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# Delhi cos' employer brand under haze

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**M**umbai: The pollution in Delhi is impacting the employer brand of companies based in the capital. In recent weeks, multiple search firms TOI spoke to said they have witnessed refusals from potential candidates because they do not wish to work in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR). A phenomenon of professionals wanting to leave Delhi is also visible, said search firm executives. What's more, travel-related concern is affecting day-to-day business at corporates.

Ronesh Puri, MD, Executive Access (India), said, "A number of candidates who were in the running for CXO level positions have declined to take their candidatures forward for positions in Delhi. The Delhi brand for attracting talent has taken a huge beating."

In addition, a number of candidates are calling up search firms to explore options outside Delhi-NCR. "The situation is serious as candidates feel quality of life in Delhi-NCR has deteriorated with children falling sick and being confined to their homes. Working mothers are finding it hard to cope with this," said Puri.

Joseph Devasia, MD, Antal International, India, said the situation spelt a major catastrophe on the talent front, adding a new dimension for HR towards retention. "In one week, we had two candidates refusing to travel to Delhi for interviews. This crisis has also affected professionals currently working in Delhi — we are seeing a spurt in applications to leave," said Devasia.

Statistically, most candidates generally used to prefer Delhi to other metros earlier, but now it appears the pecking order has changed, said Puri. According to the September 2016 report by Monster employment index for online recruitment activities, the annual growth momentum had witnessed maximum advancement in Delhi-NCR in the month, up 11 points to 26% from 15% in August 2016. Delhi-NCR was also the only major city to have ranked among the top five in year-on-year growth. The annual growth rate in Mumbai (up 23%) increased by four points following a relatively stable growth trend since June 2016. Bengaluru (up 22%), on the other hand, had eased four points.

Over the years, pollution levels including air quality in and around Delhi-NCR has gone from bad to worse. Sergey Savchenko, CEO, MTS India, said, "From a business standpoint, if things continue unchecked, it is bound to have a negative impact on the health of employees, their families and also the customers, ultimately leading to an adverse impact on business activities across the value chain."

The situation triggered a concern especially among global organisations. Given the emergency, a Sistema Shyam TeleServices (SSTL) spokesperson, said, "We received travel-related concerns from our parent company Sistema JSFC in Moscow. It is to be noted that Sistema JSFC, one of Russia's largest conglomerate, has interests in India given its investments in telecom (SSTL) and having set up the Sistema Asia Fund to support startups in the country."

Delhi-based companies, on the other hand, provided work-from-home options to their employees in addition to installing air purifiers at the workplace. In view of the weather condition and the poor air quality in Delhi-NCR, Idea Cellular enabled flexi-timing for the convenience of employees in addition to plying special buses to pick and drop employees from key locations. The arrangement included car pools. OLX, too, extended work-from-home options to its employees, especially those who need to step out of office frequently. Fortis Healthcare distributed more than 10,000 masks among employees and contractual staff based out of nine of its hospitals in Delhi-NCR.