



A new world of opportunities

The Global Manufacturing Leadership Program aims to build a robust leadership pipeline, says HR Shashikant, Group Executive President, Group HR, Aditya Birla Group.

By Niranjan Mudholkar

The Aditya Birla Group's huge and diverse manufacturing footprint is spread across the globe in 36 countries with over 70 percent of its employees engaged in the manufacturing businesses. This focus will continue with 83 percent of its revenues and 68 percent of its profits contributed by its manufacturing businesses comprising of metals, cement, textiles, pulp & fibre, chemicals, mining, carbon black, insulators and fertilisers.

Driving businesses of such scale and complexity requires truly global manufacturing leaders. While the Group already has some of the finest manufacturing leaders working with it, creating and grooming the next line of leaders is an equally strong thrust. Accordingly, the Group has been running the

Global Manufacturing Leadership Program (GMLP). The Machinist caught up with HR Shashikant, Group Executive President, Group Human Resources, Aditya Birla Group, to understand more about this unique and interesting initiative.

According to Shashikant, over the last few years Aditya Birla Group has emerged as one of the most aspirational places to work for manufacturing professionals. He says: "We are continuously working towards further strengthening and consolidating our position in the manufacturing sector. GMLP is a unique initiative which strives to build a pipeline of 'Global Manufacturing Leaders'. The GMLP was launched by Aditya Birla Group to identify talented mid-career technical professionals and groom them for leadership positions for the Group not just for India but also for its global locations, thereby building a robust leadership talent pipeline for the future.

Shashikant further points out that a leader in manufacturing which the Aditya Birla Group is, requires 'leaders' to propel its growth and meet newer challenges. "GMLP strives to hone talented manufacturing professionals into global leaders, towards this objective."

A unique program

The GMLP is not a vacancy driven initiative but a proactive HR exercise aimed towards creating and grooming leaders. "We proactively seek manufacturing professionals and provide them with the learning and growth opportunities which are industry agnostic. The GMLP is a premium and exclusive leadership program of our Group. It accelerates the development of talented middle and senior manufacturing professionals as global leaders to take on challenging roles at our plants spread across the globe," says Shashikant.

The Group's vision here is to shape manufacturing leaders of tomorrow through exposure to world-class technologies and processes, state-of-the-art research and development facilities, continuous learning and development opportunities. The program offers a platform for high-performing, ambitious and passionate manufacturing professionals, who enjoy working in a challenging but supportive environment.



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Selected candidates take on challenging roles at the Group's plants across the globe.

"Selected candidates enhance their leadership and functional skills, get exposure to key Group processes. They are given opportunities to work in cross-functional areas besides their current area of expertise. They gain immense expertise through their engagement in our key sectors," explains Shashikant. After this process, they emerge successful, joining the league of leaders at the Aditya Birla Group in roles across geographies in 36 countries. "Of the five GMLP candidates recruited in 2011, three of them have already taken on their next leadership role as independent unit heads, one in China and two in India," he shares.

The idea and the process

The thought process behind identifying the mid-career candidates is that they would bring in a fresh perspective having worked with different organisations and locations.

The GMLP attracts qualified engineers in the manufacturing industry with 10 years to 20 years of experience in various sectors. The process is customised for identifying and selecting exceptionally talented manufacturing professionals who have worked in the plants and on the shop floor and clearly display leadership potential. "A rigorous selection process has been put in place, spanning over four months and six levels of assessment involving senior leadership of the Group. It consists of Business Directors, CEOs, Technical Heads and Chief Peoples Officers, who help us to handpick the best."

Global exposure

The candidates selected through GMLP undergo an extensive on-boarding, mentoring, transition and development process before being provided leadership opportunities in line with their skills and experience. "Selected candidates can look forward to enhance their leadership and functional skills, gain exposure to key processes of manufacturing, research, product development, project management and operations, etc.,

through challenging assignments." They are given cross-sectoral exposures at both Indian and global manufacturing locations of the Group in different functions. "Open to manufacturing professionals irrespective of their technical specialisation, GMLP will develop the selected candidates to take on leadership roles in manufacturing in diverse businesses and geographies," Shashikant adds.

Win-win situation

This program offers a holistic learning experience both on the professional and personal front. "It is an opportunity to work in completely different cultures where language, food and foreign environment test your personal endurance and tenacity. Candidates enjoy this experience to the hilt as they gain tremendous exposure in a very short span of time. Alongside

GMLP selection process

The GMLP recruitment process begins in the month of September rightly coinciding with Engineers day celebrations. Interested candidates can visit the dedicated and interactive website (www.abgmlp.adityabirla.com) which is specifically designed to facilitate the recruitment process under this initiative. After all the applications are screened, shortlisted candidates are taken through three levels of interviews followed by an intense Development Assessment Centre for a whole day. This assessment centre is conducted by world leaders and experts in assessment techniques. "Candidates who emerge successful are interviewed by the top leaders of Aditya Birla Group which includes Business Heads, Directors and CEO's, they help us handpick the brightest of the best from among the talented pool of professionals," Shashikant says.

various opportunities are provided to hone their skills through structured training conducted at our world class internal university Gyanodaya, facilitated by a global faculty from some of the best institutes in the world."

Shashikant believes that while the GMLP has a direct positive impact for the Group, it also benefits the manufacturing industry. "Manufacturing is a core strength of our Group. We have a strong manufacturing footprint. In that sense Aditya Birla Group is a microcosm of India's manufacturing industry. The growth of the manufacturing sector is going to require talent at all levels, especially at the leadership level. GMLP, which focuses on developing leaders for manufacturing, is therefore beneficial to both the manufacturing industry and Aditya Birla Group in particular."

Shashikant is well aware that very few top calibre engineers consider manufacturing as their first career option. "We all know that in the last 15-20 years, other sectors have lured the best, at the cost of manufacturing. Programs like GMLP will give confidence to top talent to opt for the manufacturing sector over others and increase the collective capability of the manufacturing industry." 