

Employee screening is a must for reputable colleges

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The beginning of the academic year has become synonymous with an abundance of recently matriculated students jostling for admittance into tertiary institutes across the country. As is often the case, a number of these students are unable to find placement at big-name universities and turn instead, to private and FET colleges.

With the sheer number of tertiary institutions in the country, it pays for smaller faculties to ensure all bases are covered by boosting their credibility as higher education institutions with the aid of thorough background checks on prospective employees.

“Major institutes make background checks a compulsory qualifier of employment. It is non-negotiable not only for their reputations as trustworthy institutions, but also as a safety-net for students and existing staff. In order to be more competitive and position themselves as a viable option, smaller institutions must apply the same principles to their hiring process,” says Rudi Kruger, General Manager of LexisNexis Data Services

“For any tertiary institution, the most imperative aspect of the hiring process is the safety of its charges. You want to trust that those being placed in a position to mould young minds are fully able, skilled and trustworthy,” Kruger adds.

Another important factor when hiring in this field, is access to information. As with all tertiary organisations, it is important to remember that employees have the run of the faculty, its equipment, institutional and student records as well as financial data. The opportunity for criminal activity is therefore heightened due to this admission.

Vetting candidates – in particular teaching staff – assists the employer with verifying important information, such as past employment, and critically, past criminal behaviour and the qualifications of the individual.

“It is imperative that employers take into consideration that not every candidate will be honest. A shaky job market, creates an environment where applicants are sometimes willing to bend the truth in order to get ahead of other hopefuls. This is where background checks become vital in the battle against the reputational damage hiring a non- or under-qualified individual can create.”

The repercussions of reputational damage can have far-reaching consequences for the future of a tertiary institution. Every employee – from lecturers to admin staff, represents the employer. Negative actions, attitudes or any form of criminal activity by an employee can easily jeopardise your relationship with potential and cause censure from the Department of Higher Education.

“A background check into the individual you are considering hiring can uncover questionable aspects of their working career or participation in illegal activities. This ensures that all aspects of the business including its reputation, staff, resources, customers and suppliers are protected. This period is among some of the most formative years for the youth, it is key that tertiary institutions – no matter their size or student capacity – provide a safe environment, free from criminal behaviours of any nature,” said Kruger.

With the assistance of Lexis® RefCheck a background screening toll from LexisNexis Data Services, start-ups will be more equipped when it is time to hire a team that can be entrusted with growing a small business. 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.

For more information, visit: <http://www.lexisnexis.co.za/our-solutions/private-sector/risk-management/refcheck.aspx>.

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