

Wipro plans to hire more western staff

By Maija Palmer in London

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[Wipro](#), India's third-largest IT outsourcing company, plans to boost the hiring of US and European staff this year, in part to try to head off growing protectionist sentiment in these regions.

Suresh Vaswani, joint chief executive, said: "Protectionism is a risk we are very cognisant about but there are ways to mitigate against it.

"We want to globalise and localise a lot more. We want to hire a lot more local people in the countries where we operate and drive ethnic diversity."

India's IT industry is coming under threat from [protectionism](#) as unemployment rises in developed markets, fuelling the desire to keep IT jobs at home.

The US government's \$787bn stimulus package this year, for example, included a "[Buy American](#)" clause for public works and building projects. Barack Obama, US president, has said he would seek to end tax breaks for companies that outsourced jobs overseas.

Indian outsourcers are responding with increased lobbying, but hiring more westerners may be another way around the problem – especially as rising unemployment is making it easier for Wipro to recruit in western markets.

Mr Vaswani said: "Now is the time to hire. There are good people available. We have wanted to hire local people, but they have not always been available. Now they are".

Of more than 97,000 Wipro employees, only about 8-9 per cent are non-Indian. However, the company plans to increase its presence at university campus hiring events while other big recruiters are staying away.

It has participated in careers fairs at institutions such as Cranfield School of Management, Manchester Business School, the University of Hertfordshire, Saïd Business School in the UK and the Rotterdam School of Management.

The move to take on western staff comes against an overall [slowdown in hiring](#) at Wipro. The number of staff in its software services division fell by 401 to 74,986 in the three months to the end of March – the first time in the outsourcing company's recent history that this workforce has shrunk.

Increased western hiring may also mean Wipro is less likely to make a large acquisition in the US or Europe. Industry analysts have long speculated that Wipro would buy a US and European IT services rival to put itself in a better position to win business in these regions.

In 2007, Wipro bought Infocrossing of the US for [\\$600m](#). However, more large deals may not be necessary if Wipro can expand by hiring local staff.

Mr Vaswani said: "If there is a strategic investment of course we would look at it, but we don't need to buy. We are earmarking investment for organic growth,".

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