

# Is your top talent pool eyeing international waters?

The number of professionals who would consider leaving the country has increased consistently year-on-year. In the latest Jack Hammer Executive Report, 86% of top South African executives polled for the survey indicated that they would take seriously an offer to move abroad.



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“These statistics support the findings of other independent surveys and research projects across a number of other sectors this year,” says Advaita Naidoo, COO of independent executive search firm, Jack Hammer.

The findings are contained in the latest Jack Hammer Executive Report (Volume 5). The annual publication investigates the leadership landscape in South Africa and the rest of Africa. This year, research focused on the management makeup of SA’s Top 40 listed companies (totaling 373 executives and 41 CEOs), as well as a random selection of 40 other large to medium-sized organisations with offices in SA (The Broad 40). In addition, senior managers of local and multinational companies across the retail, financial services, professional services, education, FMCG and telecoms sectors were polled on a number of issues, such as business sentiment and outlook for the future.

The results show that the percentage of executives willing to relocate abroad has significantly jumped from 47% in 2016. Last year, 78% of leaders indicated that they would consider such a major move, with the upwards trend continuing this year.

“Unfortunately, this also bodes ill for transformation, as 49% of those interested in relocating to ‘greener pastures’ were black respondents,” Naidoo says.

She says this trend - of senior professionals from all backgrounds who are willing to consider a future outside of the country - is likely to persist in coming years.

“This presents a substantial challenge for companies wanting to secure the best leaders, particularly given the economic challenges which further impact an organisation’s ability to lure and secure top talent.”



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Naidoo says that South African managers are held in high regard wherever they land, and boast a reputation for being hard workers.

“Given the prevailing combination of push and pull factors, it’s merely a matter of time before international opportunity knocks for suitably qualified and experienced candidates, and the pool of top talent contracts a little bit more for each executive opening the door to a life abroad.

“So we have an unfortunate situation, where the number of top professionals committed to a career future in SA is diminishing, while the demand for their expertise is not.”



Advaita Naidoo, COO of Jack Hammer

Naidoo says organisations must - urgently - start thinking creatively about how to approach the current and future building of strong teams that can drive growth.

“In times of difficulty, it is more important than ever to convince professionals with a strong track record that despite the current climate, your organisation will continue to offer opportunities worth staying for.

“Although there is not much an organisation can do to retain valuable employees whose reasons for leaving are based on socio-economic-political concerns about the future, they are not completely powerless. If things are going really well for someone professionally, and the company is acknowledging them with career opportunities and financial rewards, the inclination to look abroad might be a little less enticing.

“However, when people are continuously overlooked for promotions, don’t get the bonuses or financial incentives they deserve, or don’t feel a connection to the work that they are doing or the people they work with, the reasons to stay rapidly dwindle.”

Naidoo says that what makes the trend particularly concerning, is because it is exactly those people who are leaving who may be best positioned to effect meaningful change.

“Undoubtedly, we need to find a spirit of enthusiasm and positivity. Because while there remains incredible opportunity in the country, the push factors can seem overwhelming and result in a desperate desire to move on, particularly for young and emerging leaders who want to create a sustainable future for their families.”

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