

IBM To Open Two More Offshore Development Centers In India

By Mary Hayes Weier

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IBM is opening new offshore outsourcing centers in India. But it may face the challenge of finding qualified people to staff them. It's not a problem unique to IBM in a country where finding and retaining quality IT talent has become more difficult in recent months.

IBM announced Tuesday that it has opened another global delivery center, this one in the city of Noida, located in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, and is planning another center in the area by mid-2008. Both centers will employ about 3,000 people, IBM said. With the addition of those two, IBM will have six global delivery centers and will employ more than 70,000 people working out of facilities within some 10 cities in India.

IBM says it will hire technology graduates and IT professionals with skills in IT strategy and architecture, business consulting, enterprise software (SAP, Siebel, and Oracle), testing, and business intelligence, for the Noida centers. But it's also going to make some changes in how employees' skill levels are certified.

A U.S. spokesman confirmed Tuesday published reports about IBM's efforts to do some things differently in terms of skills certification, but for further details referred InformationWeek to an India-based spokesman, who could not be reached Tuesday. "We are pioneering new ways for our people to certify their skill levels as both a validation of their value to clients and to reinforce the quality of our employees' personal skill sets," an IBM spokesman told IDG's news service in Bangalore on Monday.

The statement followed reports from several Indian news outlets that IBM recently dismissed some entry-level programmers who did not perform well in aptitude tests. However, the reports varied from between 200 and 700 programmer layoffs, and IBM would not comment on the layoff reports.

IBM isn't the only large tech company continuing to increase its presence in India while trying to ensure that it hires qualified and properly certified people. That's a growing problem in India, where there's dwindling availability of skilled IT professionals to meet the demand of a booming offshore outsourcing industry and the needs of the country's rapidly growing infrastructure.

Cisco Systems, for example, announced plans earlier this week to work with training and testing partners in India to raise the number of network engineers there from 60,000 to 360,000 within several years. But the plan also calls for certification testing partner Pearson VUE to adopt "increased security measures in order to safeguard the value of IT certifications," apparently out of concern that some certifications could be illegitimately rewarded if the proper security measures aren't in place.

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