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## LOOKING BEYOND LONGEVITY: AN INSIGHT TO JOB HOPPING

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### ABSTRACT

*The old school thought of sticking to a company till death or at least making sure they pay for the retirement benefits of pension or gratuity is fading. Those rule breakers to stickiness of employees with a company are called job hoppers. Where an employer lays off is considered to be morally bad, but the nature of such voluntary switch by employees is yet to be known. Blame it to the present generation or the outlook of people in today's era, democracy persist and prevails in every field. Today, nobody wishes to be treated as a slave, knows very well their worth and wants to hold on to things only if it suffices their needs. Jobs are not prisons, and working is not slavery. Is the stigma attached to job hopping reducing? Is it justified to move away if there is lack of growth potentials or not, shall be discussed further. Seen more in the early stage of careers and most amongst youth today, Job hopping is now the trend or the need to embed a change in the system, or maybe just a signal of being commitment phobic shall be seen, but it definitely is no longer a rare sight. Such voluntary turnover definitely results in many cost to the companies. Is it right to fear such employees thinking they shall not be loyal to company and lead to attrition? Is it a syndrome to switch jobs voluntarily? It is not necessary to generalise these as unsatisfactory species on earth.*

**KEYWORDS:** Job hopping, change, longevity, syndrome, career

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Cambridge Business English Dictionary describes Job Hopping as:

**The practice of changing your job very often.**

As it's evident, job hopping comprises of two components; job and hop. Wherein job is any position which is held because of compensation. Hopping on the other hand means moving or proceeding quickly. Combining the two words, job hopping symbolically means the changing the job very often. Old school thoughts indicate job hopping as a negative trait with a lack of longevity, but with changing trends in human resource management there is a silver lining to the cloud for these hoppers. In the coming sections, the following shall be discussed.

The psychology behind job hoppers can be said as more of an optimist, always waiting for 'something better to come'

Where most cases of job hunting is linked to greed of new explorations, some cases are indeed valid and genuine for a switch. In the present era, loyalty is hard to find anywhere be it any sphere, and as long the survival of fittest continues, job hopping shall survive. There is a thought it is a precursor to the future of the career which is no longer based only on resumes, but on networking. On the other hand the 'last pay slip' plays an important part in a hike of salary. Whether these are mere justification or the crux of job hopping shall be discussed.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To provide an understanding of the concept of job hopping
- 2) To discuss various factors influencing job hopping
- 3) To lay down pros and cons of job hopping
- 4) To analyze job hopping as a medical issue with respect to Hobo Syndrome

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper consists of conceptual framework of job hopping and provides an insight to various aspects of it. The data has been gathered through secondary sources. Literature has been reviewed from readings, quotes and observations from legendary Human Resource authors, newspapers, journals and newspaper leading to an analysis of the topic: LOOKING BEYOND LONGEVITY: AN INSIGHT TO JOB HOPPING.

## 4. CONCEPT

Centuries or decades, years ago it was not a rare sight for people to work for the same employer entire life of their careers. Historically, employers have suspected that prospective employees with a lot of short stints on their resumes were unreliable as it questioned their loyalty. In recent time, however changing jobs at least a few times during career is considered typical. Employee retention which is usually the aim of all companies puts managers in a tough spot for this kind of hopping.

According to the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics, the average U.S. worker has been with his current employer for 4.6 years. For workers aged 20-34, the average is 2.3 years. Some employers are still reluctant to hire job hoppers. Others, however, would prefer to see applicants with a few jobs on their resumes to those who have stayed in one job for a long time. Employers often fear such individuals are resistant to change or simply unmotivated. People who have worked in a number of different capacities and in different corporate environments, on the other hand, are likely to have a broader range of skills and be more adaptable.

(<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.677.8473&rep=rep1&type=pdf>)

Many negative effects of job-hopping phenomenon are seen but still, the job-hopper can survive and even tend to grow and continue to grow. This phenomenon is also supported by various studies on the development of career success that directly support the pattern of movement to achieve career success. Arthur, et al. (1999) argued that nowadays the growth and development of career is not limited to one firm only. It is known as the *boundaryless* career (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003)

When it comes to job-hopper, many make the quick assumption that it is all about the money (Goh, 2012; Tett & Meyer, 1993; Hellman, 1997). In fact, some research has found that job hopping behavior

is an individual tool to achieve his vision of life, to meet the two basic needs in the form of self-fulfillment and needs to share (Yuliawan & Himam, 2007).

## 5. FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB HOPPING

Researchers have used interchangeably the terms like job hopping, turnover, attrition, quitting, worker mobility (Rousseau et al., 2003), “protean career” (Hall, 1976); job shift; “willingness to change companies” (Finegold et al., 2003); work flows (Burgess et al., 2000; as cited in Saxena, 2012). Viewed from a broad perspective of Mobley et al. (1978), the process of job hopping commences with the dissatisfaction experienced by an individual with his present job (Griffeth et al. 2000, as cited in Boswell et al., 2005), followed by his search for alternatives, followed by a comparison of those options with his current job using an expected-value-like decision process, and, finally, the decision to leave if any of the alternatives is adjudged to be preferable than his current situation or position.

There are basic two categories that influence the job hopping tendencies, these are intrinsic i.e. the internal factors and the extrinsic which are external. The former include factors like pervasive job dissatisfaction, distrust and disengagement (Pfeffer, 2007). Mitchell et al. (2001) indicated that, job search and the consequent turnover intention, is not related to the employee dissatisfaction, as it is linked to job i.e. “shock” or jarring event, such as receiving an unsolicited job offer or a family member’s addition or demise. It may be pertinent to note here that scholars have distinguished between “job searching” from “leverage-seeking search” in the sense that the former is linked to change of the jobs, the latter is indicative of available job alternatives as a leverage against the present employer such that his/her present organization shall strive to make a better counter-offer and make efforts to retain him/her (Boswell et al., 2004). Other extrinsic factors accountable for job hopping include low commitment, and prevalent job alternatives proposed by March and Simon (1958), as cited in Mitchell et al. (2001) and Trevor (2001). However, in some other studies conducted by Michael Spector (1982) derived from job search (e.g., perceived alternatives) contribute little to prediction models.

Factors like poor interpersonal relationship with the supervisor and/or peers, personal factors like work-family role conflicts ( as cited by Mitchell et al., 2001 & Pfeffer, 2007); weather, amenities and general culture of the location (proposed by Mitchell et al., 2001); off-the-job events (like spouse relocation or an unsolicited job offer at hand (proposed by Lee et al., 2004); preference for a particular location, opting/possessing for higher education and

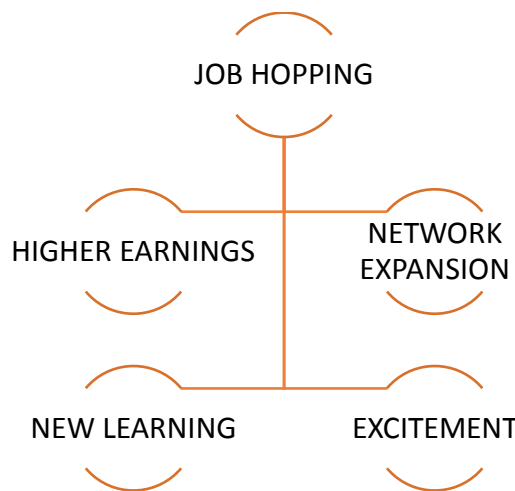
knowledge up gradation (proposed by Maurer, 2002); age of the individual employee concerned, where the younger employees were more prone to initiate quitting rather than their older counterparts (cited by Finegold et al., 2002); little or minimal work-life balance being offered by the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990 as cited in Spreitzer et al., 2002). Whereas factors like global downturn in the economy or in the specific sector per se; decision of the company to cut down the employee strength for the sake of sheer numbers; contingent staffing; electronic monitoring and variable pay (as cited by Batt et al., 2002); technological upgradation (which makes the number of heads required redundant); ongoing downsizing leading to uncertainty and demoralization (Batt et al., 2002); organizational restructuring, including mergers and acquisitions; size of the organization (as proposed by Balkin et al., 1990); number of females 43 in the organization and the number of employees with a college degree (stated by Batt et al., 2002); closing down of a particular unprofitable unit (a case in point is Hirschman's (1970) discussion of responses to organizational decline - exit, as cited in Rusbult et al., 1988); saving costs for establishing a new unit or for introducing a new process or technology or foreign expertise; a reduction in organizational attachment (Mitchell and Lee, 2001); reconfiguration of the skill mix (Burgess et al., 2000); higher pay dispersion (Bloom and Michel, 2002); present work environment and organizational culture for the study conducted in the BPO/ITES sector in the Indian context by Bhatnagar (2007); perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 2002); Perceived Supervisor Support (which would decrease employee turnover

(Eisenberger et al., 2002; Stinglhamber et al., 2003); poor person-job and person-organization fit (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996 as cited in Boswell et al., 2005); lack of job compatibility (Villanova et al., 1994, as cited in Mitchell et al, 2001); linkage of perceived fairness of pay procedures and perceived fairness of pay amounts with satisfaction, and, therefore, negatively predicting employee turnover (Hom & Griffeth, 1995), as cited in Tekleab et al. 2005), and, so on. Personal factors like performance of emotional labour, lack of organizational identification; greater loyalty towards the immediate workgroup rather than their employing organization (Cappelli, 2000; Feldman, 2000 as cited in Dess and Shaw, 2001); lack of self-esteem with the current job; lack of organizational commitment (especially when the job market is favourable (Bateman and Strasser, 1984; Griffeth et al., 2000 as cited in Bentein et al., 2005); lack of recognition and appreciation and lack of desired autonomy in the current profile; Organizational Affective Commitment (Meyer et al., 2004) and Affective Commitment to the Supervisor (Both, of these factors viz. Organizational Affective Commitment and Affective Commitment to the Supervisor) were found to have a negative correlation vis-à-vis turnover, in a study of Stinglhamber et al. (2003).

**6. PROS OF JOB HOPPING**

**(i) To the employees**

*‘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



- Higher earnings  
With a change of job comes a higher package most conventionally because the last drawn salary is usually taken as a base for an

- increment. Hence most people take job hopping as a means of fetching higher earnings
- Network expansion  
New job = new people = greater networking

Every new environments increases the list of acquaintances and in today’s era that’s an advantage to have. Hence job hopping helps people to build greater social and corporate networks and can help go up the career ladder with referrals ready.

- New learning

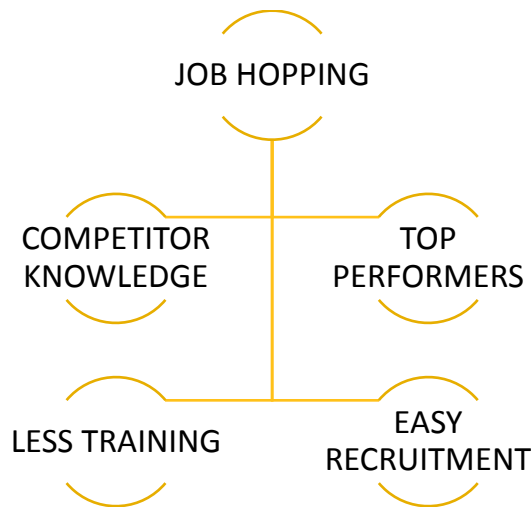
Every company has its own set of norms, procedures and ways of functioning. There is continuous learning happening at each step,

everywhere. New companies expose to new set of agendas and gives a person competitive edge in the career.

- Excitement

Change always brings excitement. New job can help employees be more productive as employees are passionate to work in a new environment and on a new job. This can lead to greater job satisfaction

**(ii) To the employers**



- Knowledge of competitors

More than half (53 percent) of employers say that job-hoppers “have a wide range of expertise,” according to CareerBuilder. In fact, when you hire a job jumper, you get the accumulated knowledge, best practices, benchmark information, their many contacts, and their experience from a number of firms. If their job jumping was within the same industry, you get a breath of industry knowledge that is hard even for your current employees to match. And if the job jumping was between different industries, you may get an even broader array of experience and best practices that can be adapted to your industry. (<https://www.eremedia.com/tlnt/hiring-job-hoppers-10-reasons-why-they-are-so-very-valuable/>)

- Top performers

If the manager are able to check the track record of job hopping and the reason for their

hopping jobs easily and frequently is because of:

1. Jump in position due a career opportunity or,
2. A better company name

- Require less training cost

It’s a myth to believe that job hoppers make the training cost a sunk cost, rather they reduce the very need to be trained which seems attractive to the management.

- Easier to recruit

As most companies are apprehensive about recruiting job hopping due to their lack of continuity record but that doesn’t pull down their inbuilt potential to be a beneficial employee. In that case ignoring their longevity issue, it can be quite easy to recruit job hoppers as there is less competition amongst companies.

## 7. CONS OF JOB HOPPING



- Less security

Given your track record of leaving companies quickly, Cashman says:

*“If your employer is forced to lay off employees, you might be the first to go”*

- Question of judgement

Frequent job switches raises a question mark on the judgements of the job hopper to gage the reason for such behaviour. It is vital to give adequate justification in such a case so as to regain confidence which is lost in fear of disloyalty.

- Hesitation to invest

It’s a human tendency to judge individual based on their past behaviour. Kahn says:

*“When jumping from job to job you are showing future employers that there is a high likelihood that you will do the same to them,”*

An employee costs a lot to the company, human resources hence require a lot of investment for training etc., but job hoppers seldom face such hesitation from the management.

- Fear to employ

Job hopping has still not been taken well with management when it comes to recruitment because management fears that the employee shall leave the company disserted at first sight of trouble.

## 8. HOBO SYNDROME AND JOB HOPPING

Ghiselli (1974) defined the “hobo syndrome” as the *“Periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place”* (p. 81). Ghiselli described certain workers as having a type of wanderlust or a strong inexplicable urge to repeatedly change jobs after relatively short periods of time. Support was found for the hobo syndrome or the hypothesis that turnover depends on the number of times an individual has changed jobs in the past (Judge & Watanabe, 1995).

*It was noted that some workers have a natural internal impulse to move from one job to another for irrational reasons* (Bodla & Hameed, 2010).

Ghiselli argued that this Wunderlust derived from instinctive impulses, writing: This urge to move seems not to result from organized, logical thought, but rather would appear more akin

to raw, surging, internal impulses, perhaps not unlike those that cause birds to migrate. Floaters regularly provide socially acceptable explanations for their peripatetic activity, but under careful examination these explanations turn out to be little more than rationalizations. The simple fact is that after being in one place for a matter of months, or perhaps a year or so, depending on the strength and periodicity of this itch, the individual is impelled to pack up and move to another place and another job (p. 81).

## 9. CONCLUSION

*“Grass is always greener on the other side”*

Job hopping is a frequent change in the pattern of jobs, which is more likely to be seen in the new era of growing boundary-less careers of ambitious persons. Not long ago it was a taboo having multiple jobs on your resume but with changing times it is now widely accepted and few managers are on a lookout for these hoppers for their advantages of competitors or lessor training cost. Hobo syndrome brings light to another aspect of such job hopping as a syndrome which gives people an itching feeling to switch jobs very often. Nonetheless job hopping shall forever remain a controversial and highly subjective matter. Wherein some people are still not stopped and some finally find peace after certain switches.

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