

Published Date:	15 Nov 2025	Publication:	Mint [New Delhi]
Journalist:	Priyamvada C, Devina Sengupta	Page No:	15
Circulation:	93,000		

# India Inc.'s new hiring play: Bring in industry outsiders

Firms believe hiring from other sectors will question existing practices, enable new work styles

Priyamvada C & Devina Sengupta  
MUMBAI

India Inc. is increasingly rewriting its leadership playbook as more companies tap talent from unrelated sectors for top roles.

From traditional manufacturing to startups, more firms are hiring CXOs from across sectors as market volatility, artificial intelligence (AI) and digitization redefine business models.

Experts say hiring a CEO, a managing director (MD), or a chief financial officer (CFO) from unrelated sectors brings fresh thinking, and helps reimagine how things can be done.

Over the past year, the boardroom shuffle has seen Neelendra Singh move from footwear major Adidas to Lemon Tree Hotels as managing director last month. Abhishek Maheshwari joined fintech platform OneAssist as CEO from alternative asset manager Blackstone in September, and Shubbam Sharma took charge as chief growth officer at furniture startup Pepperfry from crowdfunding platform Impact-Guru in October.

Harsh Chitale, who is expected to join automajor Hero MotoCorp in January 2026, comes from lighting products maker Signify.

Other similar hires include Niranjan Gupta as chief financial officer at FMCG giant Hindustan Unilever in September from Hero MotoCorp, and Mayank Gupta from Jindal Steel as group CFO of CarDekho, an online marketplace for buying vehicles, in July. Interestingly, both marked their second stints at their respective firms.

“When it comes to traditional firms, the initial comfort is to find people from within the industry, but inadequate depth of talent within the sector

## CXOs' sector switch

	Current role	Current company	Past company
Niranjan Gupta	CFO	HUL (FMCG)	Hero MotoCorp (Auto)
Mayank Gupta	Group CFO	CarDekho (Auto marketplace)	Jindal Steel (Steel)
Rohit Chatter	Chief Data Officer	AngelOne (Stock broking platform)	Walmart (E-commerce)
Shubbam Sharma	Chief Growth Officer	Pepperfry (Furniture seller)	ImpactGuru (Crowdfunding platform)
Arief Mohamad	Chief Business Officer	AngelOne (Stock broking platform)	Flipkart (E-commerce)
Balaji Thiagarajan	Chief Product Technology Officer	Flipkart (E-commerce)	Kasu.AI (AI)
Abhishek Maheshwari	CEO	OneAssist Consumer Solutions (Consumer assistance)	Blackstone (Private equity)
Neelendra Singh	Managing Director & CEO	Lemon Tree (Hotel)	Adidas (Footwear)
Harsh Chitale	CEO	Hero MotoCorp (Auto)	Signify (Lighting)

Source: LinkedIn Profiles, Mint research

or the need to differentiate causes the need to look at adjacent sectors and not hire from a rival,” Puneet Kalra, MD of

nesses and, therefore, the shift from one to another is plausible.

“The startup sector needs CEOs from

## HIRING RESET

<b>MORE</b> firms are hiring CXOs across sectors as market volatility redefines business models	<b>EXPERTS</b> say CXOs from unrelated sectors ask sharper questions, bring fresh thinking	<b>HIRING</b> from different sectors strengthens strategic thinking, drives innovation	<b>THE</b> hunt to find the suitable candidate for the post of CXO takes search firms months
executive search firm Russell Reynolds Associates told <i>Mint</i> .	Hospitality, telecom and FMCG can be seen as pan-India distribution busi-	other sectors as their business model is typically unique and the key skill needed is systems thinking, i.e., connect the dots and imagine new business	

models,” said Kalra, who also advises on boards and CEOs for the search firm.

Hiring from different sectors adds new expertise, strengthens strategic thinking, and drives innovation, an HUL spokesperson said. “This approach also helps us stay competitive and adapt to a fast-changing market.”

Companies believe cross-sector CXOs will help draw parallels from sectors that saw similar crests and troughs amid market volatility, tariff struggles, and rapid pace of digitization.

Pepperfry has made several such cross-sector hires in the past, and is “open to continuing—especially because innovation often comes from looking at old problems through new lenses,” said Joe De Choudhury, head, human resource, at the company.

“Furniture e-commerce is still relatively nascent and evolving in India. Unlike more mature sectors, it continues to benefit immensely from diverse thinking and cross-industry expertise,” said Choudhury.

Broking firm AngelOne said it hires leaders who can connect the various facets of the business that spans finance, product, and technology rather than operating within just one segment. The company hired former Flipkart executive Arief Mohamad as chief business officer last October and Rohit Chatter (previously at Walmart) as its chief data officer in March. “When you bring in CXOs from unrelated sectors, you get what I call productive distance... For us, it’s not about where someone has worked, but what they have solved and how they think,” said AngelOne chief human resource officer Subhash Menon.

priyamvada.c@livemint.com  
For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com

Published Date:	15 Nov 2025	Publication:	Mint [New Delhi]
Journalist:	Priyamvada C, Devina Sengupta	Page No:	18
Circulation:	93,000		

**India Inc.'s new hiring play: Bring in industry outsiders**

India Inc. is increasingly rewriting its leadership playbook as more companies tap talent from unrelated sectors for top roles. From traditional manufacturing to startups, more firms are hiring CXOs from across sectors.

>P15