

## Changing jobs too frequently puts a dent in your credibility

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SO, YOU'VE worked at your current employer for about a year now and you are starting to get a little bored.

In fact, you really feel it's time for a change. The only problem is, you felt the same at your previous employer after just a year, and the same at the one before that too, so you moved on from both after just one year's service.

The question is: is it OK to make another career jump so soon?

Despite the talk of the younger generations not wanting to be tied down, no, it really isn't.

While it's true that you are no longer expected to stay in one job for most of your working life, if you want to maintain any credibility in the corporate sector in future, you have to build up some sort of a track record.

Here's the thing, job hopping (holding more than three jobs in four years or less) not only looks bad on your CV, it sends a subtle message to potential employers that you're not the best person for the job.

Why? Because you don't seem to be loyal, you appear to bore easily, and any time and effort invested in you and your development on the part of the employer would essentially be wasted a year down the road.

That's the picture painted by constant job changes. This rings alarm bells for employers who are hiring, as they're looking for candidates with good track records and good references – neither of which you're likely to get if you can't stay in a job for more than a year.

The generally acceptable length of tenure to remain at a company is three years.

That doesn't mean you must stay in a company for that time regardless of mitigating factors. If career advancement opportunities have stagnated, or your articles or specialised training have been completed, or you know you're being underpaid; or liquidation or re-trenchments are on the cards, feel free to move sooner.

Just make sure you're jumping ship for the right reasons. This means you have to be able to honestly explain to future employers why you left previous companies without damaging your integrity and your professional reputation in the process.

Sadly, affirmative action has in some cases created a culture of job hopping among prime candidates who tick all the right boxes for professional posts.

As good as it might feel to be in demand in the job market and to be able to command the roles, responsibilities and even salaries you want, you should resist the urge to frequently swap jobs.

To avoid being branded a job hopper, always give your best, gather strong references and only move for good promotional prospects after at least three years with a company.

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# Don't pretend to be someone else

WHEN Dudley Rockbottom, aspirant executive search consultant for small recruitment agency Inclusive People, first applied for the position, he knew he was taking a chance in establishing his credibility to co-founders and partners Cindy Bloomingdale and Joan Herzlich and the company's senior recruiter, Jolene Monsterat-Flaptrap.

Firstly, Dudley was a man. Not just any man, but a man's man. He had two pairs of shoes, one brown and one black – both in the same workable, suit-any-occasion style.

There was nothing that his darker or lighter shoes could not take on without solid conviction, including pub crawls, weddings, sports spectating, business meetings and, when the mood took him, trail biking and mountain hiking.

There were periods in Dudley's life when he wore the same pair of pants for over a month, and it was only on rare occasions, after his mother had visited his flat, when the linen on his bed was changed.

For food and other sustenance, Dudley relied on the efforts of other people who worked in the takeaway trade, and his mother, though he liked to keep a block of cheddar as heavy as a construction brick in his fridge.

It never entered Dudley's mind to go to the theatre; he believed that drama, ballet and opera were for women and effeminate men, though he liked action movies, his favourite by far being *Die Hard*.

Some women were attracted to Dudley, for they knew where they stood with him, right behind his wide shoulders and narrow narcissism or in the tight embrace of his muscular arms.

That Dudley was a chauvinist, inclined in the company of the fair sex to adopt an upward-facing horizontal inclination, was never hidden, a quality submissive women found appealing.

Well, this is but a brief gender character description.

Secondly, a more significant cause for concern: Dudley wasn't an executive search consultant.

He made up many arguments to convince himself he was a headhunter of estimable repute, though the facts suggested otherwise.

He was thoroughly corporate, in experience and skill, a bland generalist used to dishing out to service providers the specialist work he managed on behalf of the bank.

## INCLUSIVE PEOPLE



Peter Christie is a strategic storyteller, also known as Big Chief Talking Bull, and a consultant at Exclusive People. In today's parable, he looks at the importance of authenticity

Titled a human resources practitioner, Dudley kidded himself that easily recommending shortlists of candidates, sourced in difficulty by agencies like Inclusive People, to the organisation's line managers was a form of "intrapreneurship", but this was overstretching the term much beloved by modern motivational speakers, consultants and the full gamut of other institutional bloodsuckers.

In truth, the discerning working world knew Dudley was a handsome postbox.

He further hoodwinked himself that recommending opportunities within the bank to his relatives was a form of executive search, as was the romantic matchmaking, usually ending in tears, that he undertook for his love-lost friends.

In preparing for the initial interview at Inclusive People, Dudley googled the small business (another argument he maintained proved his research capability), and correctly deduced Inclusive People to be an honest, professional and caring company.

In the photo gallery he was particularly taken by the clean, polished, tasteful and elegant value, not of the company's furniture, but of the staff members' soft radiant skin and subtly sophisticated attire.

So, the day before the interview with senior recruiter Jolene Monsterat-Flaptrap, Dudley strategically visited the Oriental Plaza in Fordsburg, treating himself to a new, second pair of black shoes, more ramp-worthy and less road-worthy than the other pair, and a sports jacket and flannel pants.

The interview with Jolene went well. As a thoroughbred female, plump and portly, even though Jolene suffered some subsequent bruising, she took a strong liking to the reminiscently Neanderthal, rough, tough feel and vice-firm grip of Dudley's handshake and the gruffness of his voice.

Jolene also warmed wildly to her candidate's Arctic, wolf-blue eyes, giving no credence to his lack of relevant experience for the job. Inclusive People were in any event, she reasoned, looking for a real man to broaden its ranks.

During the morning before the second interview, with Joan Herzlich, Dudley both shaved and had a haircut, though he did not cut his nails, as a metrosexual might.

After the barber, he further refined his image by purchasing a charcoal suit and matching grey cotton shirt from Woolworths. The subsequent interview was similarly constructive.

Although Joan's questions probed Dudley's unsuitability with deep penetration, she loved his big belly laugh and quick-witted banter, and believed him to be trainable, in the vulnerable way of a stray mongrel puppy.

For such feeble creatures, Joan's heart knew no bounds.

For the third and final interview, a panel consisting of Jolene, Joan and managing director Cindy Bloomingdale, Dudley, as a man who knows what he wants, spent the remainder of his disposable income on a tightly fitted, tailored suit from Khaliques in Sandown, and cufflinks and tie-pin from the

curiously named American Swiss in Sandton City.

That morning, he squeezed into the trousers, for the first time in his life lying on the edge of his bed to pull them up above his widening hips, making him feel strangely girlish.

But once his belt had been fastened, Dudley felt confident, now dressed like he imagined a successful executive-search consultant would dress.

On arrival at Inclusive People, receptionist Myrtle Mpofu-Mufamadi seated Dudley on the low-slung leather couch, fetched him a cup of coffee and called Cindy, Joan and Jolene.

Minutes later, Dudley's pretence was completely exposed.

As Cindy thrust out her arm to greet him, with Joan, Jolene and Myrtle looking on from the side, Dudley jumped up from the couch and his pants split all the way from the bottom of the zip to the top of the back seat of his trousers. There was a loud, unmistakable crack.

Everyone politely pretended not to notice, though the flustered Dudley took off his jacket and stupidly pulled it between his legs, awkwardly clutching the ends in each hand when entering and exiting the interview room.

But this minor matter proved immaterial. Dudley had other things on his mind, and performed poorly.

Despite Cindy, Joan and Jolene being inclusively inclined people who believed that everyone has a place, they did not offer the inauthentic Dudley a chance to prove his worth.

It was only years later, with suitable experience on his side and loose clothing around his hips, that Dudley successfully reapplied for the same position. Then, under Joan's close tutelage, Dudley proved to be an older dog capable of learning many new tricks.

**Entrepreneurial and small business tips:** Endeavour for authenticity in all marketing efforts, and never enter the world of pretence. Successful business brands arise from the personal identities of their founders, who carefully construct an attractive, compelling proposition for clients based on honest, introspective self-insight, avoiding the beguiling need to bluff.

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## Partnering to improve teaching and learning

THEO GARRUN

PARTNERS for Possibility (PFP) is an organisation that facilitates the pairing up of school principals with business leaders with the aim of improving the management of schools, thereby contributing to more effective teaching and learning.

This process has been going on, on a voluntary basis, for quite a few years now, and it was recently given a major boost when the Gauteng Department of Education contracted PFP to mobilise active citizenship around 66 under-resourced schools in Gauteng.

Each of the schools will be supported by a business leader (who will be a Partner for Possibility (PFP) to the principal).

A number of business leaders have already committed themselves to the initiative, but others are still needed.

Because these schools will need a lot of support, PFP is also recruiting people who are willing to offer human resources, organisational development, IT and financial management advice to these schools.

The SA Board for People Practices (SABPP) has mobilised its network and most of the schools have already been promised the support of human resources management experts.

Louise van Rhyne, founder of Partners for Possibility, sees these 66 schools on a journey to excellence as an example of the kind of partnership between the business world and government that the National Development Plan is calling for.

"When we received the contract, we were very concerned about the fact that one of our key success factors for this kind of engagement was not in place," she says.

"We usually invite principals to be part of the process (so it is totally voluntary). In this case, the principals were instructed to be part of the programme so we knew we had to do some work to recover from this.

"That was why we immediately reached out to one of our partner organisations (the SABPP) with a request to help us find 66 HR practitioners who would be willing to help with this process by doing an appreciative assessment at the school and being willing to act as an HR adviser to the school (and the principal).

"Within three days we had a list of 80 volunteers and 53 of them have already been allocated to schools. The others are just figuring out which school they want to work with.

"This shows what is possible when we start to work in a spirit of collaboration and generosity."

The Gauteng Department of Education and the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance are the major partners in the project and Van Rhyne says they should be applauded for their foresight and willingness to lead change in partnership.

"We have very high expectations from this project but we realise that we will truly need all hands on deck and figure out how to work collaboratively across boundaries that have not often been crossed," she says.

● PFP is holding an information session tomorrow afternoon at which interested parties can learn more about the project. It takes place at Bramley Primary School from 4pm to 5.30pm (registration at 3.30pm). For more information contact [melissa@symphonia.net](mailto:melissa@symphonia.net). Visit [www.symphonia.net](http://www.symphonia.net).