

**Need of the Hour** Some of the new-age technologies that tech professionals must be familiar with are big data, AI, machine learning, Internet of Things, blockchain, augmented reality or Python

# 'Upskill or Perish' is Now the Norm for Software Engineers

Prachi Verma Dadhwal  
 & Brinda Sarkar

**New Delhi | Bengaluru:** Software services firms may be forced to lay off more staff — as IBM's recent decision to sack 300 employees shows — if IT professionals fail to upskill in a rapidly transforming technology landscape, experts say. The decision, however, is not going to be easy for companies, they point out.

Pure-play skillsets such as Java and DotNet are no longer enough, the need of the hour is for software engineers skilled in technologies like Python, robotic process automation (RPA), big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, Internet of Things, blockchain, augmented reality and UI/UX design.

There are around 3 million software engineers in the IT services industry, not including business process management firms. About 600,000 of those are skilled in digital technologies.

Currently, about 80% of IT sector revenue comes from traditional services, but industry lobby group, the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), expects revenue from legacy or traditional technologies to come down to 40% by 2025. "Continuous skilling is the need of the hour for tech talent and anyone unable to do so may not find a place in the fast-evolving Indian IT space,"



says Sangeeta Gupta, senior vice-president, Nasscom.

Service integrators see the highest number of layoffs because of the nature of their business, says Shibani Patel, vice-president of IT recruitment and staffing services company Collabera. "Companies, by and large, do not want to let go of employees they have invested in and trained, so when layoffs happen, it is generally those who have not be-

en able to adapt or upskill who face the heat," Patel told ET. The shift to digital has meant "tech skills are going obsolete very quickly."

Over 70-80% of IT roles are now geared towards new technology, which means an overwhelming number of profiles are becoming redundant, says Abhishek Rungta, chief executive, Indus Net Technologies. "This is just the tip of the iceberg — there will be many more layoffs over the next few years. Software services are taking the biggest hit, and any role where critical thinking is not required is in danger," he says.

Demand for Python, UI and RPA has shot up phenomenally over the past year, says Aditya Narayan Mishra, chief executive of CIEL HR Services. "Of the total recruitment demands that come to us, demand for those skilled in new technologies is roughly almost half," he says.

Of the 5,500 search requests in the first quarter of the ongoing fiscal year, 70% have been for talent skilled in new technologies compared to early 2018 (January-April) when demand for new tech talent was just 50%, says Guruprasad Srinivasan, president of Workforce Management Solutions, Guess Corp Ltd. SpringPeople, which offers online courses, too has seen demand for emerging technologies quadruple in the last two years, says CEO Ravi Kaklasaria.

**RAVI KAKLASARIA**  
 CEO, SpringPeople

**Few clients are replacing the workforce that has been working on conventional technologies with one ready with new-age tech**