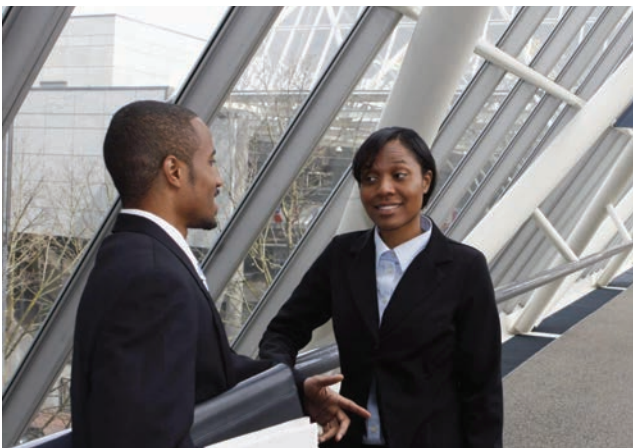


Should employers sidestep or embrace job-hoppers?

Job hopping can be defined as a pattern of changing employer every year or two out of one's own volition rather than as a result of something like a layoff or company closure. Job hopping trend has become the new norm in today's workplace that has left recruitment managers wondering whether to avoid or embrace job-hoppers.

Some hiring managers across various industries are concerned about the high rate of job hopping and there is a debate on what can be done to stop this trend. Several employment surveys have shown that this trend has gathered momentum over the years, with each generation hopping more than the one before it. For instance a survey conducted in 2016 by a leading South African staffing and recruitment company, Kelly showed that up to 44% of survey respondents have held between two and three jobs since entering the workforce. A further 29% have held between four and six jobs. Another survey conducted by BrighterMonday and Trends & Insights For Africa in 2017 showed that, 80% of the employed job seekers intend to leave their job within the next one year, against a 5% minority who intend to stay on their jobs.

But why are people job hopping? Some young employees especially millennials view job hopping as a great career move since it is an opportunity to grow their career, attract a higher salary, change locations or find a better cultural fit.



Other reasons employees job hop include lack of work life balance, lack of clear career progression paths, workforce diversity, lack of recognition, unachievable targets and sub – par benefits. Others job hop to get access to more information and resources and to gain wider networks.

In the past it was common for people to work for the same employer for their entire career life. Job hoppers were viewed as unreliable, lacking commitment and responsibility. However, in recent decades changing jobs every year or every few years is the norm especially with the rise of millennials in the workplaces who appear to be more prone to immediate gratification and the need for rapid development and advancement.

Some managers are still hesitant to hire job hoppers. This is seen during interviews where a job hopper is often frowned upon for having more than two jobs on their CV that did not last for maybe two years and above. This brings out questions on an employee's level of engagement, motivation, loyalty, ability to make mature decisions as well as ability to relate with other staff.

Some employers are not willing to invest in training or recruiting staff who hop from job to job as they fear such employees will leave after a short period of time having not added any value to the company. They also fear that such employees will leave at the first sight of trouble.

On the other hand some other employers prefer to shortlist applicants with a number of jobs on their CVs leaving out those who have been in one organisation for a long time viewing them as demotivated and resistant to taking new challenges. In this instance, employees who have worked in one or two different organisations, different positions and capabilities are preferred as they are seen to bring a broader set of skills and are also viewed to be less change resistant.

On the flipside, job hoppers can be valuable to an organisation in a number of ways. First this group is likely to be ambitious, talented and highly skilled, top performers who move up the corporate ladder quicker than their average counterparts. Secondly, they could be fast learners who build client contacts and relationships quickly since they have spent most of their careers adapting to new business environments, new colleagues and clients. Thirdly, they are believed to have insider information on competitors in the same industry which the company can leverage on and client contacts they have built while working for other industry players.

Before a hiring manager can conclude that a job hopper is the best fit for a vacancy at hand, there are certain factors to consider at the hiring stage. It is important to specify the minimum tenure the new hire is expected to serve, probe if they have been able to set and achieve specific goals for each employer they worked for, and their career aspirations. It is also important to articulate your organisation's expectations from them.

Employers can also reduce the job hopping trend by offering competitive rewards and benefits that are linked to individual or group performance, offering flexible working hours especially to young mothers, training employees on how to balance multiple priorities and manage stress.

Job hopping is emerging as a major challenge to many organisations. A key question that any employer should ask is why this trend is more frequent in their organisation; and how can they motivate their current employees to stem the tide and prevent disruptions occasioned by job hopping. On the other hand, serial job hoppers should ask themselves whether this attitude will affect their personal brand and employability in the long run.

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