

# Transformation from the top

Top leadership placements in South Africa has for the second year in a row shown a sustained increase in race and gender transformation, according to annual statistics recorded by executive search firm, Jack Hammer.



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Jack Hammer says there has been an 8% increase in BEE appointments last year, building on the near 10% increase logged the year before. The two-year upwards trend follows a period of very static placement statistics between 2012 and 2015, with the tide turning notably in 2016.

“What this means is that the increase in the number of BEE executive level appointments is not just incremental – it’s significant, and gaining momentum year on year,” says Debbie Goodman-Bhyat, CEO of Jack Hammer.

In 2017, total EE placements stood at 56%, up from 48.4% in 2016 and 39% in 2015. Black female appointments were up from 13% in 2016, to 25% in 2017. Appointments of foreign candidates dropped from 6.5% to 3%.



Debbie Goodman-Bhyat, CEO of Jack Hammer

Goodman-Bhyat says the continued increase is reflective of two things – that there is ongoing pressure to transform at senior management and executive levels within corporates, and also that there is a growing pool of talent at senior management level to fill these positions.

Notably, this data reflects EE appointments in the private sector, as opposed to in parastatals or government.

There has also been a significant uptick in the number of female appointments in general, which were up from 32% in 2016 to 38% last year, she says.

“This is significant, because until last year, we were struggling to get above the 30% mark. At the end of 2016, we moved that needle a little, but now we can see that the trajectory is moving in the right direction.

“And most positively of all, the big shift has been with the appointment of black women, whose appointments increased by 12% last year,” she says.

Goodman-Bhyat says that both statistically and anecdotally – in terms of briefing patterns - it is clear that SA companies are pushing hard to transform, particularly in high-level and hard to fill roles.

“While we can’t comment on other segments of the market, it is clear that where companies mandate search firms to find and place top-level talent, they seek to focus on diversity in addition to qualifications, experience and track record. The comparative data is showing a significant and sustained move in the right direction.”

She says it is clear that companies no longer consider transformation a box-ticking exercise, but rather an essential element to ensure continued, sustainable and inclusive growth.

“At the end of last year, we noted that it would be interesting to see whether the positive trajectory of 2016 continues into 2017, or whether the turn was not much more than an outlier.

“It is therefore extremely encouraging to see not just a continuation of this trend, but a substantial one at that,” she says.

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