

THE ROLLING STONES – EXPLORING THE JOB-HOPPING PHENOMENON AMONGST THE BLACK PROFESSIONALS

A research paper by:

Nomsa Khanyile
Research Executive
Nomsa.Khanyile@tns-global.com
TNS Research Surveys

AND

Rudo Maponga
Research Executive
Rudo.Maponga@tns-global.com
TNS Research Surveys

Abstract

In the backdrop of affirmative action and BEE, job-hopping amongst black professionals is a problem commonly perceived to be faced by many companies in South Africa. Many companies feel the pressure to meet BEE quotas combined with a shortage of black talent, drive this behaviour. Whilst a lot of people have something to say on the subject matter, few statistics exist to substantiate the claim. The primary objective of this paper is to therefore statistically substantiate whether this behaviour is unique to black professionals. The research concluded that while a proportion of black professionals have changed jobs since they started their careers; ‘white’ professionals are significantly more likely to have changed jobs, thus proving that job-hopping in South Africa is not unique to black professionals.

Introduction

Recently, media has been covering a lot of reports on how black professionals in South Africa job-hop to the increasing detriment of companies. The underlying belief is that BEE and the scarcity of black professionals are the prime catalysts exacerbating this behaviour. However, only a few have stopped to question if job-hopping is unique to black professionals as BEE is an implied agent to the phenomenon. The few studies that exist to substantiate this claim are mostly explorative in nature and therefore cannot be used to quantify the depth of this phenomenon. There is therefore a need for the research industry to provide light on this issue.

Although there is a widespread of opinions about the subject matter, it is apparent that generally there are two schools of thought. One school of thought agrees with the myth, whilst the other school of thought disagrees and motivates that South African professionals, regardless of race, are now looking for different career growth paths – this is the era of ‘instant career growth’.

This sub-section starts by looking at quotes from recent newspaper articles that agree with the myth. The majority of these opinions express the frustrations caused by black professionals who, according to the interviews, job-hop. The second part of this sub-section then looks at articles from individuals who believe that job-hopping is not unique to black professionals, the majority of whom are independent Human Resources professionals, who have a bigger picture of the workplace as they deal with a range of companies at any given time.

First existing school of thought: Black professionals are more likely to job-hop than professionals of other ethnic groups

*'I have sought to recruit many competent black people, and no sooner have we trained them that they leave. I get so upset... I am stopping this recruitment of black people. I am ok with my Afrikaners. They stay and do the work, and become experts'*¹ (I'll stick with Afrikaners, Mboweni, 'The Star', 2006).

Although Mr. Mboweni meant it in a light-hearted manner, his statement reflects the frustrations a lot of South African companies may be afraid to admit. It supports employers who feel that they recruit and train black professionals who then leave for greener pastures before the company has received any returns on their investment. According to an article published by C.I.A on biz-community, it has been estimated that *'it takes five years to recoup the costs of recruiting and training an employee'*² ('It's no longer all about the money for black talent in South Africa', Consumer Insight Agency, 2006).

These frustrations stem from the fact that, when companies try to comply with government scorecards to meet BEE quotas, it is proving difficult not only to attract but also to retain black talent as they are perceived to be less loyal to the companies and will move on to the next highest offer.

On commenting about the inequities of South Africa's past Robinson (2004)³, put it; *'...legacy of the apartheid school system that deliberately gave blacks second-class education. Even as millions of South Africans struggle to find work, employers can't fill vacant positions. The problem: a massive skills mismatch between what companies want and what jobseekers offer. Some black professionals regularly move jobs and charge a premium for their services. "You see guys jumping from one job to another and exploiting that shortage of skills," says Mandla Maleka, chief economist at Eskom Treasury, the financial arm of South Africa's giant power company. "And I wouldn't count myself out of that loop either." Maleka has worked at four different places in the past few years'.*

Second existing school of thought: Job-hopping is not unique to black professionals

As previously mentioned the other school of thought believes that job-hopping is not only limited to black talent but is a cross-racial trend in South Africa.

John Moalusi, CEO of management search company Bridging the Gap believes that, *‘While there are a number of people that jump positions frequently [in South Africa], it is not just a South African phenomenon... employers shouldn’t really be expecting their workers, especially the young, ambitious ones to stay much longer than 3 or 4 years, unless they are continually growing.’* (Candy, 2005)

This school of thought also places the responsibility of retaining talent on the employers. Moreover this school of thought believes that companies need to realize that their key employees are looking for a new type of package.

At a recent Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) conference in November 2006, Keamogetse Moula Nyoka⁵ of search specialists Spencer Stuart was quoted on the subject *“the myth of job hopping among black managers’*, saying *‘people will stay with an organization as long as they feel they are adding value. The key message on retention strategies centered on companies implementing good inductions for new employees... The issue of scarce talent leaving a business was described as colour blind, with one speaker pointing out that the issue is universal and it is only South Africa’s history that has caused the application of the colour factor. Talent wants to work for successful organizations... It is the role of the business and the boss to make sure that talent wants to stay’*”.

Primary hypothesis: Job-hopping is unique to black professionals in South Africa

The primary hypothesis this paper sets out to prove or disprove is that '*job-hopping is unique to black professionals*'.

Research Objectives

Primary objective:

The primary objective of this paper is thus to prove or disprove the principal myth around the job-hopping issue. Proving or disproving the myth is only a tip of the iceberg as it became apparent that there are other critical issues about black professionals' experience in the workplace that cannot be ignored. Thus the paper has secondary objectives.

Secondary objectives:

- Determine what the corporate environment looks like to the average black professional
- Establish the challenges that black professionals currently face in the corporate environment
- Determine commitment of black professionals to their company and jobs
- Quantify the number of black professionals that are not happy in the workplace and reasons
- Understand the impact this has on individuals and implications for both companies and black professionals in South Africa.

Methodology

For a more holistic view of the subject matter, the methodology had to ensure that it not only looked at the black professional's experiences in the workplace but also had to explore the Human Resources professional's perceptions of what was happening in the workplace in relation to black talent.

To prove statistical differences and measures, a quantitative component was also included. This section expands on the details of both the qualitative and quantitative methods used for the paper.

Secondary Research

To gain a better understanding of current thinking related to the job-hopping debate, an extensive review of current articles relating to job-hopping was conducted. The main source of the desktop research was the internet, whilst other sources included newspaper articles and SAARF's All Media Product Survey (AMPS) 2006.

Qualitative Research

A need to gain a better understanding of the black professionals' perceptions and attitudes towards their work environment made it imperative to conduct qualitative research. In-depth interviews were conducted amongst black professionals and Human Resource specialists, added to this was a focus group discussion amongst black professionals. The breakdown of the qualitative phase is as follows:

- 5 in-depth interviews with black professionals
- 4 in-depth interviews with HR specialists
- A focus group was also conducted to further explore how black professionals interact with the subject matter. The use of a structured discussion guide was minimal and respondents primarily guided the discussion, this allowed us to understand which issues were important to the respondents from their own perspectives.

Observations of the ‘black professional’ respondents

- All respondents had to be employed fulltime for at least three years
- All respondents had tertiary education, majority with university degrees
- Majority worked in highly skilled positions e.g. accountants, auditors, heads of departments and in senior management positions
- The majority of respondents fell in the higher income brackets, mostly with a personal income of R10 000 per month or more – typifying the pool of scarce black skills
- The focus group intentionally included a mixture of senior, middle and junior management to get a more dynamic aspect of the subject matter
- The majority of these respondents agreed that black professionals are more likely to job-hop

Observations of Human Resource respondents

- Respondents were a mixture of white HR specialists (two) and black HR specialists (two) to minimize racial bias in our results
- Respondents were also a mixture of agency and company HR managers
- All respondents had to have worked in the HR industry for at least five years
- The majority of these respondents agreed that black professionals are more likely to job-hop

Quantitative Research

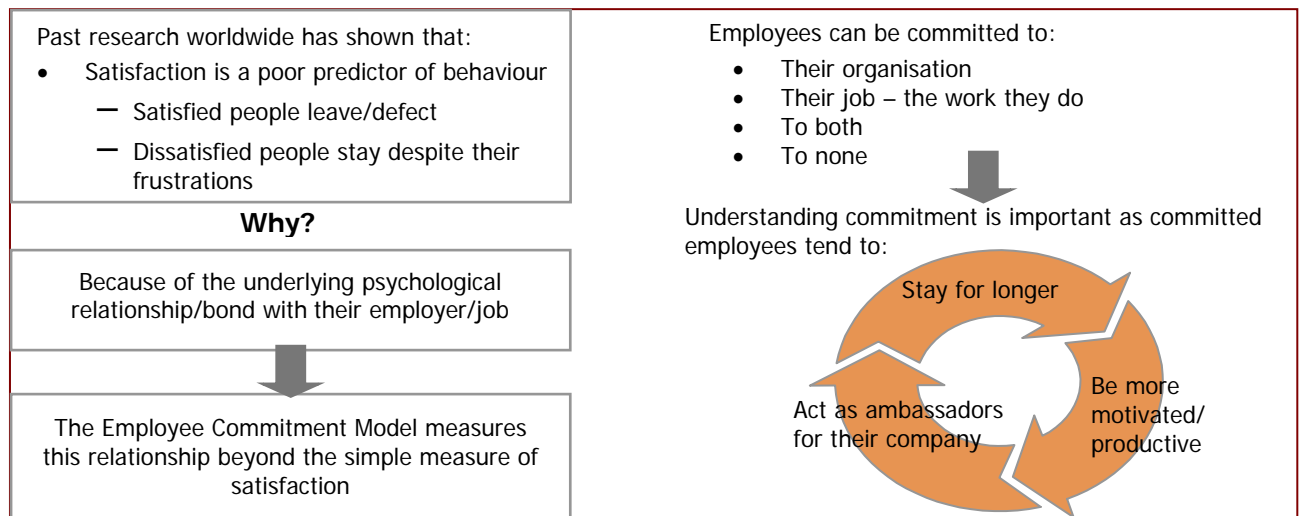
Questions were included in TNS Research Survey’s face-to-face syndicated survey which included a representative sample of 2 000 respondents. This provided the data needed to prove or disprove the myth.

Observations of the Omni respondents

- This is syndicated research; with a sample of 2 000 respondents. The sample is fully representative of the population in terms of age, language and income. For the purpose of this research the data was filtered on a predefined list of occupations¹ to make the data more representative of the scarce pool of professionals in South Africa
- The sample intentionally included all race groups to allow comparative analysis amongst professionals across the ethnic groups

To measure issues that were highlighted in the qualitative research, an online panel survey² was conducted amongst black professionals. The survey also included an employee commitment measure using the Conversion Model™ to measure commitment to their current jobs and current companies. Below is a description of why it was important to look at commitment versus satisfaction to predict future behaviour:

Diagram 1: The concept of employee commitment versus satisfaction



Observations of the online respondents

- The survey only included black respondents
- All respondents had access to internet and email facilities
- All respondents had to be employed fulltime
- Majority of the respondents agreed that black professionals are more likely to job-hop

¹ Please see Appendix A for 'Predefined list of occupations'

² Please note that this sample is not representative of South Africa's black professional pool, as it excludes those who do not have access to the internet.

Setting the scene

It is imperative to put this paper into context by highlighting some key statistics and issues about Corporate South Africa before analysing the data and drawing conclusions.

Characteristics of South Africa as an emerging market

- Racial or ethnic economic imbalances and the corresponding scarcity of black professionals in the corporate world
- High level of economic growth and a need for skilled labour
- Job-hopping amongst scarce talent (scarce in terms of qualifications and skills) and staff retention problems

South Africa's economic disparities that exist between the different race groups:

Table 1: Population breakdown by employment, qualifications and income

Race groups	Total SA population size (Stats SA) %	Population size based on the Omni data (16+)			
		Omni (n=2000) %	Professionals (n=562) %	Tertiary qualification (n=295) %	Monthly personal income of R4K %
Black	75	63	49	49	35
Coloured	9	12	10	7	10
Indian	3	6	7	4	9
White	13	19	34	39	47

Source: Stats SA population estimates (2006) and TNS Research Surveys Omnibus survey

Read: There is a significantly smaller proportion of Black people with a personal monthly income of more than R4 000.

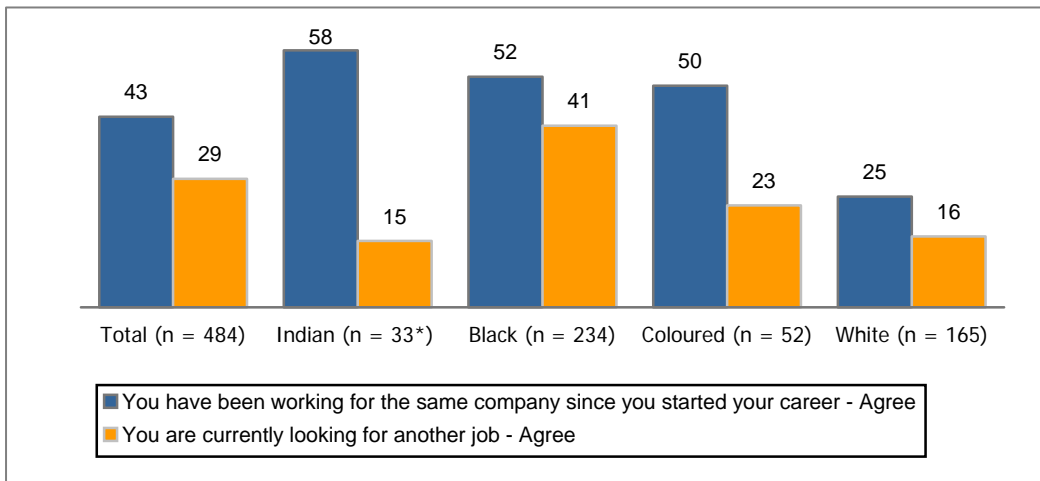
Quantitative results

This section answers the burning question: Are black professionals most likely to job-hop than other racial counterparts or not?

The chart below shows the proportion of respondents who agreed with the corresponding statements. These statements were placed on the Omni survey and were filtered by a predefined occupation list³. With 52% of black professionals saying ‘they have been working for the same company since they started their career’, compared to 25% white respondents agreeing with this statement, it can be concluded that at a 99% confidence level, that white professionals are significantly more likely to job-hop than black professionals. It is important to mention that distribution of age was very similar across the four race groups, as this is one of the skews that the data highlighted.

This means that statistically one can disprove the myth and infer that ‘black talent is not significantly more likely to change jobs than other racial counterparts’

Graph 1: Agree - statements about career path



Read: 43% of the professionals in South Africa have worked for the same company since they started their career, whilst 29% are currently looking for another job.

³ See Appendix A for 'Predefined list of occupations'

Furthermore, the results showed that Afrikaans speaking professionals (26%) were significantly less likely to have worked for the same company since the start of their career. However, they were also less likely to be looking for another job (15%).

Research further shows that professionals living in Cape Town (31%) are the least likely to have worked for the same company. Whilst professionals living in Gauteng were more likely to be currently looking for another job (33%).

Unsurprisingly, the younger professionals were significantly more likely to have worked for the same company since the start of their career, they were however, significantly more likely to be looking for another job.

As shown on Graph 1: (pg 10), the second statement shows that black professionals were significantly more likely to be currently looking for another job, compared to other race groups. This is an indication that they are unhappy with their current jobs.

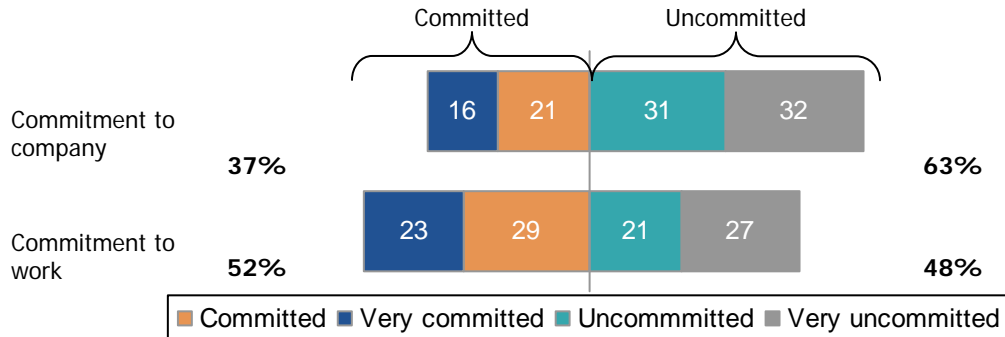
The following section looks into analysing how black professionals experience the workplace – and to possibly look for clues that might help answer why they are currently more likely to be searching for alternative employment.

Commitment to work and company amongst black professionals

Employee commitment therefore enabled segmentation of this market and gave a measure of the number of black professionals who are committed to their current companies and are thus assets to the company. The model also gave a measure of those who are uncommitted and are most likely to damage the company's image. It also gave insight on what the main drivers of commitment in this market were.

Commitment amongst black professionals

Graph 3: Commitment to company vs. commitment to work



Read: 37% of black professionals in South Africa are committed to the company they work for, whilst 52% are committed to the work they do.

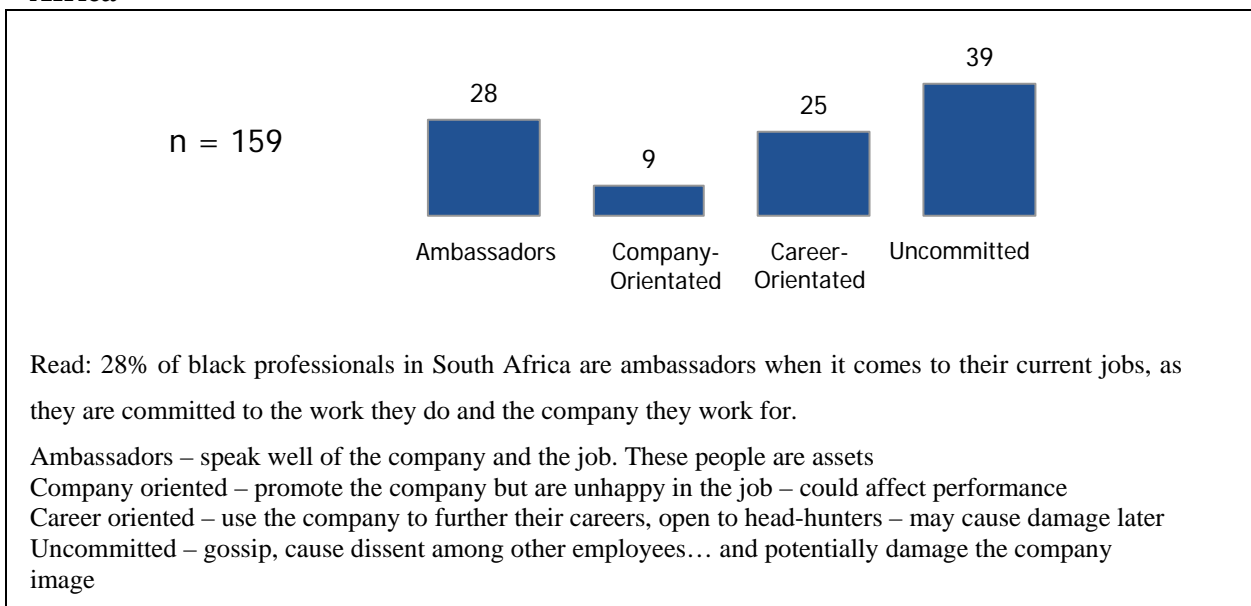
The diagram above shows the proportion of black professionals who are committed and uncommitted to the company they work for and the proportion that are committed and uncommitted to the work they do. It is apparent that black professionals in South Africa are more likely to be committed to the work they do (52%), compared to the company they work for (37%).

This research also showed that 26% of professionals who earn less than R7 000 per month are committed to the company they work for, whilst 38% are committed to the work they do. On the other hand, a significantly higher proportion (46%) of professionals who earn more than R10 000 per month are committed to the company they work for and 59% are committed to the work they do.

It was also evident that as black professionals became more senior, the more committed they were to the company they worked for. 27% of professionals who classified themselves as junior/entrant level employees were committed to the company they worked for; whilst a significant 57% of professionals who classified themselves as senior were committed to the company they worked for.

This challenges statements in media where black seniors are seen as risky to invest in as illustrated in the following quote: *‘Job-hopping by black managers has been identified as a challenge in the sense that there is a small pool of skilled black managers to draw on. Investment in such managers is risky given that once they become skilled they are often lured by higher salaries elsewhere.’* ⁶ (‘ICT Charter Fourth Working Draft’ – 2004 pg 39).

Graph 2: Employee commitment matrix amongst black professionals in South Africa



The table above shows that just over a quarter of black professionals were committed to both their job and their company, the Ambassadors. This means that they were happy with the work they did and the company they worked for. While 39% were neither happy with the work they did or the company they worked for, the Uncommitted. It also shows that a quarter of black professionals were only committed to the work they did (Career-oriented) and 9% were only committed to the company they worked for (Company-oriented).

Characteristics of Ambassadors⁴

Career statements:

They are more likely to

- feel passionate about the job they do
- have personally gained from the BEE process
- fully understand how someone can benefit from BEE
- feel that they still have a lot that they can learn from their current job
- feel that there are career opportunities at their current company

Company statements:

Ambassadors are also more likely to

- feel that their current work environment satisfies, their values and ethics
- feel that the company understands them
- really enjoy working with the people at their company
- feel that people at their work have a real interest in the individual's well-being
- feel valued as an employee
- feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued
- be proud of the work they do
- feel they receive fair payment (salary) for the work they do
- be provided with training opportunities and/or ways to develop new skills

Demographics: Ambassadors are more likely to be earning R10 000 or more personal income per month, in a senior or management position. They are also skewed towards 35 - 44 year old black professionals who have been working for 11 - 15 years. They are also more likely to be male.

⁴ See Appendix B for Employee commitment matrix by statements index

Characteristics of Company- oriented⁵

Career statements:

They are more likely to

- feel that there are a lot of black professionals with their level of qualification in their respective industries
- feel lonely in their current position
- sometimes feel out of their depth in their job
- feel they need a mentor – someone who will guide them and help them build their career
- feel they could have got to where they are, in terms of career, without BEE
- agree that black professionals are more likely to change jobs than other racial or ethnic groups
- feel they have a competitive advantage in the workplace because of BEE
- feel that there are career opportunities at their current company

Company statements:

Company-oriented black professionals are also more likely to

- feel that their current work environment satisfies, their values and ethics
- feel they receive fair payment (salary) for the work they do
- feel valued as an employee
- feel that people at their work have a real interest in the individual's well-being
- be working for a company that is mostly white owned and managed
- feel that the company understands them
- feel they are provided with training opportunities and/or ways to develop new skills

Demographics: Company-oriented black professionals are less likely to have ever changed jobs, have been working for 2 - 4years and are less than 25years old.

⁵ **Caution: Base size very small:** See Appendix B for Employee commitment matrix by statements index

Characteristics of Career- oriented⁶

Career statements:

They are more likely to

- sometimes feel out of depth in their job
- feel passionate about the job they do
- feel they are moving too fast in their career
- feel they have a lot to learn from their job

Company statements:

Career- oriented black professionals are also more likely to

- feel proud of the work they do
- feel that it is better to work for a black managed company than a white managed company
- have a black manager directly above them
- feel like an outsider
- feel they have to act like a different person at work, than when they are at home or with their friends

Demographics: Career- oriented black professionals are more likely to have ever changed jobs, have been working for 11 - 15 years and 35 - 44 years of age. They are also more likely to be female.

⁶ **Caution: Base size small** - See Appendix B for Employee commitment matrix by statements index

Characteristics of Uncommitted⁷

Career statements:

They are more likely to

- feel that there are a lot of black professionals with their level of qualification in their respective industries
- feel lonely in their current position
- sometimes feel out of their depth in their job
- feel they need a mentor – someone who will guide them and help them build their career
- be planning to leave their current job and start their own business within the next year
- feel they are moving too fast in their career
- agree that black professionals change jobs more often than other racial or ethnic groups

Company statements:

Uncommitted black professionals are also more likely to

- feel that it is better to work for a black managed company than a white managed company
- have a black manager directly above them
- feel like an outsider
- feel they have to act like a different person at work, than when they are at home or with their friends

Demographics: Uncommitted black professionals are more likely to be earning less than R7 000 personal income per month, at a junior level. They are less likely to have ever changed jobs and have been working for 2 - 4years and are 25 - 34 years of age.

⁷ See Appendix B for Employee commitment matrix by statements index

Qualitative Research Findings

1. A glimpse into the mind of a black professional

The following is an analysis of the findings from the qualitative component of this research and will attempt to answer the following burning questions:

- Is it all a bed of roses for black professionals in the workplace today? What pressures or frustrations do they experience in the workplace?
- What do they need that corporate South Africa is currently not providing?
- How do they feel about BEE, do they feel that BEE works, or is it a double edged sword?
- What are the perceptions of HR specialists?
- Do black professionals and HR specialists agree or disagree with the job-hopping myth?

Also included in this section are some statistics from the online survey to quantify some of the issues raised by respondents.

Is it all a bed of roses for black professionals in the workplace today?

Our research has shown that it is not a bed of roses for black professionals in the workplace today. Most respondents cited discrimination at various levels as the key challenge that they face. They feel that although companies are now required to employ more black talent in professional and senior positions, very little has changed in terms of management's attitudes and mindsets. Though the challenges experienced by black professionals are not limited to the ones outlined below, the paper narrates the key ones:

- **Look beyond my colour - Racial discrimination**

Most respondents interviewed felt that there was still widespread racial discrimination in their current work environment with majority having experienced it first hand. They felt that their white colleagues were treated much better than they were as the white colleagues were given opportunities that allowed growth. Their concern was black

professionals were not given challenging work and therefore end up lacking in areas that are key to their growth.

“When I first joined my company, my first assignment was to pack boxes for three months at a client’s office, whilst my white peers were working on real cases” (26 year old, internal auditor, investment bank)

“It’s demeaning to have to beg for work” (26 year old, internal auditor, investment bank)

“My company is still white demographically and they still undermine black people. Our CEO is not driving transformation” (28 year old, Head of CRM division, energy company)

The respondents expressed concern that this is where management started creating gaps between black professionals’ experience and white professionals’ experience, which adversely affected career growth in a company.

“This continues for sometime and when a good opportunity comes, they look at your experience and say you do not have enough exposure – and give it to the white colleague” (25 year old, Auditor, Accountant firm, one of the big four)

- **Reach out to me - Lack of support and no clear career planning**

Respondents interviewed felt they were not given the support, such as mentoring, that they needed to grow in their respective career paths. Contributed by South Africa’s political past, there are a few black professionals who have been fully exposed to the corporate world in general in proportion to the number of up and coming ones when compared to other ethnic groups. This means that it is difficult for the average black professional to have a mentor who understands the black professional’s culture and background, who would give the young professional the adequate support they need to face racially unique challenges in their specialized field. In the online survey, 78% of the

respondents agreed that they feel they need a mentor. The respondents viewed this as one of the major challenges that often cripple their career growth.

“As a black person, you have to learn faster in a more difficult situation or be craftier in order to make things happen” (39 year old, CEO and partner of his own company)

Most respondents also felt that there was no clear career planning for them and they often did not know where they were in their careers and what was required for them to get to the next level. They felt that companies just leave them without any guidance or support.

“There is a serious lack of growth plans and I have a boss who supports me in front of his boss but not when it’s just me and him.” (Manager, works for one of the big four banks)

Others felt that their companies would rather source more senior black talent externally instead of grooming their own people internally. This had a demoralizing effect on the junior staff in the company as they felt they were not recognized and not earmarked for growth in the company. Only 12% of the online respondents felt they were moving too fast in their careers.

“Here, talent is not groomed and my company doesn’t believe in winning with people” (28 year old, Head of CRM division, energy company)

- **Understand me and allow me to be myself - Culture clashes**

The majority of the respondents felt that the current work environment did not cater for their needs and they actually felt like they did not belong. They felt that in order to fit, they had to change who they were at work and yet for their white counterparts it seemed like a seamless transition from home to work and back home. 44% of the online respondents felt they had to act like a different person at work, than when they were at home or with their friends.

“Every Sunday evening, you have a ‘Carte Blanche’ moment, where you start feeling depressed because you know that tomorrow is Monday and it’s back to being this different person” (25 year old, IT Auditor, one of the big four auditing firms)

“I feel like I am in the matrix, I have to be two different persons, one at work and one at home” (26 year old, internal auditor, investment bank)

“Most people feel a need to wear this mask to impress and to fit in. We shouldn’t have to compromise our values in order to fit in.” (28 year old, Head of CRM division, Energy Company)

They also felt that companies did not make an effort to understand black professionals and have insights into their cultures. Most respondents felt that it was irritating to constantly have to explain yourself or your culture and tell ‘black stories’.

“They love it when you entertain them with black stories” (25 year old, IT Auditor, one of the big four auditing firms)

“As black people we are afraid to hang out with each other during lunch because it is perceived negatively by management. When a group of black people hang out together they feel that we are up to no good” (26 year old, internal auditor, investment bank)

- **Stop drowning me - Pressure to work much harder than peers**

It quickly became apparent that there were many pressures that black professionals face in the workplace. Respondents interviewed felt that these were mainly unique to black people as their white colleagues did not experience the same amounts of pressure.

They felt their competence was always challenged because they were looked down upon and only seen as being there for window dressing. They felt that most of the times they never really knew whether a company hired them because of their competence or rather to fulfill BEE quotas.

“I wasn’t sure whether they wanted me because I was black or for my competency” (39 year old, CEO and partner of his own company)

As a result most black professionals felt that they have to work ten times harder than their peers to prove that they deserved their position.

What do they need that corporate South Africa is currently not providing?

Contrary to popular belief the research found that black professionals are not primarily driven by money. Higher salaries were seen more as a sign of recognition and were also used as a benchmark for success. The respondents conferred the following factors as being of greater importance to them than money:

- Recognition and fair rewards for their efforts – ultimately leading to their competency not being constantly questioned
- Equal opportunities to learn, grow and add value to the business – they are ambitious, eager to learn and want to contribute to the development and growth of the company
- An environment that embraces their individuality and promotes diversity – they don’t want to have to change their character or compromise their values in order to fit into the environment
- Support and guidance – most felt that they needed mentors to guide them
- Transformation of not only policies but also transformation of management’s attitudes and systems – they felt the system was designed to always work against them
- BEE strategies that promote grooming in the corporate world, leading to growth for black talent

How do they feel about BEE, do they feel that BEE works, or is it a double edged sword?

The respondents were very positive about BEE. They felt that BEE was what South Africa needed in order to redress the racial imbalances that exist. Contrary to popular belief that BEE has resulted in black talent feeling their competencies are questioned, the respondents mentioned that BEE increased black people's confidence in general and felt that they also stood a chance to benefit from the process.

"BEE is a reality now, companies need to shape up and bring quality, and it's no longer about window dressing now" (28 year old, Head of CRM division, Energy Company)

"We need to catch up and catch up fast, so BEE is necessary" (25 year old, IT Auditor)

"BEE is a good deviation from the main road; it takes the country on an alternative route, to allow us to correct anomalies that exist on the main road" (39 year old, Group CEO and major shareholder)

They did recognize however that BEE was not perfect and there were some loopholes in the way that it was implemented.

"There is still a lot of education required around BEE, people are brought in as BEE partners and are exploited because they do not know anything" (28 year old, Head of CRM division, Energy Company)

"BEE needs to be done once and done correctly" (25 year old, IT Auditor, Auditing firm (big four))

It must also be noted that majority of the respondents viewed BEE as those 'big deals' and did not consider employment equity as part of it. Hence the majority felt that they had not benefited directly from BEE.

2. Perceptions of HR specialists

Points of view of the HR specialists were also explored in an endeavour to identify gaps in perceptions between the specialists and the black professionals. The burning question that this section answers is therefore: Is there a divide between attitudes and perceptions of HR specialists about black talent compared to how black professionals view the situation?

Research showed that although all HR specialists were in touch with new trends in HR, there were some discrepancies in how black and white HR specialists perceived how black professionals' feel. White HR specialists seem to have little insight on how black professionals feel and the reasons why they change jobs. On the other hand, black HR specialists had better insights – possibly due to their own experiences playing a significant role. Furthermore, black HR specialists expressed knowledge of the unique challenges and issues that black professionals are facing.

Some key findings include:

- BEE viewed positively – fair and equitable
- Staff are no longer retained by money, security, etc, they have different drivers
- Feel that companies need to change their retention strategies and provide individuals, regardless of their skin colour, with the right opportunities to grow
- Only black HR specialists, felt that black professionals face racial discrimination in the workplace
- Black HR specialists also acknowledged the need for support structures and mentors
- Black HR specialists emphasized high level of responsibility/ accountability for a project at work resulted in higher levels of loyalty – it satisfies the need for 'Actualisation' (Maslow's Hierarchy of needs)

“White people believe that black people are not adequately competent to deliver” (Black HR Expert)

*“Nobody is mentoring black people in companies. They are thrown in the deep end”
(Black HR Expert)*

“The trend has moved now to taking the best candidate and not the Affirmative Action mindset anymore” (White HR Director, Marketing Industry)

3. Do black professionals and HR specialists agree with the job-hopping myth?

Almost everyone interviewed, black professionals and HR experts believed that black professionals do job-hop.

Black professionals believe that it is mainly the push factors that were key contributors to black talent switching companies. They cited the negative experiences and dissatisfaction at a company as reasons for switching. They also felt that there were more opportunities for them in corporate South Africa. They also believed that most companies were misinformed on why black talent was leaving, because most black professionals use ‘better salary’ as an excuse during their exit interview, because they do not want to discuss the real issues that caused them to look for alternatives in the first place. 58% of the respondents who changed jobs in the online surveys cited better opportunities for their career advancement or unhappiness with how they were treated at their current companies as reasons for changing companies – this was the highest mention.

*“You just use money as an excuse at the exit interview because by then you are so tired of things, you don’t even want to get into discussing the real issues, you just want to leave”
(26 year old, Internal Auditor, investment bank)*

“Managers are the push factors. People are treated badly by the managers and they leave” (33 year old, Manager and Statistician, Government department)

HR specialists on the other hand believed that it was mainly the pull factors that were key contributors to people switching companies. They believed that black professionals were headhunted and given much better offers because all companies want to meet their BEE quotas.

“Outside opportunities are more tempting for black staff as companies offer these great packages to attract more black people” (HR Director, Marketing Company)

Conclusions

Quantitative research conclusions

While the results showed that almost half of professionals in corporate South Africa had worked for more than one company in their career, this trend skewed significantly towards white professionals. Making it clear that while there is some relationship between job-hopping and race, media has been conveying a misleading correlation. Albeit, BEE and Affirmative Action are working in the black professional’s favour, changing jobs is actually motivated by other market factors (such as scarcity of skills), of which other race groups are equally reaping the benefits.

Moreover, there appears to be no relationship between income and number of companies worked for – this challenges the belief that professionals are changing jobs more often in search for higher salaries. The results however, showed skews in language, age and area – where Afrikaans speaking respondents, younger respondents or respondents living in Cape Town were less likely to have worked for the same company since their start of their career.

However, the results showed that black professionals were significantly more likely to be currently looking for another job. This drove the endeavour to analyse how black professionals currently felt about the workplace. The analysis started by looking at commitment to company and job using the online research. Overall, black professionals

were more likely to stay in a job because they valued the work they did, rather than the company they worked for – they were significantly more committed to their job than the company they worked for.

There was no clear relationship between income and commitment to company. However, results showed that as income increases, commitment to job also increases. Money could be a driver of job-satisfaction, but not loyalty.

The results also showed a relationship between level at company and commitment to both company and job. One can conclude that the more senior a black professional is in the company, the more committed they are to both the company and their job – this supports what came out during the qualitative phase - Recognize me, and what black HR specialists emphasized as a crucial part of any company's retention strategy particularly for black professionals.

The results showed that almost 40% of black professionals were uncommitted to the company they worked for and the job they did – the Uncommitted. It is concerning that this is the largest segment of the Employee Matrix of black professionals. They felt lonely and like an outsider at work. They were also more likely to feel overwhelmed by their job. It can be deduced that this stems from lack of mentorship structures in the workplace as was highlighted in the qualitative phase.

Nonetheless, just over a quarter of black professionals were committed to both the company they worked for and the job they did – the Ambassadors. They had a strong sense of belonging in the company and were passionate about their job.

Qualitative research conclusions

- This paper has shown that job-hopping is just a tip of the iceberg when it comes to black professionals in the workplace
- Black professionals feel that they currently face a lot of challenges and frustrations in the work environment. Racial discrimination was cited as one of the key causes for the unfair treatment. Many felt that whilst companies had transformation strategies in place, attitudes and systems were yet to be transformed
- BEE as a concept is viewed positively by all the respondents and seen as a necessary step in bridging the imbalances created by apartheid. They were however concerned of how BEE is implemented
- Black professionals felt that companies needed to reach out to them and recognise their efforts. They felt that they were the only ones going the extra mile, trying to impress their companies yet the efforts were not fairly rewarded and recognised.
- The key concern that emerged from this research was the disjoint in how black professionals experience the workplace and how HR specialists, more especially white, perceived the situation. This basically means that corporate South Africa does not readily have effective retention strategies for black talent
- On a more positive light, it was clear that majority black professionals are ambitious, want to grow and add value to the companies they work for.

Cause and effect - implications:

Why should companies care?

As shown in the Omni survey, black professionals were significantly more likely to be currently looking for another job compared to other racial groups. Moreover, the majority of black professionals were uncommitted to the company they worked for. Considering that government's BEE and Affirmative Action quotas result in the exclusion of companies that are not compliant from procurement opportunities (through tenders), there is therefore the urgency for companies, which can lose potential revenue from procurement, to take note of how their current black professionals feel – in order to develop effective retention strategies

Management needs to be proactive and change the way they look at their black professionals and constantly ask themselves if as a company they:

- Look beyond colour
- Reach out to their black professionals
- Understand and allow their black professionals to be themselves
- Are not drowning their black professionals

But it is imperative that the answers come from the black professionals themselves. As shown in the paper, white HR specialists are not in-touch with how black professionals truly feel.

Another reason companies now need to put their ear to the ground is 'reputation'. There is a recent incident where a letter was written to a top investment company about the frustrations a young black professional experienced while under their employment, which has received much airtime at parties and any other social gathering, amongst black professionals. The letter has had wide distribution to a point where it eventually landed in the president's office and was recently used as an example in the president's weekly website newspaper when questioning transformation and prejudices in corporate South Africa.

Further research

Albeit, this paper has originated from the need of prove or disprove the myth that black professionals in South Africa are more likely to job-hop, what has become apparent is that companies in corporate South Africa are not in-touch with the way their professionals, regardless of colour, feel. Corporate South Africa needs to understand the dynamics that are at play so that they can implement more effect retention strategies. It is therefore urgent to:

- Explore how the entire market feels (including all race groups) and establish the underlying needs, frustrations and concerns that professionals currently have
- Quantify the current needs, frustrations and concern in order to have direction on what needs to be dealt with more urgently
- In conjunction to the above, establish the extent to which HR in corporate South Africa understands today's professional and perform gap analysis to establish any disconnects
- Establish the relationships corporate South Africa currently has with it professionals using segmentation techniques such as factor or cluster analysis

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *I'll stick with Afrikaners* – a statement reported to have been made by Mr. Tito Mboweni, The Star online, October 2006
http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20061007085830396C312112 (Accessed on the 10th October 2006)
2. *It's no longer all about the money for black talent in South Africa* - Consumer Insight Agency, September 2006
<http://www.bizcommunity.com/PressOffice/PressRelease.aspx?i=656&ai=11516>
(Accessed on the 10th October 2006)
3. *The Second Revolution* - Simon Robinson , 2004
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,610026,00.html> (Accessed on the 6th February 2007)
4. *Is tokenism a thing of the past?* - Geoff Candy. 2005
<http://moneyweb.iac.iafrica.com/economy/empowerment/435487.htm> (Accessed on the 12th October 2006)
5. *50 Years of People Management* – Keamogetse Moula Nyoka, IPM Conference South Africa, November 2006
<http://reconnectafrica.com/staging/November-50YearsofPeopleManagement.jsp>
(Accessed on the 9th of February 2007)
6. ICT Empowerment Charter Working Group – Fourth Working Draft 2004
http://72.14.235.104/search?q=cache:sA1kGIByh_EJ:www.ictregulationtoolkit.org/en/Document.1615.html+Job-hopping+in+black+professionals+South+Africa&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=36&gl=za
(Accessed 20th February 2007)

APPENDIX A –


Predefined list of occupations


1. Actuary
2. Advertising positions (e.g. advertising executive, copywriter, strategic planner)
3. Architect
4. Chartered accountant
5. Clerical/administrative employee (secretary, PA, book-keeper, bank teller, librarian)
6. Customer service (e.g. call centre agent, cashier, beauty consultant, waitron, cabin attendant, hotel steward)
7. Doctor or dentist
8. Education (school teacher, private tutor)
9. Engineer (e.g. mechanical, chemical or civil engineer)
10. Executive management (company director, managing director, chief executive officer)
11. Fashion (e.g. fashion designer, fashion buyer, merchandise planner)
12. Film and media behind the scenes (e.g. TV producer, programme director)
13. Film and media on-screen (e.g. TV presenter, actor, news reader)
14. Finance specialist (investment banker, portfolio manager, financial analyst, economist)
15. Government official (e.g. mayor, MEC or Member of Parliament)
16. Human Resource position (HR officer, staff ware specialist)
17. IT-related jobs (e.g. systems developer, programmer, java architect, web developer, data warehouse analyst)
18. Journalist
19. Law (lawyer, legal secretary, advocate or judge)
20. Management consultant/advisor
21. Marketing positions (marketing manager, brand manager, account executive)
22. Owner of a company with 20 or more employees
23. Pilot
24. Psychologist, psychiatrist or sociologist
25. Quantity surveyor
26. Senior Education (e.g. university lecturer, professor, school principal, college director)
27. Senior military/police officer (colonel, general, admiral, etc)
28. Vet

APPENDIX B –

Employee commitment matrix by statements index

	Ambassador (n = 44*)	Company- oriented (n =14**)	Career- oriented (n = 39*)	Uncommitted (n = 62)
There are a lot of black professionals with your level of qualifications, in your industry	82	129	83	106
You feel 'lonely' in your current position - you wish there were more people like you	70	120	101	109
You feel that you need a mentor - someone who can guide you and help you build your career	79	124	92	105
Some days you feel out of your depth in your job	57	126	105	112
You feel passionate about the job you do	144	76	117	64
You plan to leave your current job and start your own business within the next year	68	98	103	131
You could have still got to where you are, in terms of your career, without BEE	103	108	95	95
You have personally gained some benefit from the BEE process	119	119	58	103
You fully understand how someone like you can benefit from the BEE process	116	90	98	95
You feel that you are moving too fast in your career	100	64	118	118
You feel that black professionals have to work harder than other racial groups to prove to others that they deserve their position	99	104	99	99
BEE is a disadvantage, because you feel that you have to work harder to prove yourself to others	87	137	80	96
You feel there is a lot to learn from your job	128	75	118	80
Black professionals change jobs more often than other racial or ethnic groups	84	112	98	105
You think you have a competitive advantage in the workplace because of BEE	100	119	86	94
There are career opportunities for you in the company you work for	130	113	81	76


 Less likely to be mentioned than average


 Most likely to be mentioned than average

APPENDIX B (continued) –

Employee commitment matrix by statements

	Ambassador (n = 44*)	Company- oriented (n =14**)	Career- oriented (n = 39*)	Uncommitted (n = 62)
Your work environment satisfies your values and ethics	135	111	88	66
You are provided with training opportunities and/or ways to develop new skills	125	106	95	74
Your ideas and suggestions are valued	147	79	98	76
You are proud of the work you do	121	87	111	81
You think you receive fair payment (salary) for the work you do	118	150	61	71
You feel valued as an employee	133	133	84	50
You feel that it is better to work for a black managed company compared to a white managed company	63	66	120	151
People at work have a real interest in your well-being	144	115	74	68
Your direct manager is black	100	78	115	107
Your company is mostly white owned and managed	84	123	91	101
You often feel like an outsider at work	59	94	133	114
You feel you have to act like a different person at work, than when you are at home or with your friends	60	87	118	135
You really enjoy working with the people in your company/department	121	95	96	88
Your company understands you	147	115	83	55

 Less likely to be mentioned than average

 Most likely to be mentioned than average