 179 offers out of which 171 were accepted, Infosys made 122, out of which 105 were taken up. Industry sources said in the last two months of 2010, placements at Osmania University and Jadavpur University clearly showed who the winner was. On a day of shared slots, Cognizant made 309 offers while Wipro made 71 out of which 68 were common offers. "All 68 joined Cognizant," said an industry expert who requested anonymity.

"Some of the companies are expected to come to the campus in June-July and although the hiring order has not been decided, it would depend on the institute and its engagement with the company," said NS Narahari, the placement head at RV College of Engineering.

Both colleges and firms are turning it into a win-win situation by going for tie-ups. VIT, for one, has multiple tie-ups with companies like TCS, Infosys, Accenture and Ericsson to offer vari-

ous programmes. Firms are not lagging behind either. Cognizant too has set up labs, Accenture sends guest faculty and TCS grants scholarship to the meritorious students at RV College of Engineering (RVCE).

At RVCE in 2010, Cognizant was given the day 1 slot followed by Wipro and TCS while 2011 saw TCS coming first followed by Wipro and Accenture. Infosys has its campus connect program through which it creates alliances with the academia.

The Chennai-based SRM College of Engineering had its placements in January and preferred TCS to Cognizant. Professor Chaitanya G, head of Marketing and Media at SRM, said: "Although Cognizant had said it would hire around 1,500 students, we know from past that most are put on bench and the projects offered by TCS are much better. It is not just about numbers. So, TCS was given the first slot and they made 1,200 offers followed by HCL on Day 2 which roped in 468 students and Wipro took a similar number on Day 3."

Students, however, are not too keen on colleges forming placement tie-ups with companies. Harish Kumar (name changed), a student of Madras University, said, "This kind of tie up also reduces chances of students attending interviews for other big companies." He explains, "If a student has attended HCL interview as they have been given rights to come first and recruit, then he cannot sit for an interview for Infosys or TCS when they come to our campuses. This reduces chances of best talent entering big companies and also reduces negotiating power in terms of salary" he added. Students have also started observing the performance of a company

## Campus Calling for India's IT Inc

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G Thiruvassagam, vice-chancellor, Madras University, says: "More IT companies should come forward and recruit candidates from the general stream colleges and open opportunities for them," he noted. With the cloud of recession receding, the IT sector is looking upbeat. The sector is expected to hire about 2.5 lakh people this fiscal.