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Retired, Not Tired: Vets the Fresh Faces of C-suite

Cos give credence to experience, the judgement that comes with it, as well as ops knowhow that senior execs bring in a complex climate

Lijee Philip & Kala Vijayraghavan

Mumbai: A growing number of companies are pivoting towards retired and superannuated senior executives to efficiently navigate an increasingly complex and volatile business landscape. These executives are being drawn into fresh operational roles, reflecting a greater reliance on battle-tested leaders over the emerging ones.

At least 90 senior professionals from banks and large corporate groups—including retired and superannuated CEOs and CXOs

Age is Just a Number

SOME RECENT SUPERANNUATED PROS BACK AT HELM

Rajiv Anand, ex-deputy MD of Axis Bank, joins IndusInd Bank as MD

— have moved into operational leadership positions across India Inc, showed data from Prime Database. This shift underlines a broader recognition that decades of institutional knowledge,

PARAG RAO, former group head of payments biz, HDFC Bank, joins Mahindra & Mahindra as the growth leader (financial services)

Anuj Jain, formerly MD at Kansai Nerolac Paints joins Brainbees Solution as CBO

LIC ex-MD Raj Kumar, joins IRCON International as chief vigilance officer



SANTOSH KUMAR, earlier business head retail of Bharat Petroleum joins IndusInd Bank as dy CFO

JAYESH ASHAR, who was director, operations, at Vinati Organics joins TPL Plastech as chief executive

leadership roles, even in a changed ecosystem.

While market conditions and operating scenarios may change over time, the core business fundamentals endure, and experienced leaders tend to adapt faster to these changes, said Pallav Mohapatra, former State Bank of India executive, and the current managing director and chief executive of Arcil. He said the presence of seasoned executives helps ensure continuity and sustainable, long-term growth.

Round 2 at Ops Helm ►► 7

crisis-handling ability, and strategic judgement continue to hold value well beyond formal retirement, said experts.

For instance, Rajiv Anand, who superannuated from Axis

Bank as deputy managing director, joined IndusInd Bank as managing director earlier this year. Similarly, Parag Rao, who retired from HDFC Bank, has taken on the role of growth leader

for financial services at Mahindra & Mahindra.

Prolonged exposure to multi-faceted and evolving business cycles allows senior executives to add meaningful value in new

operational roles, where they assume direct responsibility for managing and building businesses.

Industry veterans are also in demand for independent director roles. "Such roles not only give the professionals prestige and financial compensation, but also keep them engaged," said Haldea.

As corporate India negotiates rapid changes and uncertainty, experience has emerged as a scarce and valuable asset — one that retired and superannuated CEOs and CXOs are being called upon to supply.

Round Two at Helm of Ops

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Mohapatra had earlier served as deputy managing director at SBI's stressed assets management group, before leading Central Bank of India, bringing deep expertise in handling stressed assets and navigating diverse banking roles. Raj Ku-

mar, former managing director of Life Insurance Corporation of India, joined Ircon International as chief vigilance officer after his retirement.

The appointments signal that companies are not confining these experienced professionals to just advisory or ceremonial roles, but placing them in positions with direct operational responsibility.

According to Pranav Haldea, managing director of Prime Database Group, age is no longer viewed as a constraint for the right talent. "Six-

ty is too young to retire. Such professionals are both mentally and physically capable and desirous to remain engaged," he said, adding that many such senior officials are well-suited for leadership roles that demand judgement, stability and credibility. There is also a psychological dimension to this trend. For professionals, post-retirement roles offer continued intellectual engagement, responsibility and purpose. For companies, they provide access to deep experience and proven leadership at a time of heightened complexity.

Pawan Goenka, former managing director of Mahindra & Mahindra, and currently in an executive role with the government as chairperson of IN-SPACe, believes that retirement need not mark the end of one's professional journey. He emphasises the importance of staying relevant, embracing new challenges, taking ownership of outcomes, and working closely with management to guide and support them.

He also noted a growing trend of retired corporate executives joining private equity firms as partners in