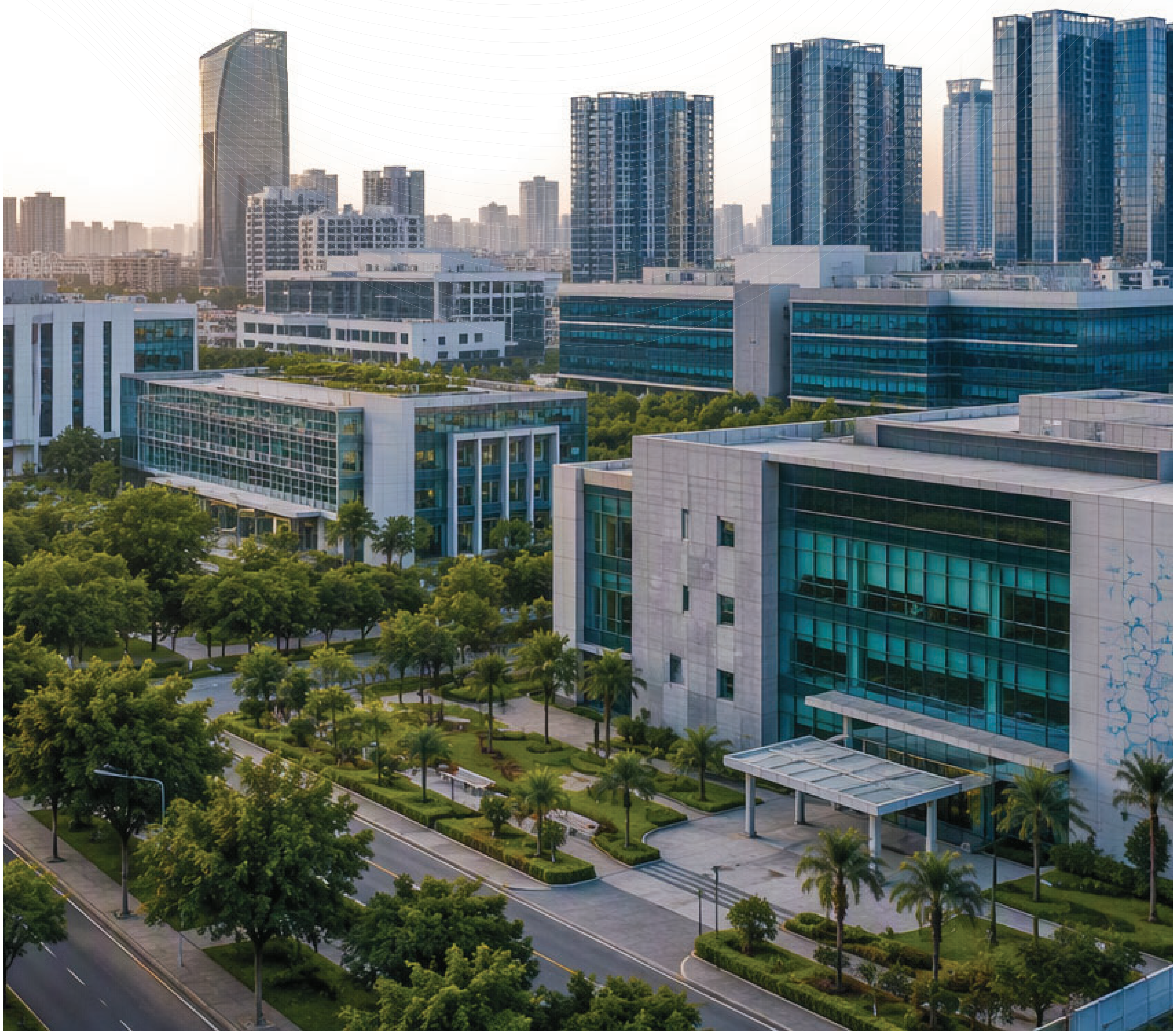
ANDREWS
PARTNERSHIP

India's healthcare corporate affairs talent market: A leadership landscape in transition

Author: Katrina Andrews, Managing Partner, Andrews Partnership



India's healthcare corporate affairs talent market: A leadership landscape in transition

Author: Katrina Andrews, Managing Partner, Andrews Partnership

India is one of the world's largest healthcare markets, valued at approximately US$180 billion and continuing to attract significant investment across pharmaceuticals, MedTech, diagnostics and healthcare services.

Yet despite the scale and growth of the sector, the pool of leaders with deep corporate affairs, communications or government affairs experience remains relatively concentrated. Andrews Partnership recently assessed 75 senior leaders across these functions in India's healthcare sector, revealing a market experiencing leadership renewal, growing demand for specialist talent and increasing competition for proven healthcare experience.

A market in motion

Our analysis highlights the extent of recent leadership movement across the market. Of the leaders assessed, 39% have been in their current role for less than three years. At the same time, 43% spent between three and six years in their previous role before making their most recent move. This points to a market characterised by significant career mobility and recent leadership renewal.

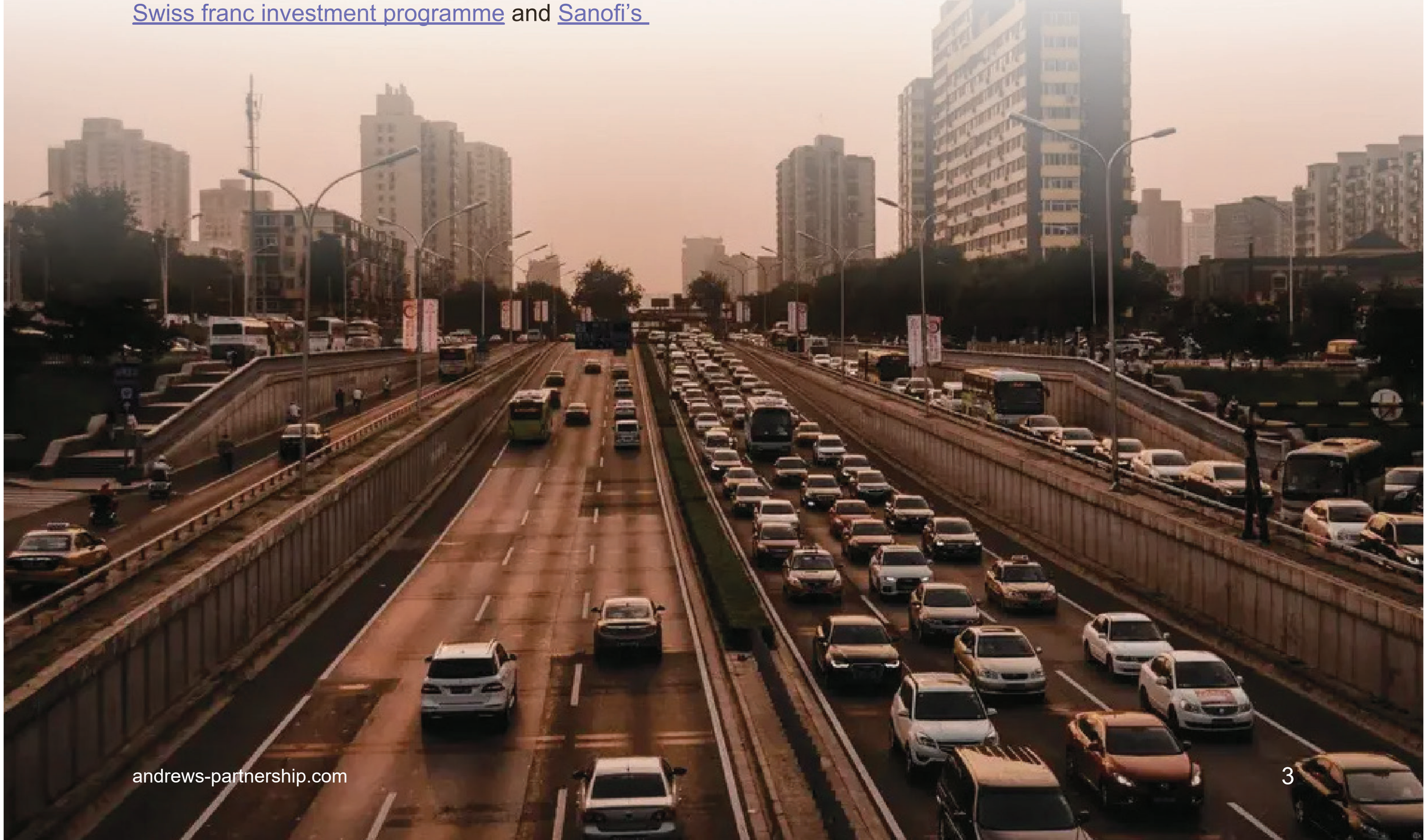
What is driving a relatively high level of recent leadership turnover across the market?

Growing demand for reputation talent

First, demand for experienced external affairs talent has increased significantly. As healthcare organisations continue to invest in reputation leadership, senior leaders are finding themselves presented with more career options than ever before.

This reflects the scale of investment flowing into India's healthcare sector. Global companies have all made significant commitments in recent years – from Eli Lilly's planned US$1 billion investment in manufacturing capacity, to Roche's 1.5 billion Swiss franc investment programme and Sanofi's expansion of its Hyderabad hub – creating more complex stakeholder environments and increasing the need for experienced government affairs, corporate affairs and communications leaders.

For India-based reputation leaders, the expansion of the healthcare sector has opened up new career pathways, enabling more strategic moves across companies, markets and functions than would have been possible a decade ago.



A wider scope for reputation roles

Second, expectations of the function have risen considerably. Today's corporate affairs, communications and government affairs leaders are often expected to navigate complex regulatory environments, stakeholder engagement, reputation management, market access challenges, policy advocacy and demanding internal leadership agendas. In many organisations, the function is still evolving, and the expectations placed upon leaders can outpace the availability of experienced talent capable of operating at that level.

The challenge is particularly acute in India's healthcare sector, where rapid growth is taking place alongside greater scrutiny from regulators, policymakers and the public. As companies expand their manufacturing, innovation and commercial footprints, reputation leaders must navigate complex issues ranging from medicine affordability and government price controls to regulatory expectations around manufacturing quality and clinical research. Finding leaders who combine deep sector knowledge with the strategic influence needed to operate across this landscape remains a significant challenge.

As a result, leadership movement is being driven by both opportunity and accountability. Strong performers have more options than ever before, while organisations facing complex stakeholder environments have less tolerance for underperformance in critical external affairs roles.

Importantly, this trend is not limited to multinational organisations. Indian-headquartered healthcare companies have also increased investment in their reputation management capability as they expand globally and operate in increasingly complex stakeholder environments.

One example is Sun Pharma, India's largest pharmaceutical company, which this year agreed to acquire Organon, a global healthcare company focused on women's health, biosimilars and established medicines, in a transaction valued at US$11.75 billion. The deal will create a larger international healthcare platform spanning more than 140 markets. This type of growth is creating new opportunities for reputation leaders who can navigate global business priorities alongside local market expectations.

India's next generation of global reputation leaders

India's healthcare industry is vast, and its reputation leadership landscape is entering a new phase of growth. As multinational organisations increasingly recognise India's strategic importance, more India-based leaders are gaining responsibility beyond the domestic market, taking on regional and global mandates.

Approximately 17% of identified professionals hold India-focused roles while reporting into a global structure, while around 5% have progressed further, taking on APAC or global corporate affairs, communications or government affairs responsibilities from India. This emerging pattern reflects India's increasing strategic importance within multinational organisations. As the market continues to grow in scale and complexity, reporting structures may continue to evolve following a trajectory AP has seen in China over the last decade, where a significant proportion of Corporate Affairs functions have moved from regional oversight into global structures.

The implication for today's talent landscape is significant. While India is developing a strong pipeline of reputation leaders, opportunities to take on broader regional or global mandates from India remain comparatively limited. As a result, leaders who have successfully combined deep Indian market expertise with experience operating across international markets are increasingly sought after, creating greater competition for this relatively small pool of talent.

A market where small moves create large ripples

The concentrated nature of the market means organisational change can quickly influence talent dynamics.

Leadership transitions, organisational redesigns and changing business priorities can create rare windows of opportunity for competitors seeking experienced reputation leadership talent. In a relatively small market, even a handful of leadership moves can have a noticeable impact on succession planning and hiring activity.

This creates an environment where organisations need to continuously monitor talent movement and leadership development across the sector, rather than only engaging with the market when a vacancy arises.

Building the pipeline before you need it

For India-based healthcare leaders in corporate affairs, communications and government affairs, the profession is entering a period of evolution. Regulatory complexity is increasing and stakeholder expectations continue to grow, while leadership experience remains concentrated among a relatively small group of professionals, many of whom are new to their current roles.

For CEOs, CHROs and Chief Corporate Affairs Officers, the challenge is understanding where experience sits, how leadership pathways are developing, and how succession pipelines are being built. Professionals who combine deep India expertise with regional or international experience are especially rare, and will be difficult to source competitively once a vacancy appears without advanced knowledge of the talent landscape.

The organisations best positioned for the future are those investing in talent intelligence early – mapping talent, developing leaders, and planning succession before the need becomes urgent.

About the author

Katrina Andrews

is Managing Partner of Andrews Partnership and leads the firm's global Healthcare Practice, supporting pharmaceutical, life sciences, MedTech, diagnostics and healthcare services organisations. She advises CEOs, CHROs and Corporate Affairs leaders on executive search, succession planning, structure design and talent strategy across corporate/public affairs, communications, market access, government affairs/policy, and sustainability.

If you're responsible for corporate affairs, communications or government affairs talent across a global or regional structure, Andrews Partnership can help. We work with healthcare organisations to map India's leadership landscape, identifying the standout leaders and where the gaps in your succession pipeline may already be forming. Get in touch for a confidential conversation about your India talent strategy.

Contact US

Wherever you are in the world, our team is ready to help. With a global footprint across key markets, we're well-placed to respond quickly and support your needs. Choose the location closest to you for the fastest assistance, or reach out to us directly – we'd love to hear from you.

Africa

Asia

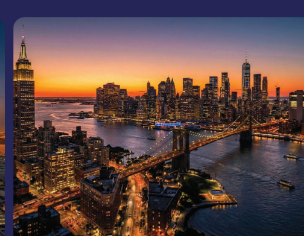
Australia

China

Europe

Latin America

Middle East



United States

katrina@andrews-partnership.com www.andrews-partnership.com