



Manish Sabharwal 39, Chairman

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geographic, financial, and social opening balance (the ovarian lottery). The biggest lesson of the last 18 years of economic reforms is that converting growth to poverty reduction needs access for labour market outsiders,” says Sabharwal.

Sabharwal and Reddy, both management graduates (from Wharton and IIM-Bangalore, respectively), teamed up in 1997 to start India Life, a payroll and benefits outsourcing company, but sold it to Hewitt in 2002. For a while, they hung around as part of the new management, but the desire to be kings of their own turf took over, and a couple of years later, Teamlease started with four offices, 10 clients and 40 employees. Soon they realised that in India, “unemployability” was a bigger problem than unemployment. Most job seekers were not job ready because of an ineffective educational and vocational training system. They then started a series of programmes that varied from last-mile employability which basically gave pointers on how to tuck your shirt in, take a bath, shave before an interview, and bigger courses of two or three months focused on soft skills, spoken English, basic computers, sales and customer service. “It sounds megalomaniac that we can manufacture our own employees

but we are a people supply chain that is running out of inventory,” says Sabharwal. Considering that he has 75,000 employable people, one cannot undermine his judgement. In the next five years, he intends to perfect the job supply chain in India.

by Swagata Sen

TEAMLEASE Established 2002

With a ready-to-deploy staff of 75,000 people in 700 cities and tie-ups with employment exchanges in 10 states, Teamlease looks set to manufacture employees for a rapidly growing economy.

PEOPLE AT WORK

Manish Sabharwal required that his job be fun, profitable, and good for India. His last held job at an oil refinery was profitable and good for India, but wasn't really fun. Similarly, his friend from Sri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi, Ashok Reddy had worked in a cola franchise—fun and profitable, but not necessarily in India's best interests. So, Reddy, Sabharwal and one of his school classmates from Mayo College Ajmer, Mohit Gupta, started Team-lease, a company providing manpower solutions. In seven-odd years, Team-lease has become much more than that. It now employs 75,000 people in 700 cities. It has tied up with employment exchanges across 10 states. “In some states we have begun to operate

these exchanges as public-private partnerships, and in others we run job portals,” says Sabharwal.

Firmly believing that India's soft infrastructure deficit may actually be more dangerous and damaging than its inadequacy in hard infrastructure, Sabharwal and his colleagues are a very important cog in the 3Es wheel of education, employability and employment. And their success lies in Teamlease being able to make a breakthrough in all these areas. “The lack of schools, colleges, skills and employment exchanges amplifies inequality of opportunity by making it difficult for individuals to escape their

1,250
employment
exchanges could
provide only
2.5 lakh jobs
last year to the
four crore people
registered.