

Worried by IT layoffs? Open online courses can future-proof your career

IITs' NPTEL platform sees increasing number of professionals self-train through online open courses

Vinay Umarji | Ahmedabad June 20, 2017 Last Updated at 15:31 IST



IT layoffs have made professionals turn to MOOCs for future-proofing their careers. Representative image

said sources at NPTEL.

After being laid-off by an information technology (IT) major in Chennai, Ashir Sharma (name changed) recently bagged a job at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), in Pune, after training himself in data analytics using the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL).

Sharma is part of a rising number of professionals in the layoffs-marred IT industry who are turning to massive open online courses (MOOCs) platform NPTEL, which is run by seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), including IIT Bombay, IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Madras, and IIT Roorkee, along with IISc Bangalore.

In fact, on the back of rising enrolments from job seekers and professionals, the takers for MOOCs on NPTEL have grown from a cumulative one million in the past three years (2014, 2015, and 2016) to 500,000 in the first half of 2017 itself.

What's more, according to sources at NPTEL, the share of professionals taking MOOCs has also grown to 20 per cent, with 65 per cent enrolments coming from students and the rest coming from faculty members.

"On one hand, while our collaboration with colleges has led to a rise in enrolments by students and faculty members, we are also seeing a growing number of job seekers self-training themselves in order to bag a better job. Layoffs will only result in a further rise in such enrolments since the IIT-backed NPTEL platform has been offering some of the latest industry-focused courses,"

It's not just professionals looking for fresh jobs, but working executives are also making the most of the platform to cement their career within their existing organisations. NPTEL has seen executives from companies like TCS, L&T, Aricent, DRDO, ONGC, BPCL, Wipro, and even the Airport Authority of India enrol for varied courses. Courses on machine learning, artificial intelligence, data analytics, and internet of things have seen prominent enrolments across the board.

"What could further boost the job market is that not only are companies coming to us seeking data on course takers in a particular subject for hiring requirements but also are being recommended by us to those who have completed such courses. What's more, companies are also advertising about jobs and internships on our platform in the hope of attracting the right talent," added NPTEL sources.

The success of enrolments on NPTEL can be gauged from the fact that of the total 520,000 people in the January to June period this year, 44,000, or nine per cent, have registered for exams as against a global average of two per cent on other similar platforms. Moreover, NPTEL also boasts of a 15 per cent rate of course completion. NPTEL exams are conducted at around 95 physical centres in collaboration with TCS iON. While the exam fee is around Rs 1000, NPTEL is able to offer 50 per cent waiver to at least 35,000 students with the help of sponsors like Aricent.

To further ensure employability among course takers on the platform, NPTEL is now also partnering with companies for conducting practical sessions.

"While the content, prepared by IIT and other institutes' faculty members, is rich in itself, we are taking help of companies to provide hands-on experience for course takers in the practicality of a subject. Hence, course takers could visit a particular company and see the principles learnt online being applied at the company's premises in practical," sources said at NPTEL, which is funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Similarly, international platforms like edX are also witnessing a rise in takers amid job layoffs. "With the pace at which business scenarios are changing, having a future-fit workforce is becoming increasingly important for business. edX has received over 2 million enrolments for MicroMasters programmes and very strong traction for the recently launched Professional Certificates," said Anant Agarwal, CEO, edX.

In a recent survey of edX learners, the platform found that 47 per cent of edX learners listed their edX certificate on their LinkedIn profile or resume. "And, we have heard from many individual learners who say edX courses help them secure a job. As a response to the growing acceptance of MOOCs among Indian corporates, in the last year, edX has made significant corporate and strategic advancements in India," Agarwal added.

About 1.1 million learners of the total 11 million on edX are from India. However, this came in January 2017 when edX crossed the 1 million learner mark with a 73 per cent growth in registered users from January 2016.