

Job Hopping—Issues and Challenges in a Dynamic Environment: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

The present study has been conducted to find out the frequency and the reasons of job hopping at different levels of management in IT & Telecom industry in north India. A total of 237 executives from both public (151) and private(86) sector were part of the sample. The results showed that the frequency of job hopping is less amongst the public sector executives as compared to the private sector. The public sector executives were mainly guided by company location, promotional avenues and compensation and challenging work. The private sector executives were however attracted towards growth and promotional opportunities with commensurate compensation and good training and developmental opportunities at a good location. In this light certain strategies to combat job hopping have been delineated for both public and private sector executives as outlined by the executives themselves.

Key words: Dynamic environment, Job hopping, Executive turnover, Executive retention, Flexi timing, Learning organizations, Employee Stock Option Plans.

“While the distinguishing feature of the last 80 years was the increase in mobility, the next century will be marked by the widening range of choice”. **Sir John Browne, BP**

1. Introduction

Leigh Branham (2005) in his book, “The Seven Hidden Reasons Employees Leave” has delineated the following reasons of job hopping; 1) the job or work place not living up to expectations, 2) mismatch between job and person, 3) too little coaching or feedback, 4) too few growth and advancement opportunities, 5) feeling not valued and unrecognized including pay, 6) stress from overwork and work life imbalance, 7) loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders.

A change in the job or job hopping with moderate frequency has become an acceptable phenomenon which was considered a disqualification for the purpose of further recruitment in the subsequent organizations during the pre-liberalization period. But this value system has undergone a radical transformation during the post liberalization period. According to Das, H. (1996) the loyalty to the organization has increasingly been felt to be an outdated value system where professional loyalty has replaced the age old concept of organizational loyalty. Peter Drucker (1980) calls it a typical scenario of a turbulent business environment which poses a major challenge for the organizations to retain their best talent. There has been a substantial movement of the talent pool voluntary or involuntary. The voluntary movers at the lower rung of the spectrum are called “the job hoppers” who move for financial/hygiene factors or increments primarily, in the middle rung are the “butterfly executives” who are driven by challenging assignments, have fire in their bellies and want to satisfy self-esteem needs, at the higher rung are the “knowledge Nomads” according to Pettinsky & Shih (2004) who move for enhancement of knowledge in new technology, global exposure or are the ones who are actually growing faster than their organizations. The involuntary job hopping is done by the people who are retrenched and are contributing to job hopping in the light of the recent global economic meltdown.

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The old thinking of “steady employees” and “company loyalties” are set aside. However, some companies are still conservative about recruiting frequent job hoppers. This thinking would continue to survive for some more time in engineering, mining and capital goods industries but the rules of the game have already been rewritten in consumer goods industries, telecom, banking and financial sector and Information technology sector. The growth in these areas is phenomenal and demand supply position is such that job mongering is taken in its stride. In fact, in many cases as reported by Dutt (1995) it is encouraged as some companies prefer people who have enriched experiences under their belt. In some of these industries the turnover rate is as high as 25 percent.

2. Literature Review

Abelson, M. (1987) has examined avoidable and unavoidable turnover in order to predict turnover, and found out that unavoidable leavers and stayers were found to be no different from each other while both groups were significantly different from avoidable leavers on levels of satisfaction, organizational commitment, job tension and withdrawal cognitions. According to Lee and Rwigema (2005), job satisfaction, affective commitment and withdrawal intention together predict employee's decision to stay or leave. Moving on with the argument on why people leave, ‘burnout preventions’ as a tool for employee retention has been studied by Bhargava and Acharya (2005). Bhatnagar (2007) investigated talent management and its relationship to levels of employee engagement and found low levels of engagement at the beginning of the career and high engagement levels at the intermediate stages of employment and further reported that organization culture and lack of career planning along with incentives resulted in high attrition amongst executives. A study by Singh (2013) found that Central Public Sector Enterprises in India have realized the importance of attracting, motivating and retaining talent and hence are bring in massive change in its attitude towards managing people. CPSEs are geared up to establish a performance oriented culture by making their compensation competitive and by integrating performance and compensation management systems. Changing jobs every two years is no longer frowned upon; instead it is encouraged as reported by Munk (1998); how else do you expect to get a huge raise. Poddar (1996) reported that Hindustan Organic Chemical Ltd has been able to retain people for many reasons but predominantly for a good school and a model hospital for its employees. Sometimes when the job is not providing enough challenge and satisfaction, (Munk, 1998) they start looking out for more challenge and excitement, Sometimes job stress and unpleasant working conditions lead to high executive turnover. There has been an exodus of 23 out of 61 faculty members from IIM's Ahmadabad since 1991, which can be attributed to nothing but increased job stress (Indian Express, 1995). Factors like pervasive job dissatisfaction (Lee and Mitchell 1994) may result in decreased employee commitment, distrust and disengagement from the organization (Pfeffer 2007).

This leads to an indomitable challenge of retaining the human resources, which further calls for enhancing organizational embeddedness (Ng & Feldman 2011) such that employee align their individual interests and behavior with the interest of the organization. (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquil 1994). Retention of employees thus takes precedence over anything else as workforce today is becoming increasingly uncommitted (KPMG Report 2012). As far as the role of manager is concerned in arresting the employee turnover it has been suggested that he needs to adopt a more proactive approach by ensuring that employees are prevented from searching at the first place itself (Swider, Boswell & Zimmerman, 2010).

3. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to determine the reasons for job hopping amongst the selected executives across various levels in the IT & Telecom (public vs. private) sector and to seek suggestions and make recommendations to combat job hopping in today's dynamic and competitive environment.

4. Methodology and Research Design

Judgment sampling was used to select the organizations in the IT and Telecom industry in North India, in public and private sector. Purposive sample selection procedure was used to give proper representation to all the categories of executives to give importance to the executive groups with insignificant number. A structured questionnaire was formulated to collect primary data and was analyzed using percentage method.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Respondents' profile

Majority of the top level executives in both public (88%) and private sector (100%) are below 50 years of age, almost half of the middle level executives, (public 50%, private 47%) are between 30-40 years and the junior level executives (public 54%, private 92%) are below 30 years of age. With regard to the work experience, in the public sector (100% at top level) have more than 25 years of service, compared to private sector (12% at top level). The executives hail from different educational backgrounds and those with technical qualification (44%) man most of the executive positions in these organizations. A few of them are however technocrats (17%) and diploma holders (20%), 66% comes from an urban background, 22% from semi urban and 12% from rural background. Majority of the executives are married (76%). The males (86%) in the sample are more as compared to females (14%).

Table 1: Sample Size of the Executives.

	Public sector	Private sector	Total
Top level	40	20	60
Middle level	48	38	86
Junior level	63	28	91
	151	86	237

5.2 Frequency of Job Hopping

The executives were asked to tell us about the frequency of the jobs changed by them across various levels in the selected organizations. The findings (Table 2) show that 82% of the executives in the public sector and 52% in the private sector have not changed their jobs ever. In the public sector, 98 % (top level), 62% (middle level) and 87 % (junior level) have not changed their jobs even once. In private sector, 70% (top level), 52% (middle level) and 40% (junior level) are sticking to their jobs since the start of their career. The number of job changes as reported by the top level in public sector is only 2% at the top level, 37.5% at the middle level and 13 % at the junior level. On the other hand 30% at the top level 47% at the middle level and 60 % at the junior level has reported job changes. The reasons as reported by them are shown in table 3. The results are clearly indicating that the trend of job hopping is more rampant in the private sector as compared to the public sector owing to more job opportunities in the private sector in the liberalized scenario.

5.3 Reasons for Job Hopping

It can be observed from the data (Table 3) that in the public sector, the executives were mainly guided by company location, promotional avenues and compensation and challenging work. A good location helps in improving the standard of living of the family and ensures good educational prospects for their children also. The private sector executives were however attracted towards growth and promotional opportunities with commensurate compensation and good training and developmental opportunities at a good location.

Table 2: Frequency of Job Hopping Across Various Levels in the Public Vs. Private Sector

Sector	Level	Top Level	Middle Level	Junior Level	Total
	No. of jobs changed				
Public sector	0	39(98)	30(62)	55(87)	124(82)
	1	1(2)	16(34)	4(6.5)	21(14)
	2	-	2(4)	4(6.5)	6(4)
	3	-	-	-	-
	Total change	1(2)	18(38)	8(13)	27(18)
	Total Public sector	40(100)	48(100)	63(100)	151(100)
Private sector	0	14(70)	20(52)	11(40)	45(52)
	1	6(30)	12(32)	11(40)	29(34)
	2	-	6(16)	6(20)	12(14)
	3	-	-	-	-
	Total change	6(30)	18(47)	17(60)	41(48)
	Total Private Sector	20(100)	38(100)	28(100)	86(100)
Total		60	86	91	237

Figures in parentheses show percentages.

The executives generally enjoyed good relations with their peers, superiors and subordinates. None of them in the top and the junior level have mentioned strained relations to be the cause of their shift. However, few executives in the middle level have given this particular reason for their shift. The company's image has been accorded equal importance by both public and private sector executives.

Table 3: Reasons for Job Hopping Vs Level of Management in the Public Vs Private Sector

S.No.	Sector	Public Sector					Private Sector				
		Reasons	T	M	J	Total	Rank	T	M	J	Total
1.	Work not Challenging	-	10	4	14	III	2	8	2	12	III
2.	Co. Image	1	8	4	13	IV	-	4	3	7	IV
3.	Compensation	-	12	2	14	III	-	14	-	14	II
4.	Strained Relations	-	4	-	4	VI	-	2	-	2	V
5.	Co. Location	-	12	8	20	I	-	8	4	12	III
6.	Lack of Trg. & Dev. opportunities	-	8	4	12	V	-	8	6	14	II
7.	Lack of Promotions and growth	-	14	4	18	II	6	6	4	16	I

Level wise analysis: (Public Vs. Private Sector)

The top level executives in the public sector were attracted by a good company's image unlike their private sector counterparts who were attracted by challenging job content plus promotional avenues.

The middle level executives in the public sector were motivated by better promotional opportunities at a good location with commensurate salaries, while in the private sector also they were primarily lured by higher compensation and a good company location.

The junior level executives in the public sector were motivated mainly by a good company location while their private sector counterparts were attracted towards a company that offered them good training and developmental opportunities. This shows that private sector executives are more pro-active and agile where they want to update themselves and think that knowledge is strength which is essential to compete and stay on in this competitive business environment.

In reality, every organization at a given point of time under given circumstances does require both rolling stones as well as stagnant stones. Depending upon the nature of eventualities that the organization is faced with, induction of an appropriate combination is prescribed. The Indian experience in the past favors only organizational loyalty. However, with liberalization organizational loyalty has been replaced by professional loyalty and executive turnover has become a rule rather than an exception. In such a situation it is not the retention of individual alone that matters but the retention of professional and career loyalty is what matters more. For the organization which acquires moss, it is the rolling stone that removes the moss, since rolling stone gathers no moss. (Das, H. (1996). "So out-of-the-box hiring is the mantra of today's organizations which want to induct people with varied and rich experience.

5.4 Executive Perception - Job Hopping

The executives were asked to give their perception with regard to job hopping as shown in Table 4. The results show that,

- More than one half (56 percent) of the executives in the private sector feel that **executive turnover in their organization is more or less linked to pay related factors** while only one third (34 percent) of their public sector counterparts share their view.
- All (100 percent) the executives in the private sector and four fifths (80 percent) of them in the public sector feel that the **present trend of liberalization has raised the expectations** of the executives with regard to their compensation.
- When asked if **job hopping was healthy for the organization as well as personal growth**, one half (50 percent) of the private sector executives said that it was healthy 'to some extent' while a little more than one third (36 percent) of them shared their view point, in the private sector.
- When asked whether **changing jobs helps them earn more**, one fourth (25 percent) of the private sector and around one sixth of them in the (15 percent) public sector said 'not at all'. While one third of them in the public sector and one fifth of them in the private sector feel positively about it.
- More than half of the (53 percent) executives in the public sector and two thirds of them in the (69 percent) private sector opined that **senior level executives do shift jobs more for status and challenging assignments**.
- One half of the (50 percent) executives in the private sector and one fifth of them (20 percent) in the public sector do feel that **lucrative pay packages are paid due to scarcity of executives** 'to some extent'.

- To the question whether the **average age of the executive is on a decrease in the post liberalization era**, more than one half (56 percent) of the executives in the private sector and one third (34 percent) of them in the public sector felt positively about it.

Table 4: Executive Perception - Job Hopping and Its Co-Relates

S.No.	Statements	Sector	To a large extent	To a considerable extent	To some extent	To a little extent	Not at all	Total Responses
1.	Executive turnover in your organization is more or less linked to pay related factors.	Public	11 (12)	19 (22)	29 (33)	26 (30)	3 (3)	88
		Private	14 (22)	22 (34)	14 (22)	14 (22)	-	64
2.	The present trend of liberalization has raised the expectations of the executives.	Public	28 (32)	42 (48)	14 (16)	4 (4)	-	88
		Private	28 (44)	36 (56)	-	-	-	64
3.	Job hopping is healthy for both the organization as well as personal growth.	Public	4 (4)	18 (20)	32 (36)	22 (25)	12 (15)	88
		Private	4 (6)	20 (32)	32 (50)	4 (6)	4 (6)	64
4.	Do you agree with the statement 'change jobs, earn more'.	Public	6 (6)	20 (23)	32 (36)	18 (20)	12 (15)	88
		Private	4 (6)	8 (12)	16 (25)	20 (32)	16 (25)	64
5.	Senior executives shift job more for status and challenging assignments.	Public	12 (14)	34 (39)	22 (25)	10 (11)	10 (11)	88
		Private	16 (25)	28 (44)	8(12)	8 (12)	4 (7)	64
6.	Lucrative pay packages are paid due to scarcity of executives.	Public	8 (9)	22 (25)	18(20)	20 (23)	20 (23)	88
		Private	4 (7)	20 (31)	32 (50)	4 (6)	4 (6)	64
7.	The average age of the executive is on a decrease in the post liberalization era.	Public	10 (11)	20(23)	30(34)	14 (16)	14 (16)	88
		Private	20 (31)	12 (25)	20 (31)	8 (13)	4(6)	64

5.5 Executive Suggestions to Combat Job Hopping

The **public sector executives feel that** (Table 5) flexible work schedules should be the number one retention strategy followed by ample training and development opportunities (rank 2) for the executives, extensive use of strategies for increasing employee satisfaction (rank 3) followed by effective rewards and recognition (rank 4), Aligning employee goals with business goals is not very high on their list (rank 5).), introducing competency based strategies and career planning (rank 6) can act as a retention strategy for public sector executives. The strategies which are given least importance by them are paying above market rates to retain their employees (rank7), taking care of the employees by introducing employee friendly HR policies (rank 8).

Table 5: Executive Suggestions to Combat Job Hopping

S. No.	Sector	Public Sector					Private Sector			
		Retention Strategies	Co. A	Co. B	Co. C	Total	Ranks	Co. D	Co. E	Total
1.	Training and development	8 (25)	12 (27)	7 (16)	27 (23)	II	3 (9)	8 (20)	11 (15.2)	III
2.	Flexible work schedules	11 (34)	18 (40)	-	29 (24)	I	5 (16)	5 (12.5)	10 (14)	IV
3.	Paying above the market	1 (3)	2 (4)	-	3 (3)	VII	2 (6)	-	2 (3)	VIII
4.	Group incentives/ stock options	-	-	-	-		3 (9)	-	3 (4)	VII
5.	Effective rewards and recognition	-	8 (18)	7 (16)	15 (12)	IV	5 (16)	10 (25)	15 (21)	I
6.	Strategies for increasing employee satisfaction	3 (9)	-	13 (30)	16 (13)	III	-	-	-	
7.	Aligning employee goals with business goals	1 (3)	2 (4)	7 (16)	10 (8)	V	3 (9)	5 (12.5)	8 (11)	VI
8.	Taking care of employee needs	-	2 (4)	-	2 (2)	VIII	7 (23)	5 (12.5)	12 (17)	II
9.	Competency based strategies	1 (3)	1 (2)	7 (16)	9 (7.5)	VI	2 (6)	-	2 (3)	VIII
10.	Career planning	7 (23)	-	2 (6)	9 (7.5)	VI	2 (6)	7 (17.5)	9 (12.5)	V
	Total responses	32 (100)	45 (100)	43 (100)	120 (100)		32 (100)	40 (100)	72 (100)	

(Figures in parenthesis represent the percentage of executives).

The **private sector firms** on the other hand feel that Effective rewards and recognition (Rank 1) can be a very good retention strategy. In contrast to the public sector, they believe in taking care of their employees' needs (Rank 2), However imparting proper training and development opportunities to the executives (Rank 3) is popular with both public and private sector firms, Surprisingly in our selected organizations, the private sector firms have placed flexible work schedules quite low on their agenda (Rank 4) where as it is a top priority with the public sector firms.

Career planning is also given less importance (rank 5) than it should have received, especially in the private sector. The other strategies could be, aligning employee goals with business goals (rank 6), offering group incentives and stock options (rank 7) and paying above the market rates (rank 8) does not seem to be an attractive retention strategy for the private sector executives.

So how do you retain people? By paying them more or by providing them a culture which boosts their morale and provides them a workplace to which they look forward to going every day. The answer is not as simple as it seems. There are controversies regarding the two points of views. Some companies are buying people – that is, accelerating pay and offering huge hiring bonuses – but that idea can come back to haunt a company which finds that no matter what it offers, someone else will offer more. Money buys talent: it doesn't keep it forever.

Others say that the answer lies in creating a passion for a job and for a company by giving them the working ambience which motivates them and creating a congenial relationship between the employee and the management. Giving him ample recognition and a 'pat on the back' once in a while and you see the difference. It goes a long way in retaining people.

6. Summing Up With Recommendations

What can be done to combat job hopping – Executive's viewpoint

Since job hopping is a common phenomenon in today's business world, we asked the executives to come out with some concrete suggestions to combat this problem. They were frank enough to pen down some very good suggestions which have been delineated below.

Company A (Public sector)

The executives in company A, a public sector firm, gave foremost importance to career planning & growth opportunities, followed by - Proper planning and organization of the job encompassing job, enrichment and job rotation to enhance job satisfaction, - they want stock options, and equity participation which would enhance their feeling of belongingness to the organization, plus - an attractive compensation package which should be at par with multinational and private sector firms, they want their company to further introduce - certain innovative motivational strategies to enhance their level of motivation.

One of the executives came out with really good suggestions to curb job hopping. He said that following points should be taken into consideration.

- Due recognition should be given to talented people and their work.
- Professionalism should be incorporated in the work culture of the organization.
- The working culture & environment should be congenial. There should be cordial relations between superiors and subordinates, which is possible only through open communication between them.
- The compensation package should be adequate enough to help them maintain a reasonable standard of living.
- Proper and timely training & development programs should be carried on for the executives.
- Operational freedom
- No nepotism and favoritism should be there, which mars the working environment of the organization on the whole and is one of the important factors leading to job hopping.

One of the executives pointed out that 'there is no job hopping as such. It is only when some multinational enters the industry, some people are attracted towards it and the dust soon settles down'.

Company B (Public sector)

The executives in this company said that in order to stem job hopping, there should be:

- More thrust on work and productivity based incentives,
- Competency based strategies, at all levels,
- Career planning, career growth and self-development programmes for executives at all levels,
- Job rotation and job enrichment to enhance job satisfaction and to improve the motivational level of the executives.
- Early performance based promotions and revision of the compensation package to save it from stagnating,
- A good compensation package to retain the best talent, which should be individualized,
- Good working conditions with flexible work schedules and a task – oriented work assignment,
- Effective reward and recognition strategies,
- And job security above all.

Company C (Public sector)

The executives in this company opined that job hopping can be checked by:

- Incorporating more vertical growth opportunities in the organization,
- Making the work and assignments more challenging, to save them from becoming monotonous,
- Job rotation and job enrichment to enhance job satisfaction of the executives,
- Employing more employee friendly policies to boost their morale i.e. there should be quick promotions at all levels,
- Passing on more benefits to the employees,
- Laying more emphasis on career planning and development,
- Introducing M.B.O. (management by objectives) based policies to motivate executives,
- Last but not least, by doling out a competitive compensation package to the executives, to enhance their status both within and outside the organization.

Company D (Private sector)

The executives of this private sector firm suggested their organization should:

- Follow appropriate retention strategies,
- Adopt and design fair and transparent compensation policies with attractive salaries and perks commensurate with those of the multinational firms,
- Clearly define and communicate career planning to their executives,
- Impart better training and developmental opportunities,
- Give due recognition to employee efforts and services,
- Take care of employee needs,
- Make conscious efforts on value addition of their workforce,
- Inculcate the feeling of job satisfaction and job security amongst their employees through various programmes,
- Try to make the work environment more conducive and generate healthy relationships in the organization,
- Try to match the job expectation with job responsibility, should provide ample avenues for full potential utilization,
- Introduce regular entertainment breaks for breaking monotony in the working environment,
- Encourage a work culture conducive for performance leading to growth & development of the executives,
- Give jobs according to the persons aptitude which would lead to higher job satisfaction and would thus curb job hopping.
- Give performance based increments & promotions
- Ensure job security, especially when the multinationals are adopting a policy of hire and fire,
- Indulge in continuous dialogue with the executives and ask them what do they want and expect from the company. This would inculcate a feeling of belongingness amongst them and they would feel more committed towards the organization.

One of the executives said that, “job hopping is not a big problem and certain amount of job hopping is healthy because it infuses fresh blood in the organization. He further added that money is not important. Company culture and work environment is more important which should be challenging as some people are driven by a challenging work environment, than anything else.

Company E (Private Sector)

In this private sector firm, the executives opined that in order to curb job hopping in their organization, the management should look into the following factors i.e.

- It should give a competitive compensation package to its executives,
- Introduce job rotation and job enrichment to enhance job satisfaction,
- Provide challenging assignments from time to time to keep the flame burning,
- Give status and respect to the executives at all levels which is conspicuous by its absence in their organization and is a major source of demotivation,
- Provide adequate training and developmental opportunities from time to time to keep them abreast of the latest 'in things' in their respective fields,
- Chart out career planning programmes for them,
- Provide childcare facilities within the organization.

These were some of the suggestions put forth by the executives which our selected organizations should earnestly endeavor to follow in order to curb job hopping.

A recap of the findings shows that job hopping is more rampant in the private sector (42 percent) as compared to the public sector (26 percent). And also, the middle level executives are more prone to job hopping than the top level and junior level executives. Most of the top level executives change jobs because of higher status and company image, the middle level executives are driven by a higher compensation, promotional avenues and a good company location, while the junior level executives are attracted towards a company, which they feel has more training and developmental opportunities besides being situated at a good location.

The top level executives have given very low chances of leaving their current jobs in contrast to the middle level executives where they say that their chances of leaving are high. The junior level executives are however 'neutral' in their response.

Majority of the top level executives in both the sectors doesn't want to leave their respective organizations while the middle level executives have indicated their direction of flight towards multinational and private sector concerns. The junior level is indiscriminate towards it and can join public sector, private sector or a multinational firm, as long as it satisfies them on all fronts.

The most important retention strategies followed by the public sector firms are flexible work schedules, training and development and effective rewards and recognition while taking care of employees needs is at the top of the agenda of the private sector firms. Besides they also have flexible work schedules and effective training and development programmes.

The executives in both the sectors feel that in order to curb job hopping, their organizations should lay more emphasis on career planning, which is a neglected area in both the sectors, should try to enrich their job content, try giving out stock options at least to the top and the middle level executives, should encourage professionalism and last but not the least should not hesitate in giving them a competitive compensation package which can do wonders for their organizations and can help in executive retention to a large extent.

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