**HIRING TRENDS IN THE PREVAILING TIMES**

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted markets, industries globally during 2020. The short-term consequences were sudden and often severe. Millions of people were furloughed or lost jobs, and others rapidly adjusted to working from home as offices closed.

Being a part of the Executive Search company, we saw the Pandemic impact coming to our industry as well. The after effect in India has been largely disruptive in terms of economic activity. Almost all the sectors have been adversely affected as domestic demand and exports sharply plummeted with some notable exceptions where high growth was observed. That growth was clearly seen in the industries such as **Healthcare, FMCG, IT, Food Delivery, Fintech, EdTech etc**., where hiring was picking up the speed. Athena experienced large number of searches coming through young and growing tech-based companies and large food organization entering India with a purpose of expanding their horizon to the APAC markets. At the same time there were some companies who were interested in doing scenario-based hiring.

We also witnessed various forms of expansion news on social media, where we could see planning’s happening more around IPO’s, M&A’s, Fund raising, JV’s etc.

* One of our clients is an emerging **AI based advertising tech company**, transforming advertising in Video for world's largest brands. They are at a very interesting journey of their growth as they plan to launch IPO, hence Athena has been mandated to figure out someone with strong exposure towards Corporate Finance, with scenario-based experience (IPO, Fund raising, M&A etc.). As per our research analysis, we have come across almost 40 names who have recently launched their IPO’S/ or planning to go public.

Also, by 2025, the digital advertising industry in India is estimated to cross the Rs 50,000 crore (US$ 7.15 billion) mark supported by faster internet adoption, proliferation of smartphones and technology advancement.

To attract top talent in the market, it becomes Important for a company like us to show a larger picture to the candidates, in terms of growth plans, number vision and scope for them to get better numbers along with the organization’s growth. Nowdays, the companies have become quite flexible in charting out the most suitable package for a candidate and captures their interest. Disbursing out ESOP’S is the most attractive plan amongst young and dynamic leaders. Given the public market’s appetite for tech startups and the way valuations are soaring, CXO talent too is keen to negotiate higher ESOP components along with attractive hikes in pay.

Highlighting some of the marquee executive moves from large brands to startups include; **Microsoft’s Gangadhar Kodandaram** moving to AI startup Vernacular.ai as chief revenue officer, and media veterans **Ratan Singh Rathore** (previously INCA) and **Neha Nagpal Chatterjee** (previously at ByteDance) at ShareChat.

* Apart from this Athena actively worked on a search that required us to setup the entire leadership team for a leading billion dollar **Bakery company which entered India a couple of years ago with a vision to be one of the largest company in the country**. Looking at FMCG industry, this is the fourth largest sector in the Indian economy, where food and beverages accounts for 19% of the sector. Another critical search for us considering how Indian food industry works, trying to match up with the culture and style of a foreign company and building a balance between the mindset of a global stakeholder with that of a domestic leader. Our search strategy, for finding out the best talent was bifurcated within three tiers, focusing majorly on food and bakery companies-Perishable and non perishable (30 companies), Beverages industry (15 companies) and FMCD (20 companies)
* **One of another prestigious clients is an Indian lifestyle and Influencer-led social commerce platform.** This company seems very promising amongst various other start-ups. Majorly targeting the youth segment of our population with its mobile application is used by Indian communities to share their experiences with like-minded individuals in the form of short and interesting videos.

We are assisting them in hiring for their team in India and at oversees locations as they are planning to foray in global locations very soon. We have already created a database of 200 people available in the US and India market meeting all the criteria, however understanding this market where lot of immature players also exist, it becomes really important for us to be able to differentiate between the right target and the wrong target.

Another sector that has witnessed immense boost is the **Healthcare** **industry** where there has been a significant shift in demand of contracts engineering services/medical transformation/healthcare consulting space. India is a land full of opportunities for players in the medical devices industry. The country has also become one of the leading destinations for high-end diagnostic services with tremendous capital investment for advanced diagnostic facilities, thus catering to a greater proportion of population. The scope with which Healthcare market can increase is three-fold to Rs. 8.6 trillion (US$ 133.44 billion) by 2022.

* Athena did multiple searches for Healthcare consulting space, where one of them is for a **Tech enabled Healthcare solutions provider, headquartered in the US**. The organization’s focus has been towards expanding in the APAC market along with continued expansion plans for US. Japan was seen as a priority geography in the APAC market and quite a challenging market.

Headhunters say startups as well as the non-impacted industries are wooing senior talent to set up better governance systems as they scale, and in some cases to launch new products, services, organic & inorganic expansion, diversification and even help them to go public. Many industries along with Startups are becoming the go-to option for C-suite talent in large enterprises looking for a change, with Head of Sales, Head of Corporate Finance, Chief Diversity Officer, Chief Transformation Leader, Head of Government Relations, Chief Digital Officers being a few are the desired one’s in the market.

The most motivating factor for these seasoned leaders to join young organizations rather than making a move in the established setup, is the opportunity and to innovate and ability to build things from scratch and act as an entrepreneur. **This is another factor why search firms are being approached by startups and emerging organizations in abundance.**