## Motilal Oswal

# **Quess Corp**

Estimate change	
TP change	
Rating change	

Bloomberg	QUESS IN
Equity Shares (m)	148
M.Cap.(INRb)/(USDb)	74.7 / 0.9
52-Week Range (INR)	539 / 337
1, 6, 12 Rel. Per (%)	-1/7/15
12M Avg Val (INR M)	193

#### Financials & Valuations (INR b)

Y/E Mar	2024E	2025E	2026E
Sales	192.3	222.7	262.8
EBITA Margin (%)	3.6	4.4	4.7
Adj. PAT	3.1	5.0	6.9
Adj. EPS (INR)	20.6	33.6	46.4
EPS Gr. (%)	79.4	63.5	38.0
BV/Sh. (INR)	234.1	260.3	302.3
Ratios			
RoE (%)	11.8	17.9	21.7
RoCE (%)	13.3	18.5	21.9
Payout (%)	77.8	47.6	34.5
Dividend Yield (%)	3.2	3.2	3.2
Valuations			
P/E (x)	24.5	15.0	10.8
P/BV (x)	2.1	1.9	1.7
EV/EBITDA (x)	11.0	7.7	5.8
EV/Sales (x)	0.4	0.3	0.3

#### Shareholding pattern (%)

Dec-23	Sep-23	Dec-22
56.7	56.7	51.9
10.7	10.2	8.1
16.3	16.9	21.8
16.4	18.9	18.3
	56.7 10.7 16.3	56.7      56.7        10.7      10.2        16.3      16.9

FII Includes depository receipts

## CMP: INR503

TP: INR560 (+11%)

Neutral

## Good margin performance on muted revenue growth

### Maintain Neutral rating as we await recovery in WFM

- QUESS delivered revenue growth of 8.4% YoY in 3QFY24, below our estimate of 12.7% YoY. The headcount addition was strong at ~10k net, but lower than ~22k net additions in 2Q. EBITDA margin at 3.7% (+40bp YoY) was above our estimate, aided by a strong margin expansion in the GTM (+180bp YoY) and PLB (+1040bp) businesses.
- Revenue growth in 3Q was modest, due to weaker end demand and account rationalization. Moreover, while its general staffing business continued to add headcount (+13k QoQ), the tough 3QFY23 base resulted in slow YoY growth in low teens. We expect growth to improve from FY25 onward as GTS and OAM growth start normalizing after bottoming out in FY24E. We estimate a revenue CAGR of 17.0% over FY24-26.
- More importantly, QUESS delivered good EBITDA margin improvement, up
  40bp YoY, aided by strong margin improvement in GTM and PLB. The
  company delivered strong margin improvement despite persistent pressure
  on the WFM vertical, which is facing margin headwind across the industry.
  For the PLB and American operations, the management has reiterated its
  guidance of achieving the EBITDA breakeven by 4QFY24.
- We expect these investments to aid margins in FY25; hence, we raise our margin estimates to account for better profitability. Accordingly, we expect a PAT CAGR of 50% over FY24-26, on a low FY24 base (driven by 100bp PAT margin improvement from 1.6% in FY24).
- Though QUESS should benefit from medium-term tailwinds of formalization and labor reforms, the growth has already been factored into the valuations.
  We reiterate our Neutral rating due to full valuations, taxation concerns, and weak macro. Our TP of INR560 implies P/E of 12x FY26E EPS.

### Miss on revenues, strong execution on margins

- Revenue grew 8.4% YoY, below our expectation of 12.7% YoY growth. Workforce management grew 11.8% YoY. Operating asset management grew 0.8% YoY and GTS grew by 4.9% YoY. The product-led business was weak, down 12.7% YoY.
- EBITDA margin was up 40bp YoY at 3.7%, 10bp above our estimate of 3.6%.
  GTS EBITTDA margin expanded 220bp YoY, while WFM margin was down 20bp YoY.
- Adj. PAT increased by 142.7% YoY to INR838m vs. our estimate of INR863m, largely due to lower other income (net).
- Reported PAT at INR639m was down 27.4% YoY due to a one-off expense of INR199m, attributed to impairment related to goodwill and other assets.
- QUESS overall added strong 10k in headcount and added 14k workforce to its workforce management business.
- The board has approved an interim dividend of INR4 per share.

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## Key highlights from the management commentary

- The environment was positive in industrial, BFSI, retail, and telecom, whereas ecommerce and FMCG saw a net headcount decline that was attributed to the festival season concluded in 3Q.
- General Staffing Business added 13k headcount in 3Q, led by the manufacturing, telecom and BFSI sectors. The vertical focus strategy has continued to incentivize excellent growth; manufacturing and BFSI grew 8% each QoQ.
- The Indian IT staffing and collection business remains impacted by global headwinds. Focus continues to be on niche profiles, GPC, BFSI, and digital, and on maximizing the market penetration in strategic focus areas.
- The improvement in EBITDA margin was driven by three elements: (1) Spending reduction in marketing product development; (2) Growth in profitability in TTS vertical and improved margins due to Business mix in OEM vertical; (3) Volume growth and rigorous cost-control measures.

### Valuation and View: reiterate NEUTRAL

- Though QUESS should benefit from medium-term tailwinds of formalization and labor reforms, the growth has already been factored into the valuations.
- We expect a gradual recovery in margins over FY25 and FY26, which should support earnings.
- We reiterate our Neutral rating on the stock due to full valuations, taxation concerns, and weak macro. Our TP of INR560 implies P/E of 12x FY26E EPS.

Consolidated quarterly performance											(	INR m)
Y/E March		FY	23			FY	24	-	FY23	FY24E	FY24	Var.
	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4QE			3QE	(%/bp)
Net Sales	39,793	42,733	44,656	44,402	46,002	47,483	48,418	50,391	1,71,584	1,92,295	50,316	-3.8
YoY Change (%)	33.2	32.4	21.2	17.1	15.6	11.1	8.4	13.5	25.3	12.1	12.7	-425
Total Expenditure	38,259	41,386	43,200	42,882	44,463	45,848	46,608	48,400	1,65,726	1,85,320	48,505	-3.9
EBITDA	1,534	1,347	1,456	1,520	1,539	1,635	1,810	1,990	5,858	6,975	1,811	-0.1
Margin (%)	3.9	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.9	3.4	3.6	3.6	13.9
Depreciation	610	676	695	765	686	697	718	688	2,746	2,788	682	5.2
EBIT	924	671	761	756	853	939	1,092	1,303	3,112	4,186	1,129	-3.3
Margin (%)	2.3	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.6	1.8	2.2	2.2	1
Interest	204	263	290	309	272	281	354	342	1,066	1,250	263	34.7
Other Income	72	88	67	36	41	151	52	236	263	481	149	
PBT before EO expense	792	496	538	483	621	809	790	1,197	2,309	3,417	1,015	-22.2
Recurring Tax	115	100	217	183	140	83	-45	180	615	358	152	-129.7
Rate (%)	14.6	20.1	40.3	37.9	22.6	10.3	-5.7	15.0	26.6	10.5	15.0	
MI and P/L of Asso. Cos.	64	-24	-24	-31	3	-10	-2	0	-16	-9	0	
Adjusted PAT	613	421	345	331	478	735	838	1,017	1,710	3,068	863	-2.9
Extraordinary items	0	0	-535	0	0	16	199	0	-535	215	0	
Reported PAT	613	421	880	331	478	719	639	1,017	2,245	2,854	863	-25.9
YoY Change (%)	32.7	12.0	5.0	-55.0	-22.0	71.0	-27.4	207.1	-6.9	27.1	-1.9	-2,545
Margin (%)	1.5	1.0	2.0	0.7	1.0	1.5	1.3	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.7	-40

Source: Company, MOFSL

## MOTILAL OSWAL

### **Key performance indicators**

Y/E March		FY2	3		FY24				FY23	FY24E
	1Q	2Q	3Q	4Q	1Q	2Q	3Q	4QE	1	
Headcount (k)	470	504	505	511	525	547	557		511	
Segment Revenue (INR m)										
Workforce Management	27,579	29,428	30,683	30,618	32,206	33,153	34,302	35,823	1,18,309	1,35,484
Operating Asset Management	5,967	6,515	6,891	6,843	6,899	7,055	6,950	7,151	26,216	28,055
Global Technology Solutions	5,074	5,287	5,607	5,710	5,633	5,843	5,880	6,053	21,678	23,408
Product-led business	1,174	1,502	1,474	1,231	1,264	1,433	1,287	1,364	5,381	5 <i>,</i> 348
EBITDA Margin (%)										
Workforce Management	3.4	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.9	2.6
Operating Asset Management	5.1	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.5	5.0	5.2	5.3	4.6	5.0
Global Technology Solutions	16.3	16.0	16.1	16.7	17.8	17.8	18.3	18.3	16.3	18.1
Product Led business	(20.4)	(15.9)	(18.2)	(16.4)	(20.3)	(14.1)	(7.8)	(0.8)	(17.6)	(10.6)

Source: Company



## Key highlights from the management commentary

## 3QFY24 performance

- The environment was positive in industrial, BFSI, retail, and telecom, whereas ecommerce and FMCG saw a net headcount decline that was attributed to the festival season concluded in 3Q.
- General Staffing Business added 13k headcount in 3Q, led by the manufacturing, telecom and BFSI sectors. The vertical focus strategy has continued to incentivize excellent growth; manufacturing and BFSI grew 8% each on QoQ basis. The momentum is expected to continue for the BFSI and manufacturing segments. The management indicated that the pipeline remains healthy, which will drive the headcount in the coming quarters.
- The Indian IT staffing and collection business remains impacted by global headwinds. Focus continues to be on niche profiles, GPC, BFSI and digital, and on maximize the market penetration in strategic focus areas.
- The platform business has demonstrated economic sustainability and positive momentum toward higher value-added earnings. The business closed an order book of over INR1,100mn EBITDA in 3Q, implying sustained revenue growth in the coming quarters. BFSI accounted for 35% of total annual contract value added. The company also saw encouraging green shoots in the auto, retail and consumer goods sectors.
- In the International CSM business, growth momentum is expected to continue in 4Q as well, leveraging further revenue realization from leading North American customers. Additionally, the company is witnessing green shoots in healthcare, manufacturing and infrastructure and will continue to focus on sales sector.
   Margin
- The improvement in EBITDA margin was driven by three elements: (1) Spending reduction in marketing product development; (2) Growth in profitability in TTS vertical and improved margins due to business mix in OEM vertical; (3) Volume growth and rigorous cost-control measures.
- The improvement in gross margin was attributed to improving operational efficiencies and the mobilization of contracts won during H1FY24.
- Cash management and debt repayment continued in 3Q. Gross debt declined by INR530mn in 3Q to INR4,190mn, the lowest in the last 10 quarters.

## Valuation and View: reiterate NEUTRAL

- Though QUESS should benefit from medium-term tailwinds of formalization and labor reforms, the growth has already been factored into the valuations.
- We expect a gradual recovery in margins over FY25 and FY26, which should support earnings.
- We reiterate our Neutral rating on the stock due to full valuations, taxation concerns, and weak macro. Our TP of INR560 implies P/E of 12x FY26E EPS.

#### **Exhibit 1: Revisions to our estimates**

	Revised estimates			Earl	Earlier estimates			Change (%/bp)		
	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E	
Revenue (INR m)	1,92,295	2,22,720	2,62,791	1,96,217	2,29,213	2,70,224	-2.0%	-2.8%	-2.8%	
Revenue growth (%)	12.1	15.8	18.0	14.4	16.8	17.9	-229bp	-99bp	10bp	
EBITDA (INR m)	6,975	9,800	12,351	7,030	9,856	12,160	-0.8%	-0.6%	1.6%	
EBITDA margin (%)	3.6	4.4	4.7	3.6	4.3	4.5	4bp	10bp	20bp	
EBIT margin (%)	2.2	3.0	3.4	2.2	3.0	3.2	-1bp	0bp	20bp	
EPS (INR)	20.5	33.6	46.4	21.0	35.2	44.6	-2.4%	-4.5%	4.0%	

Source: Company, MOFSL

## **Financials and valuation**

Consolidated Income Statement								(INR m)
Y/E March	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Total Income from Operations	85,270	1,09,896	1,08,370	1,36,918	1,71,584	1,92,295	2,22,720	2,62,791
Change (%)	38.3	28.9	-1.4	26.3	25.3	12.1	15.8	18.0
Cost of services	2,624	2,671	2,007	2,787	4,794	5,373	6,223	7,343
Employees Cost	67,132	90,632	92,968	1,16,870	1,46,595	1,64,290	1,90,284	2,24,520
Other Expenses	10,868	10,027	7,617	10,743	14,336	15,657	16,413	18,577
Total Expenditure	80,624	1,03,329	1,02,593	1,30,400	1,65,726	1,85,320	2,12,920	2,50,440
As a percentage of Sales	94.6	94.0	94.7	95.2	96.6	96.4	95.6	95.3
EBITDAs	4,646	6,567	5,777	6,518	5,858	6,975	9,800	12,351
Margin (%)	5.4	6.0	5.3	4.8	3.4	3.6	4.4	4.7
Depreciation	1,232	2,486	2,285	2,120	2,746	2,788	3,118	3,416
EBIT	3,414	4,081	3,491	4,397	3,112	4,186	6,682	8,935
Int. and Finance Charges	1,144	1,668	1,113	792	1,066	1,250	1,336	1,445
Other Income	712	511	451	198	263	481	557	657
PBT bef. EO Exp.	2,983	2,924	2,829	3,803	2,309	3,417	5,902	8,147
EO Items	0	6,641	1,388	, 0	-535	. 0	0	, 0
PBT after EO Exp.	2,983	-3,717	1,442	3,803	2,844	3,417	5,902	8,147
Total Tax	329	483	590	1,066	615	358	885	1,222
Tax Rate (%)	11.0	-13.0	40.9	28.0	21.6	10.5	15.0	15.0
Minority Interest	88	138	114	98	-16	-9	0	0
Adjusted PAT	2,565	2,609	2,125	2,640	1,710	3,068	5,017	6,925
Change (%)	-17.2	1.7	-18.5	24.2	-35.2	79.4	63.5	38.0
Margin (%)	3.0	2.4	2.0	1.9	1.0	1.6	2.3	2.6
Consolidated Balance Sheet Y/E March	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	(INR m) FY26E
Equity Share Capital	1,461	1,475	1,477	1,480	1,482	1,482	1,482	1,482
Total Reserves	25,795	21,284	21,954	22,898	24,205	25,050	28,023	32,779
Net Worth	27,256	22,759	23,431	24,378	25,688	26,532	29,505	34,261
Minority Interest	31	769	939	1,310	1,621	1,611	1,611	1,611
Total Loans	7,502	9,976	4,514	5,877	5,311	5,301	5,293	5,285
Deferred Tax Liabilities	-5,046	-6,166	-4,061	-3,983	-5,275	-5,275	-5,275	-5,275
Capital Employed	29,742	27,339	24,823	27,582	27,343	28,169	31,134	35,882
Gross Block	8,152	9,295	10,857	13,806	16,160	18,360	21,560	24,760
Less: Accum. Deprn.	3,357	5,843	8,129	10,249	12,995	15,687	18,583	21,999
Net Fixed Assets	4,795	3,451	2,728	3,557	3,165	2,673	2,977	<b>2,761</b>
Goodwill on Consolidation	11,769	8,358	9,890	10,096	10,427	10,427	10,427	10,427
Capital WIP	147	46	309	10,090	10,427	200	220	240
Total Investments	820	725	41	133	101	17	17	17
Curr. Assets, Loans, and Adv.	27,540							
	27,540	<b>34,439</b> 284	<b>30,173</b> 290	<b>35,904</b> 275	<b>41,429</b> 282	48,911 282	<b>56,150</b> 282	67,325 282
Inventory Account Receivables								
	9,132	9,982	8,945	23,323	26,886	34,244	39,662	46,798
Cash and Bank Balance Loans and Advances	5,855	7,587	5,646	4,105	4,376	3,815	4,989	8,177
	12,333	16,586	15,292	8,201	9,886	10,571	11,217	12,068
Curr. Liability and Prov.	15,328	19,681	18,317	22,145	27,876	34,059	38,658	44,888
Account Payables	1,729	1,633	1,212	1,154	1,249	4,570	5,250	6,175
Other Current Liabilities	12,351	16,494	14,983	18,258	23,546	25,930	29,289	33,855
Provisions	1,248	1,554	2,122	2,733	3,080	3,559	4,119	4,858
Net Current Assets	12,212	14,759	11,856	13,759	13,554	14,853	17,492	22,437
Appl. of Funds	29,742	27,339	24,823	27,582	27,343	28,169	31,134	35,882

## **Financials and valuation**

Ratios Y/E March	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
· ·	F119	FT20	FTZI	F122	FTZS	F124C	FTZSE	FIZOE
Basic (INR)								
EPS	17.5	18.3	14.9	17.7	11.5	20.6	33.6	46.4
Cash EPS	25.9	35.7	30.8	31.9	29.9	39.2	54.5	69.3
BV/Share	240.5	200.8	206.7	215.1	226.7	234.1	260.3	302.3
DPS	0.0	0.0	7.0	8.0	8.0	16.0	16.0	16.0
Payout (%)	0.0	0.0	135.7	45.2	53.2	77.8	47.6	34.5
Valuation (x)								
P/E	28.7	27.6	33.8	28.4	43.9	24.5	15.0	10.8
Cash P/E	19.4	14.1	16.3	15.8	16.8	12.8	9.2	7.3
P/BV	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.7
EV/Sales	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
EV/EBITDA	16.2	11.3	12.3	11.8	13.0	11.0	7.7	5.8
Dividend Yield (%)	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.6	1.6	3.2	3.2	3.2
FCF per share	7.2	21.3	45.7	31.6	24.6	16.0	27.3	40.2
Return Ratios (%)								
RoE	9.9	10.4	9.2	11.0	6.8	11.8	17.9	21.7
RoCE	10.6	15.4	7.7	11.4	8.6	13.3	18.5	21.9
RoIC	12.9	22.0	10.9	15.0	10.6	16.0	22.7	28.5
Working Capital Ratios								
Asset Turnover (x)	2.9	4.0	4.4	5.0	6.3	6.8	7.2	7.3
Debtor (Days)	39	33	30	62	57	65	65	65
Creditor (Days)	7	5	4	3	3	9	9	9
Leverage Ratio (x)								
Net Debt/Equity ratio	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	-0.1

Consolidated Cash Flow Statement								(INR m)
Y/E March	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
OP/(Loss) before Tax	2,566	-4,319	737	2,510	2,229	3,741	6,397	8,516
Depreciation	3	2,486	2,285	2,120	2,746	2,692	2,895	3,416
Interest and Finance Charges	1,144	1,668	1,113	550	1,066	848	794	793
Direct Taxes Paid	-1,750	-1,449	1,648	-869	-1,994	-358	-885	-1,222
(Inc.)/Dec. in WC	-1,248	-1,933	-464	-307	-231	-1,859	-1,466	-1,757
CF from Operations	714	-3,547	5,319	4,004	3,816	5,064	7,735	9,746
Others	1,302	7,157	1,835	1,538	846	-456	-436	-524
CF from Operations incl. EO	2,016	3,611	7,154	5,542	4,663	4,608	7,299	9,222
(Inc.)/Dec. in FA	-957	-570	-613	-833	-987	-2,220	-3,220	-3,220
Free Cash Flow	1,058	3,041	6,540	4,709	3,676	2,388	4,079	6,002
(Pur.)/Sale of Investments	-117	732	-144	-390	485	0	0	0
Others	2,898	-1,865	-295	-653	543	0	0	0
CF from Investments	1,823	-1,703	-1,052	-1,876	41	-2,220	-3,220	-3,220
Issue of Shares	5	478	2	628	352	-9	0	0
Inc./(Dec.) in Debt	-74	2,197	-6,312	720	-567	-9	-9	-8
Interest Paid	-865	-1,158	-737	-553	-640	-848	-794	-793
Dividend Paid	0	-144	0	-1,868	-1,855	-2,388	-2,388	-2,388
Others	-2,706	-1,244	-997	-3,842	-2,530	-501	-521	-433
CF from Fin. Activity	-3,640	129	-8,045	-4,916	-5,239	-3,756	-3,712	-3,622
Inc./Dec. in Cash	199	2,037	-1,943	-1,250	-536	-1,368	367	2,381
Closing Balance	5,860	7,589	5,646	4,105	4,376	3,815	4,989	8,177

Investment in securities market are subject to market risks. Read all the related documents carefully before investing

Explanation of Investment Rating	
Investment Rating	Expected return (over 12-month)
BUY	>=15%
SELL	< - 10%
NEUTRAL	< - 10 % to 15%
UNDER REVIEW	Rating may undergo a change
NOT RATED	We have forward looking estimates for the stock but we refrain from assigning recommendation

\*In case the recommendation given by the Research Analyst is inconsistent with the investment rating legend for a continuous period of 30 days, the Research Analyst shall be within following 30 days take appropriate measures to make the recommendation consistent with the investment rating legend.

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