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## Senior techies seeking greener pastures

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BANGALORE: When Prakash Gurbaxani co-founded the BPO 24/7 Customer eight years ago, it was not with an idea to hang up the headphones in some years. But that's just what he ended up doing.

Gurbaxani's avatar as a well-known executive from IT-enabled services is history: he jumped ship in early 2007 to QVC Realty, a real estate start-up.

"Despite the recent slowdown, real estate as a sector is set to be big in India from the long-term perspective. The opportunities in this space are immense and I felt getting into realty would make sense," Gurbaxani, who is the managing director and CEO, said, justifying his move.

QVC received \$100 million investment from IL&FS Investment Managers last year. Gurbaxani is not the only IT honcho giving up bits and bytes for a different calling.

Saumil Majmudar, an IIT+IIM wiz, found solace in starting Sportz Village, a sports event management company for schools and corporates, after stints with the likes of Wipro.

"I like to be my own boss. Sportz Village happened because of this very reason. It gives me enormous amount of independence and flexibility in doing my own stuff," he said.

Vineet Saxena, who was heading the Bangalore performance centre of Tavant Technologies, a California-based IT company, saw an opportunity in personalised gifting and merchandising and co-founded Myntra to tap the opportunity.

"Our focus was pretty clear. We saw opportunity in this space where not too many players were present," Saxena said.

Senior IT professionals have been moving out of their comfort zones to explore other worlds of opportunity that the Indian economy is throwing up.

Some say this is because the best days of IT are over.

"I believe the golden age of IT would not continue long. IT is a process oriented job where I did not see a bright future," said a former project manager with Infosys (he did not wish to be named), who, in 2007, moved to McKinsey & Co as consultant.

Though slowdown may have a bit to do with the feeling, ennui is also an oft-quoted reason.

"With slowdown people are re-considering future options," said Rishi Das, director, CareerNet Consulting.

The IT industry is also not giving professionals enough latitude to fulfill their creative aspirations and entrepreneurial zeal, Das said.

A survey of 300 senior IT professionals conducted by CareerNet showed two-thirds wanting to move out and become entrepreneurs or foray into areas such as realty, telecom and venture capital funds.

Shivalik Prasad, who was a senior consultant with IBM, chucked it all, moved to India to join MapmyIndia, a digital map and navigation services provider, as vice president of sales in 2007.

"MapmyIndia helps me work and develop something that tests my creative abilities," Prasad said.

CareerNet's Das said though IT professionals will not openly admit, several of them see peers in other industries earning better and making a name for themselves and thus feel the urge to take the plunge.

HR consultants and recruiters are not surprised by the trend but add it could be a cause for concern for the IT industry as a whole at a time when companies are struggling to retain talent.

Nishant Kumar Gautam, CEO of Mpower IT Systems, an HR consultant, says the industry is already facing scarcity at the top level. "This will only add to their woes."

E Balaji, executive director, Ma Foi Management Consultants Ltd, one of India's biggest recruiters, said every few years new industries and opportunities emerge and people want to be a part of the boom.

"They want to get into the bandwagon early to earn good returns," he said.