



## Digital Talent

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This article is based on **The war for digital talent: India can emerge as a global hub for it** which was published in the Livemint on 29/09/2021. It talks about digital talent and the issues associated with the digital experts ecosystem in India.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** has accelerated the digital transformation of enterprises, creating enormous opportunities for all organizations. Given the customer-centricity of the tech industry in India, the demand environment is extremely positive, and many companies have announced aspirations to grow in double digits this fiscal year.

To deal with the talent issues, companies are adopting a multi pronged approach—step up fresh hiring so that the supply pool increases, enhance re-skilling programmes through online learning, deploy adjacent-talent skills for on-the-job learning, and, above all, offer employees a holistic employment experience, one that spans career development, learning and wellness.

In an evolving technology ecosystem, India has a huge opportunity to become the digital talent hub of the world. And the demand for talent in advanced technology like **AI, robotics,** and **data science** will be 20 times greater than the supply by 2025.

- These are (talented) employees who are able to adapt and use the existing digital technologies.
- **Need For Digital Talent: A World Economic Forum** report showed that investment in upskilling could potentially boost the global economy by USD 6.5 trillion by 2030, and India's economy by USD 570 billion.
- Digital talent is not equal to education in the classic **STEM (Science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines.**
  - Rather, digital talent stems from a digital-first mindset comprising hard digital skills such as **data analytics** and **soft digital skills** like storytelling, comfort with ambiguity, etc.
  - Gone are the days when an engineer only sat in a room and wrote code. Today, the most important skill for a data scientist is storytelling.

## Indian Prospects

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- For India to retain its lead in the digital era, **India needs to disrupt the traditional approach to talent development.**
  - The race to becoming and being seen as a talent hub is warming up across the world.
  - For example, the UAE just announced plans to roll out green visas, expand eligibility for golden visas and attract top tech workers for the country to become the preferred investment hub for technology companies.
  - Several other countries like the UK, US and Australia are rethinking efforts to attract high-skill talent, including fast-tracking visas for at-risk sectors and promoting visas for highly accomplished applicants.
- India's **biggest opportunity is developing digital talent for the future world.** India is going to be the talent leaders of the world.

Talent will be the biggest competitive advantage for India. Business will go where the talent is and they will base their investment decisions based on that.

## Reasons For Lack of Digital Talent

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- **Digital Skill Shortage:** Owing to the skill shortage, 53% of Indian businesses could not recruit in 2019.

Thus, the shortage of digital skills is one of the main challenges today.
- **Problem of Brain Drain:** One of the key problems is that our best-trained minds don't stay in our country: They go abroad.

It is referred to as the "**brain drain**" or the mass migration of skilled labor from India.
- **Standard of Private Institution:** There are a very large number of private engineering colleges that don't teach anything, and are run mainly for personal gain and not for the students/societal gain.

It thus does not encourage R&D on the campus.
- **Lack of Remuneration:** People in technical fields simply aren't compensated well enough.

India is the only country where immediately after graduation, an engineering student would go for an MBA to get into marketing or management.
- **High Unemployability:** Inequality is rising in the country, as is rural and urban distress. Migration is also on the rise, real estate prices have collapsed, expenditure is rising, and wages are stagnant — and they have been so for a while now.
- **Lack of Focus on Research and Developments:** India's digital talent most of the times just focus on the salary packages and give a little heed on innovation.

## Way Forward

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- **Focused Implementation of the National Education Policy:** It is important to have a long-term focus and we need to inculcate the right attitudes.  
Continuous learning, skill credits, world-class academic innovation, experiential learning, faculty training, all need to focus on excellence and outcomes.
- **Build Alternate Talent Pools:** We need to build digital capabilities in smaller towns, get more women to join the work-stream with hybrid work norms, revamp vocational education from industrial training institutes and polytechnics.  
We can leverage **corporate-social-responsibility (CSR)** funding from industry for these programmes.
- **Incentivize Skilling:** In the early days of the tech sector, tax incentives played a key role in building a global footprint of multinational corporations in India.  
We must now create schemes that incentivize skilling for corporates, not just for their own needs, but across the ecosystem.
- **Explore Innovative Learning Models:** Use apprenticeship programmes at scale, not just for a certificate, but coupled with assessments.  
Invest in building world-class free content that can be leveraged by anyone and aligned with a credible system of certification.
- **Democratize Training:** We must remove all hurdles for people to get skilled.  
Unnecessary entry qualifications and eligibility criteria can be dropped. Let's have no barrier to entry, but a quality-controlled exit process.

## Conclusion

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India must not only look at strategies aimed at increasing home-grown talent, but also work on attracting the best global talent to catalyse the next decade of growth and innovation. This requires constant investments in re-skilling and embracing a culture that promotes skill development. Creating a robust digital talent ecosystem would further enable us to be future-ready and leverage the opportunities of a digital future.

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

In an evolving technology ecosystem, India has a huge opportunity to become the digital talent hub of the world. Discuss.

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