

The Times of India

10 lakh candidates for 2,000 SBI probationary officer posts

State Bank of India (SBI) has received 9.75 lakh applications for the position of 2,000 probationary officers, which is nearly 500 applicants for every position. The bank is also in the process of recruiting 8,300 clerical level employees, for which it has got 16.6 lakh applications.

Speaking to TOI, SBI deputy MD Prashant Kumar said, while the eligibility criteria for a probationary officer's position is low (graduation), the candidates do have to clear a written exam before an interview and group discussion. "Almost 70% of even clerical recruits are engineering graduates or post-graduates in business administration," said Kumar.

However, he said that acquiring good talent continues to be a challenge. Unlike in the past when the best and brightest chose between administrative services and banks, current graduates feel that there are better opportunities in the private sector. To overcome this perception, SBI has been visiting top institutes to market the opportunities and highlighting compensation in terms of cost to company instead of merely disclosing pay scales.

The bank has also drawn up a succession plan whereby it will have at least four candidates prepped for each leadership position within the bank. The leadership positions are those up to the level of deputy managing director (DMD) and the bank has identified 70 such leaders. The successors are identified in advance and work along with the incumbent for a few months so that they familiarise themselves with the new role.

The bank has around 15 DMD positions, which exclude chief executives for its life and general insurance, and credit card subsidiaries. Appointments above the level of DMD — the managing directors and chairman's position — are filled through government appointments.

In addition to having four candidates for the leadership position, the bank is also building up succession plans for the positions vacated by prospective leaders. This will ensure that handing over charge takes place seamlessly. Historically, public sector banks have faced regular leadership changes as most executives are promoted to the general manager level in their 50s. The succession policy will help maintain continuity even if there are frequent changes.

According to Kumar, the bank has put in place a new performance assessment solution that has enabled it to complete its entire promotion exercise within 45 days of the current fiscal. Earlier, the exercise would move into the second quarter.