

# HDFC on hiring spree to fuel biz growth

Bank has hired over 56K since March 2022; focus on reining in attrition, women re-hiring

MANOJIT SAHA  
Mumbai, 6 November

HDFC Bank, the largest private sector lender in the country, which is on an ambitious growth path, is laying emphasis on expanding its workforce and rolling out initiatives to tackle employee attrition head-on. Between March 2022 and September 2023, HDFC Bank added 56,310 employees, taking the total count to 1,97,899. In other words, more than a fourth of the bank's staff was added in the past 18 months, after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The issue of attrition was also alluded to by Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das at *Business Standard's* BFSI Insight Summit recently. Noting that attrition was high in private banks and that they needed to build a core team, Das had said, "We are looking at it very closely, because we find that the times have changed, and banks also need to give greater focus on this rate of attrition. It's for the banks to really analyse and deal with it."



Although the employee numbers of other banks for the first half of FY24 are not available, the Capitaline data of India's top banks for the past few years suggests that HDFC Bank has been the most aggressive in hiring. HDFC Bank is also aiming to

become a gender-neutral organisation, in line with Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Sashidhar Jagdishan's vision. The bank has over doubled its women employee strength in the last five years — from 17,500 to 39,200 as on

March 31, 2023 — despite low hiring during the two years of Covid.

Women employees' share in the bank has thus increased from 19.07 per cent as on March 31, 2022, to 24.20 per cent as on September 30, 2023.

Turn to Page 6 ▶

## TAKING ATTRITION HEAD-ON

▶ 12,000 added from HDB Financial in Q2

▶ Listening architecture improved; employee surveys within 3, 6, 9 months of joining

▶ Active re-hiring of returning mothers

▶ 'Learn on the go' programme for GenZ

▶ Talent hunt, master chef initiatives for staff families

## STAFF STRENGTH

Total no. of employees

Mar 2022 141,579  
Mar 2023 173,222  
Sep 2023 197,899

% of women in workforce

19.07 22.63 24.20  
Mar '22 Mar '23 Sep '23

Source: HDFC Bank

▶ FROM PAGE 1

## HDFC...

The aim is to reach "at least 35 per cent" in line with the share of women in the workforce in some of the large technology companies, said a top official from the bank on condition of anonymity. The bank is opening branches rapidly with the primary aim of mobilising resources — an exercise started even since the merger with HDFC was announced in April last year. It has added 1,446 branches in the past one year — probably the highest by any Indian bank.

The bank has not received any exemption from maintaining the cash reserve ratio and the statutory liquidity ratio on HDFC Ltd's liabilities. In the July-September quarter itself, HDFC Bank garnered ₹1.1 trillion of deposits.

"The bank is looking to expand, and the number of people required to man the branches will naturally need to fuel that. The numbers will be proportional to our growth plans. More so, in semi-urban and rural areas," the official said. While the lender is hiring at a brisk pace, it is also making a conscious attempt to check attrition — a challenge faced by most Indian private sector lenders in the wake of the pandemic. The pent-up demand in FY23, on the back of almost a freeze on hiring in the preceding two years, is one of the reasons often cited by bankers for attrition. Most Indian private sector banks maintain that attrition, particularly among entry-level staff, is very high. Both HDFC Bank and Axis Bank saw attrition of over 30 per cent in the previous financial year, management of these banks said during their earnings call. The figures were much worse among frontline and entry-level staff.

One of the key initiatives taken by HDFC Bank to address the attrition issue is to recruit from one of its subsidiary, HDB Financial — an upper layer non-banking finance company, the official said. In the July-September quarter, 12,000 employees of HDB Financial

## TOP 10 BANKS

Company	NO. OF EMPLOYEES (IN '000)					ABSOLUTE CHANGE OVER	
	Mar '19	Mar '20	Mar '21	Mar '22	Mar '23	Mar '22	Mar '19
State Bank of India	257.3	249.4	245.7	245.7	235.9	-9.8	-21.4
HDFC Bank	98.1	117.0	120.1	141.6	173.2	31.6	75.2
ICICI Bank	84.9	97.4	98.8	105.8	129.0	23.2	44.1
Punjab National Bank	70.8	68.8	101.8	103.1	104.1	1.0	33.3
Axis Bank	61.9	74.1	78.3	85.8	91.9	6.1	30.0
Canara Bank	58.4	58.6	88.2	86.9	85.0	-1.9	26.6
Bank of Baroda	55.0	84.0	82.0	82.2	76.5	-5.7	21.5
Union Bank of India	37.3	37.2	78.2	75.2	75.6	0.4	38.3
Bandhan Bank	32.3	39.8	49.4	60.2	69.7	9.5	37.4
Kotak Mahindra Bank	41.8	50.0	51.7	66.5	56.1	-10.4	14.4

Numbers include additions due to mergers, etc.

Source: Capitaline

joined HDFC Bank. Another 4,000 joined from erstwhile HDFC, post the merger.

"They would have a career path in the bank. Now as an employee of the bank they can participate in its growth journey," the official said on the recent addition from the subsidiary.

Another initiative of the bank, aimed at the younger generation, is to step up the listening architecture. For example, employee surveys are conducted within 30 days, 60 days, and 90 days of their joining to capture their experience and offer customised solutions.

The key challenge for human resource management in banks, unlike IT companies, is that the workforce is spread across the length and breadth of the country and not in a few campuses in metros. The listening architecture also consists of annual engagement surveys, returning mothers' surveys, women cohort surveys. HDFC Bank has beefed up the re-hiring of women who exited in the past, offering them jobs without any loss of seniority. The bank is also offering the returning mothers the option of hybrid work, even at the branch level, whenever possible.

For youngsters, a learning programme, Mpower, where the staff learn on the go, has been initiated to brush up certain concepts and skills through a digital device on a real-time basis. And there are elaborate engagement programmes for employees keeping in mind the stress environment of working in the BFSI segment. In these programmes the family

members can also participate — be it talent hunt or MasterChef competition.