Infosys employees want Nilekani to come back

Post messages on the IT major's bulletin board asking him to return

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Nandan Nilekani is the top choice of Infosys employees for the new CEO's job.

Sources in the IT bellwether say that employees, especially at the lower and middle levels, have started posting on the company's bulletin board asking Nilekani to return as he may not have much of a political role after the Congress' defeat in the Lok Sabha elections.

Messages like "Bring Nandan back" and "We need a leader with a vision like Nandan to get us back to growth" popped up across Infosys development centres in Bangalore, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram. Nilekani did not comment.

"His return cannot be ruled out," an analyst with a leading brokerage told *Business Line*. "In fact it will be helpful for the company."

The call for Nilekani to return and head the company comes at a time when the IT major is battling to show industry-leading growth, struggling with high attrition and trying to boost the morale of its workforce.

"The company needs a dynamic individual and being involved in larger causes gives his profile a boost, which could help Infosys," said Ronesh Puri, MD, Executive Access, an executive search firm.

As chairman of the Unique Identification Authority (UID), Nilekani held a Cabinet post at the Centre and has better experience than others in

Nandan Nilekani, co-founder and former CEO of Infosys

Nilekani led Infosys during its most successful era, from 2002-03 to 2006-07, when revenues tripled from ₹3,623 crore to ₹9,028 crore

working with government machinery, sources in the company said.

Also, as the retirement age for executive directors in Infosys is 60, Nilekani can work two more years. Besides, the nominations committee can always recommend an increase in the age limit.

Successful reign

Puri also added that the company needs a new line of thinking, and that resistance to a person who has delivered in the past will be lower.

Nilekani's reign was probably the most successful one for Infosys, with the company delivering across all parameters. It tripled revenue from ₹3,623 crore to ₹9,028 crore and the profit margin reached a high of 27.15 per cent (at the end of the 2006-07 fiscal).

However, not everybody believes that Nilekani will be able to achieve those results today as technology has metamorphosed and is changing rapidly.

"What was possible in the early 2000s is not possible now," said Kris Lakshmikanth, CEO of Head Hunters India.

With cloud computing, the outsourcing business has changed dramatically and the old way of adding people to execute projects will no longer work, he added.