



INTERVIEW/HARI ABBURI, HEAD (PEOPLE), BHARTI RETAIL

Service-oriented mindset is a must

By K.V. Rajasekher

How is the retail sector poised right now?

The organised retail sector in India is poised for substantial growth. Our estimates show that from the current 5.5 per cent share, organised retail is expected to grow to 10.4 per cent by 2012. This growth is expected to continue as more customers enjoy the benefits of organised retail, which include a great shopping experience with quality products at competitive prices.

What is the future for students who have opted for retail-specific business courses and will be coming out of colleges in 2009-10?

Talent in the retail industry can be broadly classified in three categories—customer facing employees

working in the stores, operations management professionals and specialist talent in merchandising and supply chain. Bharti Retail is focused on an inclusive approach in stores where we employ a cross-section of community, where our stores are located. Thirteen per cent of our employees are housewives who work four hours, 8 per cent are differently abled, 13 per cent are local fruits and vegetable vendors and 14 per cent are local meat cutters.

Graduates who opt for retail sector specific courses should focus on gaining sound understanding of operations management as there are considerable number of jobs that will be available in this sector, such as team leaders, store managers and

district or zonal managers. All these jobs require specialisation in management diploma, either in retail or general management.

How many people do you intend to recruit?

Bharti Retail is rolling out stores as per our plans. We hope to employ approximately 60,000 people by 2015.

Is there a real shortage of talent in the retail sector?

The shortage of talent in India is, to some extent, to do with the mismatch of present vocational training courses with the sectoral employment requirements. Hence, we believe that if we can invest in providing training for sectoral skills, for example, customer service, operations management and merchandising, we will collectively enhance the employability of people in India. Sectors that have taken a long-term view on talent development have sustained their talent pipeline over the years.

What areas of specialisation would you advise aspirants in these fields to prepare for?

Firstly, being good managers of people and of finances or resources available at hand. They should also understand profitability. They should pick up skills around finance, people management and process thinking.

What would be the hot jobs on offer in the sector?

The retail industry currently offers good operations management roles for graduates with limited work experience. For experienced professionals, managerial roles in operations, merchandising and marketing are available.

What kind of a mindset should people wanting a career in retail management have?

A service-oriented mindset is a must for a person to become a successful professional in the retail sector. An ability to interact with the customers and fellow employees with warmth and compassion with a down-to-earth attitude is also important. At Bharti Retail, our leadership philosophy is 'making everyone successful', which includes our customers, our teams and our community. ■