

Middle Managers at Wipro Move up the Ladder, Become VPs

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For the first time in nearly two years, top managers at Wipro have been promoted to become vice-presidents at different business units, as India's third-biggest software exporter plans to offer more growth options for its mid-level managers and retain key staff.

Coming out of an economic recession during 2009 when customers shelved software projects and tech firms like Wipro, Infosys and TCS were forced to freeze promotions and even trim payroll, the challenge now is to ensure that key staff don't get poached by rivals offering lucrative posts and better salaries.

Earlier this month, Infosys handed promotion letters to dozens of its mid-level managers and promoted three of the company's next-gen leaders to the board.

According to at least three people familiar with these promotions, Wipro will now have some 30-40 vice-presidents, more than around 15 managers at this level it had until two years ago. Rishad Premji, Wipro's chief strategy officer who joined the company as a business manager in 2007 and was promoted to become general manager two years ago, has moved up to join the vice-presidents' club at Wipro.

"Good to see people talk of promotions now, after months of restructuring and bad press," said one of the managers who got promoted. He requested anonymity because he is not authorised to speak.

Sunita R Cherian, Supriti Bhandary, Priti Rajora and Isaac George are among the general managers promoted to become vice-presidents in Wipro's human resources division. Ashok Tripathy, who heads Wipro's PC business, has also been promoted to the vice-president level along with Durga Prasad who heads the compa-



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ny's business in Saudi Arabia.

As top customers such as Citigroup and BP increase outsourcing of IT and back-office projects, Wipro needs to promote its managers to handle bigger, more complex roles.

"In the past few years, things have been slow on the promotion front as there was the downturn and there wasn't too much long-term visibility. But this year a lot of general managers have been promoted to vice-president level and vice-president have become senior vice-presidents," said an official on conditions of anonymity. "There are several reasons for this—the market has opened up overall and there is buoyancy. Even peers like Infosys, TCS and Cognizant have rewarded employees well so in a way they are keeping up with the industry. Also, now that the restructuring is almost complete, the company has a long-term view and it wants to reward those who have done well," the official added.

Wipro's appraisal process kicked off in April and ended on June 15. Employees have started getting their letters and all the process will be completed in the next few days.

Wipro's Offshore Staff to Get Hikes

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"The total number of promotions is definitely higher. It's also an outcome of the fact that we have grown overall; we have added 20,000 employees in the past few years, so the number will be higher. The promotions have been good across the board and there is also a feel-good factor," another company official added. Experts say as demand picks up, companies like Wipro will reward team leaders.

"Companies are rewarding employees at the operating level (team leaders, projects managers etc) because the opportunities for them in the market are much higher. On the compensation front while they are good, there is more sanity compared to the 2006-07 levels," Ajit Isaac, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Iky Global,



said. Earlier this year, Wipro announced that it would be giving out 12-15% hikes to its offshore employees. The company also standardised its appraisal procedure, fixing the first quarter of the year as the appraisal cycle. The wage hikes are effective June 1. TCS announced 12-14% hikes while Infosys has given out hikes earlier this month. It was between 10-12% with retrospective effect from April.