

Background screening on the rise

The demand for background screening services in South Africa - and Africa as a whole - has continued to increase over the last five years, presenting a 14% rise in the uptake of vetting solutions by businesses during this period. This highlights the importance of conducting comprehensive background screening checks both pre- and post-employment.



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This is according to Managed Integrity Evaluation's (MIE) Annual Background Screening Report - which summarises findings from the organisation's vetting services conducted in the past year - released on 30 January 2017.

MIE Director and CEO, Ina van der Merwe, says, "Something that has always been - and always will be - essential to business success, is hiring the right people with the right skills, qualifications and experience for a particular position. Failing to do so can cause an organisation serious financial as well as reputational harm."

In high demand by businesses across industries, MIE conducted a total of 561,346 qualification checks in 2016 – increasing by 17% when compared to 2015.

MIE's qualification checks are processed through the National Qualifications Register (NQR), which has a database of over

3.8 million graduate records and 25 subscribing tertiary institutions.

Van der Merwe says, "As a whole, cross-border qualifications from African and international institutions, are the most likely to be misrepresented, fraudulent or inconsistent as candidates believe foreign qualifications will not be checked or verified. Risks in this regard are also on the rise increasing from 40% in 2015 to 42% in 2016."

Criminal records

In terms of criminal record checks, van der Merwe reveals that MIE completed 741,560 checks of which 10% of candidates had a criminal record. An even more concerning statistic is that out of the 10% of candidates with a criminal record - 48,167 candidates did not disclose their criminal history on application.

"We also noted that the Manufacturing and Mining industries are at greater risk as these sectors recorded the highest number of candidates with criminal histories – ranging between 18% and 20%."

Using the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) when verifying the criminal record statuses of candidates, all fingerprints captured are electronically checked against the South African Police Service (SAPS) database. "There are no 'ifs' or 'buts' when it comes to the accuracy of this process. If you have omitted information about a criminal offence – we'll know about it," she says.

Credit checks

Van der Merwe says, "The demand for verifications of a candidates' credit history has declined in recent years due to the amendment to the National Credit Act (NCA) in 2015. MIE conducted 462,466 credit checks on candidates in 2016 and 17% of candidates had an unfavourable credit history."

Keeping this statistic in mind – individuals qualified to work in the financial industry handling cash or finances, may not be suitable to do so due to an unfavourable credit record.

MIE forecasts continued growth in the demand for background screening services across the African continent as well as increased awareness and uptake of services available to assist in identifying suitable vendors and combatting procurement fraud.

"Due to the development of various smart vetting solutions available to organisations, it is important to include candidate and supplier screening into your organisational strategic planning and partner with a reputable background screening company to achieve these goals," van der Merwe concludes.

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