

We're not 107 years old, we're 107 years new: Tata Power CHRO Himal Tewari

In an exclusive interaction with Moneycontrol, Tata Power CHRO Himal Tewari held forth on various issues, including the expectations of talent in the energy sector, the rising attrition level, productivity framework and hiring plans.

[Abhishek Sahu](#)

October 27, 2022 / 03:35 PM IST



Himal Tewari, CHRO, Tata Power

As the climate agenda takes shape, Himal Tewari, CHRO of Tata Power, says this is the golden era for a 107-year-young energy company. Highlighting the intergenerational work culture, Tewari says it's a place where 55-year-olds and 22-year-olds come together to work for the company's benefit.

“We don't say we are 107 years old; we are 107 years new,” Tewari told Moneycontrol. Though the attrition level has increased compared to the last two years, the CHRO asserts it's still “very much manageable”. This is because Tata Power has stayed true to its basics — focus on employee care and wellness.

Further, apart from hiring engineering and management trainees, the company has focussed on hiring specialised talent in IT and specific areas in clean tech and green tech. Edited excerpts from the interview follow:

What are your key learnings from recent disruptions? How do you think the expectation of talent has changed in the energy sector?

It's like 10 years of experience crunched into two. If some of us write a book in about 10-15 years, these two years will be like a year of hyperlearning.

Being a utility company, operating 24X7 is Tata Power's nature of business. So, you can call us like the police or medical services, because the lights have to always be on and somebody has to be there. Hence, the first and foremost learning for me is the strength of the frontline. However, the power of the frontline has always been underestimated.

Now, we focussed on how we as an organisation need to reinforce this — both from a structural point of view and also a cultural point of view. And if you see, a lot of companies that have come out of this crisis, in my view, we have been lucky in how we have found that our frontline has emerged as a key strength.

The second focus is on how digital plays a different part in our journey. Digital has transformed the way we work and engage — a trend that has accelerated — and perhaps we will never turn back from that going ahead.

The third important aspect is culture. We keep talking about how culture eats strategy for breakfast but it just manifests in such situations when you have a culture where the employees find meaning in what they're doing, which is larger than what is only in KPIs.

When the next-door employee was afraid to come out, our people were operating plants and maintaining our distribution lines. And I think our engagement level only increased in that time. I must also say that our internal unions came requesting us to enable them to contribute.

How has Tata Power reacted to all these trends? How has the news been on the attrition side?

I must admit that we have had more attrition than earlier — our attrition level in the pandemic was less than 2 percent. While it has increased to about 6 percent, when I see the companies around me, that's a completely different number.

HUMAN CAPITAL OF TATA POWER

Total employees	21,636
Workmen cadre employees represented by unions	47.70%
Employee training hours	7,84,761

Source: Tata Power's annual report (FY22)     

So, if you ask me if attrition has affected us, the answer is yes. But has it had this kind of devastation, the answer is no. It's still very much manageable. This is because we have stayed true to our basics — employee care has been the key part for us for many years. It's a 107-year-old organisation and, needless to say, employee wellness is our focus area through various initiatives.

We run a programme called 'Fuller Life', which looks after employee wellness from a holistic point of view and through a health index that we monitor at a granular level.

Secondly, we need to see how we express and address the younger organisation. We don't say we are 107 years old, but 107 years new. We are a new organisation with an average employee age of around 37-38. In the next 3-4 years, we'll be around 33.

There is an employee 55 years old and then there's a 22-year-old. They come together to work and this is how we celebrate the intergenerational differences in the organisation for the overall company's benefit.

Moreover, for this intergenerational gap, Tata Power trains around 400 employees in digital and data analytics every year to build a future-ready workforce. Today, a lot of the learning is not only vertical, it's also horizontal.

It means early in their careers, they are in important horizontal projects — they have rounded learning.

Why do you think attrition has risen?

Firstly, if you double-click our attrition, there are some support functions like IT and finance where we found that there was attrition. However, there is a clear realisation that we're not losing the majority of our talent to energy companies or competitors but to other companies: consulting, IT etc.

Here, one key part for us was to see how we can address some of the career, experience and course, exposure-related things that we can give. For instance, currently, we find that data and analytics are in big demand. So, we run a Data Analytics Academy internally, where 400 of our employees go through it every year when they work on actual projects.

In a nutshell, we're going very big on experiential learning.

Please share details of Tata Power's IE-based productivity framework for resource optimisation.

We started this about two-and-a-half years back as part of our transformation programme 'Tata Power 2.0'. Its two legs are very important — digital transformation and customer-centricity.

Now, we have built the verticals of our leadership programmes, which we have curated from our leadership academies. We ran it through 230 employees consisting of emerging leaders, first-time leaders; middle management, those trying to get into senior management, and senior management.

All these people go through the Digital and Analytics Academy and we have a professor from one of the US universities that has been our mentor all this while. We have a technology partner, and then we have multi-layered certification programs.

TOTAL EMPLOYEE BASE OF TATA POWER AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES

EMPLOYEE CATEGORY	<30	30-50	>50	TOTAL
Senior Management	Nil	167	299	466
Middle Management	3	1,339	476	1,818
Junior Management	2,237	4,120	542	6,899
Workmen*	166	7,250	2,896	10,312
FDA+SE**	951	638	552	2,141
Total	3,357	13,514	4,765	21,636

*Workmen includes Non-Management employees

**FDA & SE includes employees and supervisory trainees on direct contract with the company; Source: Tata Power's annual report (FY22)



At the base level, there is a foundational course that you must be aware of digital, and then there is a basic course, followed by becoming a data analyst. Further, the journey leads employees to become data engineers, and the top is data scientists — building algorithms and new data models.

What is the hiring plan for the next year with regard to full-time employees? Which roles and skills are you looking at in light of the Tata Power 2.0 transformation?

In the last 2.5-3 years since we have been in the growth paradigm, and we've been hiring. If you include Odisha, we've been hiring well over 2,000 people every year and this is largely in the domain of getting trainees in various categories, basically graduate engineer, management, finance and diploma trainees, because we are an engineering company.

But also in the last two years, we have hired specialised talent in IT, in digital and also in specific areas in clean tech and green tech. And the hiring activity will continue as the plan has been approved for the next year.

You should expect another about 1,000 odd people to be hired next year.

You mentioned clean tech and green tech. What has your experience been in terms of talent availability for such skills?

The entire green space is very hot. When we go to campuses, there is phenomenal interest in sustainability and green jobs and our company is at the forefront of that conversation.

I believe this is the golden era to be in our companies today. At one end there is a cutting-edge business that involves the climate agenda, making our business very important. On the other end, there is a very strong connection with solving deep social issues as well. Today, through microgrids, we are trying to eliminate energy poverty — people are finding meaning in working with us.

We have seen a substantial increase in the percentage of women in the workforce at Tata Power — over 14 percent. How do you plan to increase this further?

We've been on this journey for a long time. A lot of the traditional intake in terms of our training, hiring and other hiring plans are looking at managing that. But more importantly, we are working more on building the pipeline.

It is not only about the tokenism of that number — a number is important, we get that, but it's more important than how we are meant to manage that transition across levels and we don't have a leaky pipeline.

Tata Power's policies, which include flexible work schedules, unique sabbatical leaves, childcare facilities, etc., are created to accommodate the life-stage transition of its female employees.

Over the years, the company has institutionalised several policies and programmes to maintain gender diversity. Senior leaders mentor women employees through the Women's Mentoring Programme, while the Returning Mother's Coaching programme — a six-month-long coaching

programme — focuses on addressing concerns around childcare/support, work-life balance and confidence for new mothers.

The company also allows women to choose flexible work timings till the child turns one year old. These ensure that women have the requisite support to manage their careers while focusing on important personal priorities at different stages of their life.