

OPERATIONS

Creating global leaders

HR Shashikant, Group Executive President, Group Human Resources, Aditya Birla Group, appraises on their Global Manufacturing Leadership Program (GMLP)



How was the idea of GMLP conceived?

The Aditya Birla Group is a global leader in the manufacturing sector with manufacturing plants in 36 countries and over 70% of employees engaged in the manufacturing businesses. The Aditya Birla Group's focus on manufacturing will continue with 83% of its revenues and 68% of its profits contributed by its businesses comprising of metals, cement, textiles, pulp & fibre, chemicals, mining, carbon black, insulators and fertilisers.

Over the last few years, Aditya Birla Group has emerged as one of the most aspirational places to work for manufacturing professionals. We are continuously working towards further strengthening and consolidating our position in the manufacturing sector. GMLP is one such initiative which strives to build a pipeline of "global manufacturing leaders"

A leader in manufacturing like us needs "leaders" to propel our growth and meet newer challenges. GMLP is an initiative that strives to hone talented manufacturing professionals into global leaders, towards this objective. GMLP was launched by us to identify talented mid-career technical professionals and groom them for leadership positions for the Group not just for India but also for our global locations, thereby building a robust leadership talent pipeline for the future.

As an example, I would like to share with you that of the five GMLP candidates recruited in 2011, three of them have already taken on their next leadership role as independent unit heads - one in China and two in India.

What is unique about GMLP? Kindly elaborate.

A premium and exclusive leadership program, GMLP accelerates the development of talented middle and senior manufacturing professionals as global leaders to take on challenging roles at our plants spread across the globe.

The Group works with the vision to shape manufacturing leaders of tomorrow through exposure to world-class technologies and processes, state-of-the-art research and development facilities and continuous learning and development opportunities. The program offers a platform for high-performing, ambitious and passionate manufacturing professionals, who enjoy working in a challenging but supportive environment.

Selected candidates enhance their leadership and functional skills as they get exposure to key Group processes. They are provided with opportunities to work in cross-functional areas besides their current area of expertise. They gain immense expertise through their engagement in our key sectors like the ones mentioned above.

After this process, they emerge successful, joining the league of leaders at the Aditya Birla Group in roles across geographies in 36 countries. The uniqueness of GMLP is “unlike other organisations who have lateral hiring as a response to a vacancy in the organisation”. We proactively seek manufacturing professionals and provide them with learning and growth opportunities which are industry agnostic. GMLP is a customised recruitment program focused on potential talent from the manufacturing industry.

What is the thought process behind identifying mid-career candidates?

At the Aditya Birla Group, each of its businesses runs a robust GET program to recruit junior level talent at the manufacturing locations of the Group. While we have other programs to develop our employees, GMLP is specifically focused for identifying, recruiting and fast tracking careers of the best in class talent through a rigorous process.

We as a Group are always open to assimilating new ideas and experiences and the thought process behind identifying the mid-career candidates is that they would bring in a fresh perspective having worked with different organisations and locations.

There is a dire need to make manufacturing attractive to top quality engineers. Programs like GMLP give confidence to the top talent to prefer manufacturing over the other sectors. ”

And what is the criterion for shortlisting and selecting these candidates?

This program attracts qualified engineers in the manufacturing industry with 10 to 20 years of experience in various sectors. The process is customised for identifying and selecting exceptionally talented manufacturing professionals who have worked in the plants and on shop floor and who clearly display leadership potential.

A rigorous selection process has been put in place, spanning over four months and six levels of assessment involving senior leadership of the Group consisting of Business Directors, CEOs, Technical Heads and Chief Peoples Officers, who help us to handpick the best.

The Global Manufacturing Leadership Program seeks the best middle and senior level talent to take on challenging roles in production/operations, maintenance, planning, projects, electrical and instrumentation and power plant functions at our plants, so candidates are selected on their ability to take on such roles in the future.

How does the selection process work?

The GMLP recruitment process begins in the month of September rightly coinciding with engineers day celebrations. Through print and digital recruitment campaign we reach out to manufacturing professionals across the country.

We urge interested candidates to visit our dedicated and interactive website (www.abgmlp.adityabirla.com) which is specifically designed to facilitate the recruitment process under this initiative.

After all the applications are screened, shortlisted candidates are taken through three levels of interviews followed by an intense development assessment centre for a whole day. This assessment centre is conducted by world leaders and experts in assessment techniques. Candidates who emerge successful are interviewed by the top leaders of Aditya Birla Group which includes Business Heads, Directors and CEO's.

Once the candidates are selected, how are they given exposure in global manufacturing?

The candidates selected through GMLP undergo an extensive onboarding, mentoring, transition and development process before being provided leadership opportunities in line with their skills and experience. Selected candidates can look forward to enhance their leadership and functional skills, gain exposure to key processes of manufacturing, research, product development, project management and operations, etc., through challenging assignments.

They are given diverse cross-sectoral exposures at both Indian and global manufacturing locations of the Group in different functions. Through these assignments the candidates experience world-class technologies and processes, state-of-the-art research and development facilities and continuous learning and development opportunities in the process their functional and leadership skills get enhanced.

Open to manufacturing professionals irrespective of their technical specialisation, GMLP will develop the selected candidates to take on leadership roles in manufacturing across diverse businesses and geographies.

What are the key learnings that are imparted to the candidates?

This program offers a holistic learning experience both on the professional and personal front. An opportunity to work in completely different cultures where language, food and foreign environment tests your personal endurance and tenacity. Candidates enjoy this experience to the hilt as they have gained tremendous exposure in a very short span of time which they cherish for a lifetime.

Alongside various opportunities are provided to hone their technical and managerial skills through structured training conducted at our world class internal University. Here, the training programs are conducted by global faculty, which we engage from some of the best institutes in the world.

Finally, how does GMLP benefit the manufacturing industry in general and Aditya Birla Group in particular?

Manufacturing is a core strength of our Group. As you know, we have a strong manufacturing footprint both in India and globally. In that sense, Aditya Birla Group is a microcosm of India's manufacturing industry. The growth of manufacturing sector is going to require talent at all levels, especially at the leadership level. A program like GMLP which focuses on developing leaders for manufacturing is therefore unique and beneficial to both manufacturing industry and Aditya Birla Group in particular.

As of today, there is a dire need to make the manufacturing industry attractive to top calibre engineers. We all know that in the last 15-20 years, other sectors have lured the best, at the cost of manufacturing. Programs like GMLP will give confidence to top talent to opt for the manufacturing sector over others and increase the collective capability of the manufacturing industry. ■