

# An Interesting Chemistry

The chemical industry is a significant component of the Indian economy, contributing around 5 per cent of India's GDP, with an annual growth rate of 8.6 per cent, making it the fastest growing sector in the country. **Naressa Coutinho** speaks to **Izabela Megerle**, General Manager and Head, Human Resources, LANXESS India Private Limited, a specialty chemicals company about opportunities in the industry

**A**ccelerated globalization and changing pace of technology have created a plethora of opportunities in the chemical sector. The chemical industry comprises of companies that produce industrial chemicals, agrochemicals, bio-technology, pharmaceuticals, basic and specialty chemicals like petroleum, man-made fibres, industrial gases, fertilisers and construction chemicals. Moreover, the employment potential is said to grow to a million within the next few years.

#### How is the Indian chemical industry as a whole faring currently?

The chemical industry in India is growing at a very healthy rate, propelled by the rising middle class and increasing purchasing power parity. The specialty chemicals industry alone has potential to build a USD 80 to USD 100 billion industry by 2020. The end user industries like automobile, construction, paints and coatings, tires, agrochemicals, among others are all growing steadily and hence create a strong demand for specialty chemicals in India. Thus, the chemical industry in India will continue to grow and holds promise for employment opportunities.

#### What are some of the emerging career opportunities within this industry?

Graduates in chemistry or, in engineering (chemical, mechanical or comparable disciplines) are the most sought after professionals for the primary jobs in the chemical industry. The chemical industry with many new plants and projects involves manufacturing of chemicals, so there will be ample career opportunities for entry level production engineers, technical specialists and production heads. Professionals from various disciplines are required in plant maintenance, areas of quality, compliance, environmental aspects, safety issues etc. Beside the core job profiles in the chemical industry, other

roles include sales and marketing, management and several service functions like procurement, logistics and supply chain, human resources, finance and communications among others.

Unfortunately in India, many of the graduates who study chemistry or chemical engineering lack interest to pursue jobs in the fields that they have studied. Chemistry is an integral

#### What are the aptitude and skills required to excel in the field of chemistry?

Over and above the skills acquired during academic training, we look for candidates who have the ability to work in synergy with people across different levels and divisions and have a global mindset, as they have to often work with teams from other countries. The ability to think and act

#### What is the role of educational institutes in promoting this industry's growth?

Training and acquisition of knowledge is an important requirement for acquiring and maintaining the talent pool in the chemical industry. Hence academia and corporate must integrate to devise programs that students and professionals can benefit from.

There is a gap in the demand for

the chemical sector. But if the academic institutions could organize more seminars, workshops and training programs, specially designed for students where industry representatives could throw light on the subject, students could make well-informed decisions when they graduate.

Secondly, students who join the industry with an academic orientation do not necessarily have the right understanding of the application of their knowledge to their work. Organizations should therefore offer more possibilities for students, to implement their theoretical knowledge for performing the jobs in a real time scenario in the industry. For students to be encouraged to do this the academic curricula set up by colleges and universities should incorporate this as a mandatory part of the syllabus.

#### Would you say that working in this industry has benefits like a good pay package?

Like in any other industry, a young professional could envisage their career growth from being an engineer over an executive, to being the head of production or, the head of the site, further, being a director or equivalent at the company, which will surely ensure a regular and decent pay-hike. This will be largely governed by the interest of the candidate and their passion for the job.

#### What is your message to those who would like to pursue a career in this field?

Chemistry is a very fascinating field and offers ample opportunities for growth like in any other industry. So the professional entering this industry must be backed by a passion for this field, which would equip him with the willingness to explore more at work each day and thereby grow in his or her career. Like they say, a career chosen out of passion is far more satisfying and rewarding than any other.

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#### MENTOR'S DESK

part of our lives and is involved in many things that we need, use and which are around us, our clothes, cars, houses, food, the pavement we walk on and even drinking water. Chemistry contributes towards higher standards of living so the potential for this industry to grow is immense and so are the possible career options within the industry.

strategically along with the willingness to continuously learn on the job and question the status quo, are an important part of the work attitude. They should be open to work within the plants as well, if the job demands it, as at the production sites one often needs to look into the plant operations personally, while forsaking the comfort of the office.

graduates with relevant profiles in the chemical industry and the supply of such students passing out of colleges and universities. The demand is higher than the supply. There are possibly two reasons why this happens. One is the lack of awareness about the interesting jobs available in this industry. Hence chemical engineers or chemistry graduates end up joining other industries, which is clearly a loss for



>> Izabela Megerle

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