

# Less black female executives appointed despite high demand

Executive-level race and gender equity continued to lag in appointments made in 2011, but not because of a lack of will to redress imbalances, a leading executive head hunter says.

Based on a review of executive-level briefs and appointments made last year, Jack Hammer Executive Headhunters found that despite the imperative to increase female representation in South Africa's top jobs, the number of women in executive positions has changed little over the past four years.

While there remained an ongoing demand for increased EE/black executive appointments, the percentage of black appointments has remained relatively steady since 2009 with a slight tapering off last year after a high in 2010.

Debbie Goodman-Bhyat, managing director of Jack Hammer, says 40% of appointments made in 2009 were EE appointments, with the numbers growing significantly to 48% in 2010. Last year, the number of EE appointments was slightly lower at 45%. "What is interesting to note here is that in spite of almost every mandate having preference for an EE appointment, and hence every shortlist comprising top black candidates, companies are still not making high-level appointments of black professionals as consistently as we would like," says Goodman-Bhyat.

## A hesitancy due to family commitments

"The flipside of this is that after so many years of pushing transformation, when it comes to high-level appointments of senior managers and executives, white candidates are still being appointed over 50% of the time," says Goodman-Bhyat. Similarly, the low level of female appointments is not because of a lack of demand from the corporate sector, which more and more frequently place female executives on top of their 'wish list'.

"In spite of this, there remains some hesitancy around female appointments due to their generally broader family commitments," says Goodman-Bhyat. "This, despite the consistent rise of highly successful, capable and driven career women locally and internationally. Perceptions still need to change."

Jack Hammer has been measuring female executive appointments since 2008. While the number of senior female appointments hovered around 30% of total executive appointments then, they have now actually fallen below 30% as measured at the end of 2011.

"However, this is not too surprising, as most industry average ratios indicate a male to female segmentation of 70% vs 30%. In some industry sectors this is even more heavily swayed to male dominance. But on average, across a very diverse

range of sectors including financial services, energy, retail, FMCG, professional services, agriculture and industrial services, the ratio of 70 to 30 is unfortunately not shifting," she concludes.

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