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CIO cadre now 48% BEE

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Only 52% of SA's chief information officers (CIOs) and IT directors are white and male, a new study has found.

The research was carried out in April by Landelahni Recruitment Group, an executive placement company, and involved a cross-section of 100 large public and private sector organisations.

Landelahni CEO Sandra Burmeister says 94% of the top jobs are held by men.

Just over half (52%) of CIOs or IT directors are white men, with other groups making up the remaining 48%. Of the total, 24% of top jobs are held by black men, 11% by Indian men and 7% by coloured men.

Only 6% of CIOs or IT directors are women, with white women registering at 5%, black women at 1% and no Indian or coloured women.

Burmeister says the criteria used in the research for defining a CIO or IT director included a minimum 10 years' senior IT management experience within a large and complex environment, the ability to bridge IT strategy with business strategy, and a track record of maintaining operational performance excellence within an information management environment.

Public sector

"The growing number of black, Indian and coloured men in these senior positions represents a significant shift," says Burmeister. "This trend is led by the public sector. Generally, more qualified and experienced black men are found within government entities.

"In most cases, these entities are focusing on employment equity, and are looking either to embark on new ICT initiatives to develop the competencies of the current incumbent, or they have used external consulting houses to structure and design their IT businesses," she adds.

Private sector

"In private sector organisations, the vast majority of black candidates are two or three levels beneath the CIO or IT director position," Burmeister says.

"This carries the implication that the private sector – despite the development of the black economic empowerment (BEE) codes of practice

and the industry charters – is dragging its heels in regard to employment equity and the skills shortage.

“Why should government provide a high level of support if business doesn't show some willingness to address the skills problem from within its own ranks? This is, after all, not only government's problem. We all have a stake in it,” she argues.

“And of course, when it comes to women empowerment, both the public and private sectors are failing miserably.”

Managing talent

Burmeister adds that once graduates – both male and female – are employed, a fast-track programme for black candidates with management potential is needed, particularly on the operational side, so they can achieve executive status within the company.

“Only as part of a formalised talent management programme can the organisation develop a pool of skilled resources from which to draw as senior positions become available,” she says.

“We need to realise that experience doesn't necessary mean competence. Having 20 years' experience in a field does not necessarily mean you do your job well. Moreover, five years' experience on five projects on five continents is infinitely more valuable than five years' experience in one company on one project in SA.”

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