

Are background checks worth the added cost?

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For some organisations, the act of screening potential hires is not a necessity. Often, the added cost and effort required for pre-screening serve as an understandable deterrent to business owners who would consider skipping the background check process altogether. However, when weighing up the risk, it can be costlier to the reputation of a business to forgo this step in the hiring procedure.

Background screening serves as a safety net, uncovering valuable information, which can be used to root out inappropriate candidates and eliminate risk, says Rudi Kruger, General Manager of Data Services at LexisNexis. “Screening candidates with thorough background checks helps improve transparency and disclosure while investigating an applicant’s claims. Furthermore, background screening assists with the verification of qualifications, citizenship, employment history and identification right at the start, eliminating long-term repercussions,” he said.

Kruger said finding out late that the candidate is wrong for the job is far costlier in the long run. “Often, ill-equipped employees are capable of doing just enough to avoid detection. This is dangerous as a weak employee can lead to a decline in revenue, time wastage and futile expenditure in the form of salaries and benefits,” he said.

“Employees who fail to perform could have either lied on their CV about their qualifications or fabricated their experience,” said Kruger.

Kruger says, the local airline employee who was able to fly under the radar without a pilot’s license for 20 years, was a prime example of just how vital pre-screening is. “This case showcases exactly why taking on the added time and resources to verify the necessary requirements – authenticity of the qualification and experience – are such positive investments in an industry. The investment aids the employer in ensuring that the brand is protected from harm in the long-term.”

While background screening using a third-party provider requires additional effort and funding, there is no more effective and efficient way to red flag criminal behaviour, uncover unverified qualifications, root out fabricated experience or verify other relevant information.”

Should in-depth pre-screening be standard practice for every company though?

Kruger says this is dependent on the industry in question. “In cases where the safety of customers is pivotal, or the new hire is likely to come in contact with minors, it is absolutely imperative that thorough background checks are conducted before a new employee is brought into the business.”

“However, it is wise to always ensure some form of screening takes place and to be consistent in your approach as a business. For example, in regards to short-term retail employees, waiters or first-time job seekers, business owners should be taking precautionary measures and conducting – at the least – a basic criminal record, and reference check. In addition to this, your procedures as an organisation should be transparent so that applicants are aware of what is expected from the start of the hiring process. This builds trust based on openness, while also ensuring that the business is adequately covered from risk.



Rudi Kruger

With the assistance of Lexis® RefCheck a background screening tool from LexisNexis Data Services, businesses will be more equipped overall. Lexis® RefCheck services include verification of tertiary and secondary academic qualifications held by the individual from registered local and international institutions; identity and South African citizenship validation; fraud history checks via the South African Fraud Prevention Services; credit history checks through detailed TransUnion and Experian credit bureau reports; criminal history check via AFISwitch (electronic fingerprint collection and processing); verification of local and international employment history and professional association membership; and matching of bank account against an identity number or registration number.

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