

Points to Note

In a 10-point agenda to support technology-driven innovation and entrepreneurship, addressed to the new government, **Rishikesh T Krishnan**, cofounder of software product think tank iSpirt and director, IIM Indore, said an important first step is recognising the importance of application-oriented research in Indian academia

1 Replicate the benefits

The model of research and development support programmes offered by the Department of Biotechnology must be available across sectors

2 Create leadership platforms

Set up ten collaboration platforms to promote technology leadership in critical areas

3 Buy local

Provide public procurement support for local technology development

Faculty should be encouraged to get involved in start-ups, either directly or as mentors

RISHIKESHA T KRISHNAN
Director, IIM Indore

4 Recognise & reward research

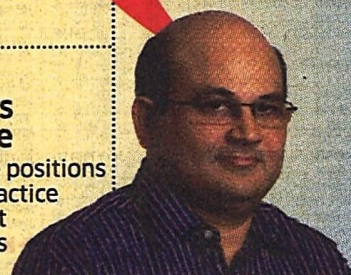
Award meritorious application-oriented research in academia

5 Encourage patents

Include patents and commercialisation in faculty evaluation criteria

6 Hire professors of practice

Set up two to three positions of professors of practice in each department within IITs and NITs



7 Let teachers turn entrepreneurs

Remove all restrictions that prevent faculty from engaging with startups

8 Merge faculty

Introduce the practice of joint faculty appointments across disciplines

9 Foster collaboration

Launch glue up programmes to encourage collaboration among institutions across disciplines

10 Give grants

Issue grants to set up tinkering laboratories in top 50 engineering institutions

CRISIS @ INFY: CEO HUNT GETS MORE CHALLENGING

The search for the software company's first non-founder CEO has also triggered the classic boardroom debate about separation of powers

With Murthy, Will New CEO Just be a Statue?

PANKAJ MISHRA & VARUN SOOD
BANGALORE

Infosys is grappling with the conundrum of delineating the roles of chairman and chief executive officer as it moves closer to identifying a successor to SD Shibulal, people aware of the company's thinking said.

With NR Narayana Murthy being recalled last June to head the company as executive chairman, the search for the software company's first non-founder CEO has also triggered the classic boardroom debate about separation of powers.

"Of course it's an issue. But it also depends heavily on whether Infosys is able to find a strong CEO candidate from outside," said a person familiar with deliberations in the company. "In that case, it's not realistic for the new CEO to work without absolute executive powers for another 3-5 years," he added.

So will founder Murthy, who has been appointed to a five-year term, relinquish his executive role before then?

"I do not think that's an issue, and knowing him, I am sure he will go, but only after being fully satisfied that the new leader is capable," added second source.

Infosys declined to comment.

Last month, it appointed US-based Development Dimensions International, a specialist in executive evaluations, to present the nominations committee of the board with a slate of internal candidates. Executive search firm Egon Zehnder will come up with a shortlist of external candidates.

On Tuesday, ET reported that the Infosys board has finished evaluating eight internal candidates, including presidents BG Srinivas and UB Pravin Rao. The company is awaiting a list of external candidates from the search firm.



For his part, Murthy has focussed his attention on driving up sales growth by competing aggressively for bread-and-butter outsourcing deals while reducing costs to improve the bottomline. For 2013-14, Infosys has forecast revenue growth of 7-9%, much below the 13-15% export growth prediction for the industry.

Murthy's over-arching influence on a company he calls his "middle child" has the potential to inhibit executives who may otherwise believe that heading India's second-largest software firm is an attractive proposition.

"In Infosys, NRN is a larger-than-life figure. If you go to Infosys main reception and you are supposed to meet NRN, the reception you get is completely different from what you get if you have to meet anyone else, including the other founders," said Rishikesh T Krishnan, professor of corporate strategy and director at IIM-Indore.

He added that this debate about whether or not to have an executive chairman above the CEO is a big issue in corporate governance.

"Most governance purists prefer a non-executive chairman, but several companies including well-known US ones, have an executive chairman," Krishnan said.

In India's over-\$100 billion IT industry, this debate also means a growing divide between leaders and laggards. While growth leaders Cognizant and Tata Consultancy Services don't have executive chairmen, laggards including Wipro and Infosys have founder executive chairmen at the helm.

And for any new person joining from outside, working with a dominant executive chairman can be a huge distraction.

At least one candidate who was contacted by Infosys expressed apprehensions about working under "a very active executive chairman."

Oldtimers want Nandan to Flash His Unique ID



WILL HE WON'T HE? Nandan Nilekani

But former UIDAI chief has no plans to go back to a life in corporate world

INDU NANDAKUMAR
BANGALORE

Nandan Nilekani may have lost the election to BJP's Ananth Kumar from Bangalore South, but if he were to contest for the job of Infosys CEO, Nilekani will have support from the unlikely of quarters — former Infosys director V Balakrishnan who joined rival Aam Aadmi Party, and former Infosys HR head Mohandas Pai.

A day after one of Infosys' two presidents, BG Srinivas, resigned to join Hong Kong-based PCCW as managing director, former board members and senior industry executives have begun to openly endorse Nilekani for the top job while the Bangalore-based software company evaluates both internal and external candidates as part of the CEO selection process.

"I think Nandan has a moral obligation to come back to Infosys because he founded the company and helped it grow," said Pai.