

Don't fake it to make it!

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Securing a suitable career path is undeniably one of the most difficult decisions one must make in life - especially in the South African environment where opportunities are hard to come by. With the reality of background screening steadily becoming a compulsory practice within the hiring process - what does this mean for candidates?



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Our recently launched [Background Screening Index](#) (BSI) answers some critical points that candidates need to be mindful of when going through the job application process or growing a successful career path.

Why are candidates screened/vetted?

The background screening process can come with a great deal of anxiety for the candidate looking to secure employment. However, candidates need to come to terms that this process will increasingly be adopted by hiring organisations who need to ensure that they are employing the right person for the position on offer. As such, it is critically important for the candidate to check that they are always presenting accurate and honest information.

Given the serious implications of potential reputational damage that comes with making a bad hire, which we have seen reported on often in the media, organisations are prioritising background screening with the aim to mitigate their risks. With that said, candidates should educate themselves about the background screening and vetting process and ensure there are no discrepancies on their application by being 100% honest.

What checks are being done and what are they finding?

Traditionally, criminal, qualification, and credit checks are standard. However, the 2018 BSI report noted that employers are becoming increasingly aware that these checks alone are not enough to gauge a candidate's suitability. As a result, there is growing market recognition on the importance of conducting employment history checks and the comprehensive

vetting of candidate CVs, for both part-time and full-time appointments. Understanding this should make it clear to candidates that an honest approach is the only approach.

Some of the information by or about a candidate that is most commonly found to have been misrepresented when undertaking background checks includes:

- A candidate having a criminal record
- Fraudulent or a misrepresented qualification
- A candidate having an unfavourable credit record
- Fake identity or driver's licence documents
- Misrepresented employment history

Why lie and risk getting caught?

It is easy to fall into the trap of misrepresenting information, especially given how competitive the job market is, where every candidate wants to stand out from the crowd and land the job. However, being forthcoming about sensitive information such as a criminal record or the lack of certification, for example, is important and far better than running the risk of being caught after a background screening process is completed.

Interestingly, the BSI report has also found that of the 778,319 criminal checks conducted by MIE in 2018, 9.96% were found to have a criminal record or a case pending. Furthermore, 7% of these criminal checks conducted showed that the candidate either lied about having a criminal record or did not know they had one.

This highlights a need for people to also undertake a 'self-check' to determine what information is available in their name. Also, given the growing reality of qualification 'mills' that produce fake documents, it is also important for candidates to ensure that the qualification(s) they have come from accredited and legitimate education institutions.

Finding the right career is not always easy and staying on the path to grow professionally takes confidence, which not only comes from having an authentic qualification but also the right skills. Therefore, rather than misrepresenting their qualification and/or past work experience, to make themselves a more attractive applicant, candidates should focus on acquiring the right skills, suitable aptitude, and experience – as required by the job scope.

There are simply no short cuts to success. Though it may take time and hard work to attain all the criteria for the desired job, it is important for candidates to present themselves honestly, because there is a difference between a candidate presenting themselves well or being outright dishonest. The latter can be far more career limiting than being open about perceived weaknesses, lack of qualification, or mistakes of the past.

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