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# Telco execs make distress call for job switch to new line

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Mumbai: The telecom sector, which was once a talent magnet, is losing some of its sheen, and people as well.

A number of CVs (curriculum vitae, or bio data) of mid- to senior-level telco executives are floating around, multiple executive search firms have told TOI. The main reasons for disgruntlement among managers include sectoral uncertainty and low increments. Sources said these executives are mostly looking at job opportunities in sectors other than telecom. While there have been hardships in telecom for over a year now, it's only in the last couple of months that search firms are witnessing a spike in inquiries for other job opportunities.

Antal India MD Joseph Devasia, who has been headhunting several senior executives from telecom, said, "A lot of executives are talking to us. Growth is stunted in telecom and there are suitable openings in sectors like FMCG and e-commerce. Some of the people we are helping change jobs are getting nearly 20% hike in salary. On the other hand, increments in telecom are largely muted." Moving into consumer-facing sectors is a natural transition for a manager working in telecom, said Devasia.

A senior executive from ManpowerGroup said a lot of redundancies have been created due to the consolidation in the market. The entry of Reliance Jio Infocomm disrupted the market, posing tough challenges for existing players, which resulted in efforts to consolidate.

"Talent wants to get out of telecom. People who joined telecom when it was at its peak certainly benefited over the years. They were the highest paid then. But they are now keen on joining other sectors," said Executive Access India MD Ronesh Puri.

Airtel sources told TOI the company continues to attract top talent. “We are not seeing any spike in attrition. For us, our culture of entrepreneurship and empowerment is what makes us a talent magnet. We are also delighted that many of our alumni occupy significant positions of leadership across a range of technology and consumer companies,” these sources said.

As a talent-retention strategy, telecom companies created CEO-level posts for every circle, giving them P&L (profit and loss) responsibilities. “The organisational design with several layers, however, couldn’t create further avenues of growth. Over time, there were cost pressures, which reduced the possibilities of better compensation as well,” said Puri.

Hiring sources said although Jio has created job opportunities, the company gets its talent from across sectors. On the other hand, at mid to senior levels, there are only as many openings. In its latest employment outlook report, TeamLease Services said the telecommunications sector reported a decrease in its outlook for the April-September 2019-20 (half-year period). The report also said attrition rates during October-March 2018-19 as compared with full year April-March 2018-19 dropped for the overall telecommunications sector.