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Banks step up hiring in small towns & villages

By [Saloni Shukla](#), ET Bureau | Updated: Jan 29, 2016, 11.16 AM IST

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MUMBAI: Banks eager to grab a big slice of the 'Bharat Banking' pie have ramped up hiring in smaller towns and villages, with appointments from such areas now accounting for 50-80% of some of the lenders' total hiring. "If you look at the last few years, the expansion among banks has been in the smaller towns, which has necessitated us to look at talent from smaller towns," Rajkamal Vempati, head of HR at Axis Bank, told ET.

"In fact, when we look at our demand forecasting, especially with the campus tie-ups that we have, we hire a lot of people from these smaller towns to fuel the entire expansion spree that we have planned."

Over the last four years, Axis Bank has, on an average, hired over 50% of its total workforce from tier 3 and 2 locations. The bank also pointed out that over the past three years, fresh hiring from tier-2 and 3 cities has been close to 80%.

The launch of IDFC Bank and Bandhan Bank last year has also heated up the rural hiring scene. "We expect to hire over a third of our employees from rural and semi-urban locations in the next few years," said Animesh Kumar, head of HR at IDFC Bank. "This ratio will only grow as we expand our footprint across geographies. Currently, of the 1,700 employees, about 20% are from these areas."

IDFC Bank has set up a separate 'Bharat Banking' division which is focused on making banking available to underserved rural areas. A majority of its employees in such locations are being hired locally. The bank is hiring a significant number of people in locations like Hubli, Khandwa, Hoshangabad, Indore and Bhopal.

However, Kotak Mahindra Bank, which gained a significant footprint across the country after ING Vysya Bank was merged with it last year, sees some challenges in rural hiring. "The hiring that is taking place in C category cities is also quite significant and sometimes we face a challenge there," said Makarand Khataavkar, group head, HR, Kotak Mahindra Bank.

"The talent is available but sometimes we don't know the right kind of head hunters or the right hiring channels."

To deal with hiring challenges, banks are tying up with institutes that will help them train incumbents and then upgrade them with specific training modules. Some banks have also set up in-house training modules to skill new recruits. "All new employees go through an extensive training programme, which includes a detailed induction to align the employee to the organisation's culture," Kumar said.

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