

CAREER

EARLY CAREER JOB HOPPING

Why do fresh graduates do it and how is it perceived by employers?

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

"The first couple of jobs after graduation are always for developing skills and gaining experience" is something I have heard too many times, and from people with varying professional backgrounds. This statement does hold some merit to it, since one does need to acquire certain professional skills right after graduation and gain a bit of experience before they can start advancing in their career.

But, that being said, graduates don't need to continue doing a job that's not giving them enough reasons to stick around. If a better opportunity comes up, they should be allowed to switch jobs. However, this type of job hopping often gets freshers criticised. So, is early career job hopping a bad thing, and is it ever "too soon" to switch jobs?

"From an HR perspective, when we come across a recent graduate applying to our company, who has changed jobs frequently, it raises some concerns," says Rifah Nanjiba, a business development team lead of a globally renowned IT company. "We look for candidates who show a commitment to their

roles for at least a couple of years."

Didar Hossain, a senior HR executive at a knit and garments company, echoes similar sentiments.

"When we go through candidate resumes, we pay close attention to their job histories and how often they tend to switch employers. The general idea among most organisations is that those who switch jobs so frequently are unlikely to show the commitment employers want. So, unless the candidate is highly-qualified, we think twice before hiring them," says Didar.

Hence, from the employer's point of view, frequent job hopping so early in one's career is not entirely viewed as a positive. However, it's not like those who switch jobs so early in their careers do so without a valid reason.

"After graduating from university, I started my internship at a software company and later joined the same organisation as a junior software developer," says Arman Akib*, currently working as a project manager at a Dhaka-based software company. "After a few months, I had the chance to move to an IT firm with a slightly higher salary, but with better opportunities to develop my coding skills."

Even for freshers, a better opportunity doesn't always have to be about self-development. It can also be about better pay, work-life balance, and friendly working conditions.

Sifat Ahmed*, an accounts executive at a Bangladeshi conglomerate, felt the need to switch jobs for these very reasons.

"I jumped ship from one group of companies to another in less than a year in expectation of better pay," says Sifat. "I also had the chance to work at a place that was close to my home."

To prevent job switching, especially for newcomers, some companies ask recruits to sign contracts, where the contract lengths can vary from one to two years, maybe more. However, as pointed out by Rifah, this is not just to prevent job hopping but also to preserve organisational interests in general.

"When a new employee suddenly expresses the desire to leave, we handle the situation through one-on-one counselling sessions. Our approach is to understand the reasons behind the employee's decision to move to another job," says Rifah.

That isn't how things always pan out though.

"Right now, I have an offer letter sitting at home with the opportunity to join a private bank," says Sifat. "It's a good opportunity, but I need a NOC (No Objection Certificate) from my current employer if I am to accept the new job offer and switch there. Unfortunately, from what I have heard from some of my colleagues,

I probably won't get the NOC because I am yet to complete a full-year at this office."

As harsh as it may seem, job hopping so early in one's career won't always work. Your current employers won't appreciate you quitting so early while future employers won't be sure whether or not you'll actually stay long enough to serve them.

"When you join a company right after graduation, the company invests valuable time and resources to train you. You leaving them for greener pastures is

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understandable, but it makes your current employer dissatisfied. Even the new company you're going to will have doubts when they see you frequently switching jobs so early in your career. That's why, it's vital that you clarify to them what you want from the job," suggests Didar.

Sifat, however, disagrees with Didar.

"A potential employer shouldn't have to know about my career intentions," says Sifat. "If I were to disclose my plans, I believe there's less than a five percent chance of me actually securing that job. So, if you're indeed job hopping early on in your career, do it with the mindset that you're on your own in most cases. Personally, I think employers should be more accepting of the fact that the younger generation will continue looking for better opportunities, even when they've just entered a job straight out of university."

Sifat's views regarding job hopping are valid. After all, fresh graduates gradually understand their value and worth as they enter the workforce. For a better understanding of how much money and what other benefits they deserve, switching jobs early on is a good strategy.

**Names have been changed upon request.*

Faisal Bin Iqbal is a sub-editor at Campus.

