

## Firms prefer candidates with artificial intelligence, communication skills

HIRING PROFESSIONALS in Asia Pacific (APAC) countries prefer candidates who possess artificial intelligence (AI) expertise and soft skills and plan to offer employee training on both, a study by LinkedIn showed.

LinkedIn's latest Workplace Learning Report showed 88% of employers in APAC markets reported changes in the skills and qualifications they prioritize in job candidates amid the impact of AI and automation on their industries, it said in a statement this week.

"Companies are placing emphasis on candidates who possess not only AI expertise but also soft skills and a capacity for learning," it said.

LinkedIn said in Southeast Asia (SEA), 95% of Learning & Development (L&D) professionals said human skills are increasingly becoming the "most competitive."

"In particular, 'Communication' has topped LinkedIn's most in-demand skills list across all countries in APAC — in the Philippines, Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, and Singapore. This is not surprising in a new world of work where AI tools are freeing time for professionals to excel in jobs only people can do, like building relationships and collaborating with others," it said.

"In addition, 40% of APAC hiring managers consider an individual's potential for growth and ability to learn the most critical factor when evaluating internal and external candidates," it added.

Amid the impact of AI on companies' operations, 91% of APAC firms said they plan to offer training to their em-

ployees this year on the use of AI technologies.

"Today, the top five skills that hiring managers in APAC consider the most important in the era of AI show are a combination of both hard and soft skills — problem-solving abilities (35%), communications skills (27%), critical thinking (25%), AI skills (19%) and IT & web skills (17%)," it said.

"In the past year, the narrative was dominated by technological advancements, particularly the integration of AI into business workflows... However, we are now witnessing a pronounced shift towards skills — both technical and soft skills — to thrive in the era of AI. Investing in people's growth is no longer a perk but a strategic imperative, considering that our workforce is the driving force behind companies' success in an era shaped by both AI innovation and collaboration with AI," Feon Ang, vice-president at LinkedIn Talent Solutions and APAC managing director, said.

LinkedIn's study showed 44% of APAC human resources professionals are offering online training programs, while 43% said they are offering internal learning and development sessions focused on generative AI.

"As companies increasingly invest in learning opportunities, the focus on creating a learning culture has soared, becoming a top priority for L&D professionals in 2024 across

all APAC markets. In fact, 91% of them in SEA say they can show business value by helping employees gain skills to move into different internal roles," LinkedIn said. —

A.R.A. Inosante

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# PHL tech sector to benefit from partnerships with Indian firms

By Justine Irish D. Tabile  
Reporter

THE PHILIPPINE technology sector is still at a nascent stage and could be developed more through partnerships with Indian companies, Indian Ambassador to the Philippines Shambhu S. Kumaran said.

At the pre-event press conference for the First India-Philippines Tech Summit happening on March 5 held on Friday, Mr. Kumaran said the local tech sector is ripe for growth.

"I'm someone who's very optimistic about the Philippines in general and particularly about the digital economy, because I see quite a few conditions that are necessary for the sector to grow already existing in the Philippines, like in India," he said.

These include the country's young population made up of skilled individuals, he said, noting that he has seen many young Filipino entrepreneurs who are aggressive in setting up startups.

However, although there is funding for these startups, it is critical for them to enter partnerships to help address challenges, he said.

"I think one of the things that is crucial is for Filipino compa-

nies and digital economy actors to look at partnerships beyond the traditional subset of partners that they look at. And I think India, definitely, is not a traditional partner in that sense for Filipino companies," he said.

"There are also structural constraints. For example, I noticed that the cost of data is quite significantly high in the Philippines and that it is still, I would say, dominated by a few large companies, so there is a need to open up the sector, especially to young companies," he added.

Mr. Kumaran said partnerships with Indian companies could help address issues on the development side.

"Clearly, you could try and develop a lot of these answers yourself, but I would submit for consideration that partnerships, especially with like-minded countries, will help you and your companies and individuals to leapfrog and to get into a more dynamic mode in the future," he said.

Asked for his recommendations, Mr. Kumaran said that the Philippines could learn from the experience of India in implementing enabling frameworks and incentives.

"I think if you have a broader focus from the government in

terms of infrastructure and creating the enabling policy frameworks... I think India's experience could be useful for the government here to consider," he said.

"I must say I've had very good conversations with your political leadership, including the Department of Information and Communications Technology secretary, and I think there's a recognition that there should be more engagement with India, which is one of the leading countries in the global digital economy," he added. "The Philippine authorities and companies need to work together to see what would work best in a Philippine context because, of course, in India, the scale is slightly different."

However, in terms of partnerships, there is a lack of information about opportunities in the technology sector of the Philippines, he said.

"The Philippines is seen in India as an economy with extremely bright prospects, and companies are keen to explore these opportunities," he said. "However, there is an information deficit in terms of what India can offer, and I assume Indian companies are not very well versed in the opportunities that exist in the Philippine market."

He said the information gap could be addressed through the

India-Philippines Tech Summit, which is expected to spark conversations between India and the Philippines about digital technology, covering areas including digital governance.

India already has a very large information technology (IT) service presence in the Philippines, as over 30 Indian companies are already operating in the country, employing close to 200,000 Filipinos, he noted.

"So, there's already a legacy of engagement between India and the Philippines in the IT sector. But what we are lacking so far is a broader understanding of the transformational changes that are happening in the Indian digital economy," he said.

"And we thought that through this event, we would have a platform where leading Indian digital companies would have an opportunity to come and present their capabilities, and relevant stakeholders on the Philippine side could have a detailed conversation with regard to the possible partnerships that could be forged," Mr. Kumaran added.

The summit will focus on three areas, namely agriculture, finance, and health, which are also priority sectors of the Philippine government.

## GenAI can be a useful tool for BPOs, AWS says

PHILIPPINE business process outsourcing (BPO) firms can use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technology to improve customer service and increase productivity, Amazon Web Services (AWS) said.

"I think, specifically to the Philippines, [there are] lots of BPO companies there. If we think about any kind of business process, a lot of generative AI capability can help optimize some of these processes," AWS Asia Pacific Chief Technologist Olivier Klein said in a virtual briefing.

GenAI is a useful tool as it can quickly summarize, analyze, and transcribe conversations and get potential answers during calls, Mr. Klein added.

However, agents should still be available to vet clients' answers, he said.

During the briefing, he introduced Amazon Q, a generative AI-powered assistant that can be tailored for businesses' specific needs. It helps "solve problems, generate content, and take action," he said.

"I really see a big potential in the Philippines to be the leading edge of using this generative AI security tools in order to protect the Philippines better and able to meet the commercial needs with the rest of the region," Phil Rodrigues, AWS head of security for Asia Pacific and Japan Commercial, said.

AWS has trained over 100,000 Filipinos in digital cloud skills since 2017, it said. — Aubrey Rose A. Inosante

## Globe Telecom eyes expansion of data center capacity by 2026

GLOBE TELECOM, Inc., through its data center unit, is aiming to expand the capacity of its data centers by six times from the current 22 megawatts (MW), the telecommunications company said on Wednesday.

"The country's capacity today is roughly around 60 megawatts. So, the 124-megawatt project in Fairview, which represents one of the country's largest data centers to date, plus the six megawatts of IT capacity of STT Cavite, are really going to help strategically position the Philippines as the next data center hub in Southeast Asia," Carlomagno E. Malana, president and chief executive officer

of STT GDC Philippines, said in a media release.

STT GDC Philippines is Globe's joint venture with Ayala Corp. and ST Telemedia Global Data Centres (STT GDC).

STT GDC Philippines is scaling up its data center growth after reaching about 83% rack utilization across its operations, signifying the efficiency and reliability of its services, Globe said.

The company will increase its current information technology capacity load by over sixfold to more than 150 MW from the 22 MW capacity.

"With specific targets set to attain 33 MW by 2025 and 52 MW by 2026, this expansion is designed to propel STT GDC

Philippines into its next phase of growth," Globe said.

To date, STT GDC Philippines has five operational data centers in the Philippines which includes its data centers in Fairview and Cavite which will be operational by 2025.

"This move signifies the Philippines' readiness to host global cloud providers and provide efficient data management solutions locally. That way, we can support the Philippines' digital transformation ambitions within the next few years," Globe said.

At the stock exchange on Wednesday, shares in the company fell by P4 or 0.23% to end at P1,726 apiece. — Ashley Erika O. Jose

## Damosa Land sees 20% revenue surge in 2024

DAVAO-BASED property developer Damosa Land, Inc. projects a 20% revenue surge in 2024, driven by strong growth across all business segments, its president said.

"Our revenue for the year would grow by about 20% from last year," Damosa Land President Ricardo F. Lagdameo said during a media briefing on Wednesday.

"We were able to sell quite a bit last year and that was very encouraging," he added.

Mr. Lagdameo declined to provide the exact figures for its revenue growth, other than describing the company's financial performance as having already reached its pre-pandemic levels.

"In terms of pre-pandemic financial performance, yes we have already hit our 2019 [figures]; 2019 was really our highest in terms of revenue

leading up to the pandemic," he said.

He said that the main driver for the company's upward trajectory is the continued growth of the real estate sector.

"From 2022 to 2023, that was actually our big jump. We did about 50% (revenue growth) from 2022. The main driver for that growth is our office leasing, and we were able to sell our house and lot packages, our condos and we saw it is very consistent here," he added.

The company also saw significant interest in luxury homes, which boosted the company's revenues, Mr. Lagdameo said.

"The luxury that is really doing well. For high-end luxury we see the same phenomenon," he said.

For 2024, Damosa Land is allocating approximately

P1.5 billion for its capital expenditures, up from P1 billion in 2023.

"Last year was a bit less. This year is about P1.5 billion and last year was a about a billion," Mr. Lagdameo said.

This year, the company will be launching three more projects: Agriya Gardens, Kahi Estates, and Regus Damosa Diamond.

Agriya Gardens, expected to be launched by March, is the company's high-end residential community featuring about 13,000 square meters of designed open spaces. Kahi Estates, slated to be launched by April, is the company's agri-residence in Davao City.

Regus Diamond Tower is the company's fourth co-working space, scheduled to be operational by June. — Ashley Erika O. Jose