

Hiring the right employee depends so much on how much the employer is able to discover the present and past of such prospective staff. Chief Executive Officer, Primex Background Check Limited, Frank Oyorthigo, says his firm, a due diligence organisation, is focusing on helping employers identify the right persons for the jobs by finding out about their pasts, write COLLINS NWEZE and CHRISTOPHER EBOH

## 'Professionals should handle employee's background checks'

**E**FFECTIVE management of an organisation is premised on a pool of talents including having detailed information about such employees remains critical tool in organisational success. Still, this remains a daunting task for most employers.

For Chief Executive Officer, Primex Background Check Limited, Frank Oyorthigo, having the data of prospective employees verified by experts should be left to professionals. He said his firm helps employers simplify this complex task, enhance business success, and also ensure that employees create the right thinking that makes the delivery of their functions possible.

According to him, Primex Background Check is involved in investigation of integrity of the nation's business environment, which in its own come with benefits for both the employer and employees.

### Human Resources

He said most human resources departments of companies are known to be involved in background checks. "Naturally, when a company employs people, it verifies their certificates by writing letters to previous employers to authenticate claims on the resume. The process used to be given less attention in most companies, until it was discovered that with the saturation of the employment market, applicants can do anything, including falsification of results, to show that they are more qualified than they are," he said.

Oyorthigo said such malpractices make it difficult for employers to recruit the best hands, putting many qualified hands out of jobs. It also makes business owners to lose money in terms of training and retraining which usually follow after discovering that an employee does not have the needed skills claimed on the resume. The extra training expenditure adds to the huge costs of running the business. Such additional costs, he said, blurt the budget, adding that people are employed based on prestige and performance the employer expects the employee to bring to the table.

### Employees that lie

He explained that companies which discover that employees claims are false are either retrain or dismiss such employee. Such, action, he said, is like starting all over again, which remains unprofitable for business, because of the time and money usually lost.

The former staff of Skye Bank said the firm also helps foreign investors verify key information claimed by their local business partners.

"So what we are actually doing apart from verifying certificates is do business with foreigners who want to do business with Nigerians, especially with the kind of money we have. People want to get into business partnership but they also want to find out if their partners actually have the company or do the kind of business they claimed," he said.

He added that from the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), the firm find out who are the directors and shareholders of such company to ensure that the company's address used in the partnership business is correct



• Oyorthigo

via the open check or the discrete check.

According to him, the discrete check is when an employer wants to read in between the lines the things that does not exist, for instance, there are some things that a prospective employee may not tell you because, may be you did not ask.

"If you want to employ an accountant and then you ask him how much he was earning formerly and he said N 2.5 million per annum, but if you say, I will give you N3 million, because you want to be a good employer and he accepted.

"However, if you go back to his former employer discover that he was earning N 1.5 million. That is dishonesty? What this simply means is that if he has an opportunity to make away with your money, he certainly will do."

He recalled the problem with the legislators sometime ago over issues like falsification. He said these were small issues which could easily be detected if proper checks were done.

"You need to be sure that they are okay, so, somebody who can lie about his previous salary cannot be trusted, their jobs but in terms of integrity, cash management, financial integrity, they may be lacking.

"I think the one that is usually common is that a company wants to hire a prospective employee and he is being asked how much he earned previously, in majority of the cases, one will always be up his earnings especially, if you are coming from a background where you earned small. We know how much the pay is in every sector, and then, the person is thinking you can give him an edge in negotiation if he tells you that actual amount. Also, with that actual amount, the employer may not even employ him again," he said.

He said many think that such lies will help them, or they will want to

to do background check.

Also, if you are the young man who wishes to get married, and your fiancée is asking you to visit you with one small box or gift, you should say this," he said. He said that he has been in their family, and he has been ahead to discover that it was the child she had while she was in secondary school, but didn't tell you. That will reduce the level of trust you are going to have for her or for him when you later get married. It may even make them change and not work. So, you can check anything or anybody before you go ahead with marriage or business.

"But for us, at this moment, we focus on employment check, certificate verification, NYS-Certificate verification, professional certificate verification. Guarantor check, reference check among others."

### Guarantor checks

He said guarantor check is a major challenge in Nigeria because most employers do not give their forms to the right persons.

According to him, if an employer wants to employ somebody, probably a driver, that will be driving a 3300 litre fuel capacity trailer, part of the proper check is to get a check person, a guarantor, to come with him. If a guarantor and the driver abscond with the fuel and you now go and arrest the guarantor only to discover that it was somebody who scarcely support himself financially, that is the guarantor.

"He said: "If that happens, the goods are gone because he cannot identify you. What we do is that the guarantor for himself will be verified in terms of worth, reputation in the society and whether he is aware that he is standing in for someone as a guarantor because in for someone who just fill in somebody's name without the person being notified, especially, as reference.

You put a call through and the person being used as a guarantor says I don't know that he put my name there although he is my son's daughter or son. So does the guarantor know that he is being used as a guarantor? Can the guarantor stand for the person? But once he says, Yes, I am aware, I signed this form! That is a form of security and it also serves as check, because, such a person will be very careful in the way he handles things or the way he does his job."

He said the job of background checks should be left for professionals who understand the what it takes and give the extra mile to find out about prospective employee.

### Being proactive

He said the average Nigerian business owner is not proactive but reactive, adding that such employers believe that if an employee commits fraud, and once he is sacked, he has been punished, but forgetting that if you sack one person, the recruitment process cost you more in terms of fund, time and man power. "So we just look at it at the surface level and say, okay, if he doesn't do well, I will sack him. But number two, there is no government regulation that says you must do background check before you employ."

"In developed climes, there is what we call Negligent Hiring (NH) and Negligent Retention (NR). So if you do background check, if you did not employ somebody and you did not commit a crime, which if the person has committed before someone where you can be sued for hiring such a person because that amount to negligent hiring. But we don't have that kind of regulation here in Nigeria. So anybody can employ. Employers unfortunately don't think that background check is an investment, rather, they see it as a liability," he said.

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## NEWS FEATURE

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According to him, Primex Background Check is involved in investigation of employees' certificates so as to bring integrity to the nation's business environment, which in its own, come with benefits for both the employer and employees.

### Human Resources

He said most human resources departments of companies are known to be involved in background checks. "Naturally, when a company employs people, it verifies their certificates by writing letters to previous employers to authenticate claims on the resume. The process used to be given less attention in most companies, until it was discovered that with the saturation of the employment market, applicants can do anything, including falsification of results, to show that they are more qualified than they are," he said.

Oyorhigo said such malpractices make it difficult for employers to recruit the best hands, putting many qualified hands out of jobs. It also makes business owners to lose money in terms of training and retraining, which usually follow after discovering that an employee does not have the needed skills claimed on the resume. The extra training expenditure adds to the huge costs of running the business. Such additional costs, he said, float the budget, adding that people are employed based on prestige and performance the employer expects the employee to bring to the table.

### Employees that lie

He explained that companies which discover that employees' claims are false are either retrain or dismiss such employee. Such action, he said, is like starting all over again, which remains unprofitable for business, because of the time and money usually lost.

The former staff of Skye Bank said the firm also helps foreign investors verify key information claimed by their local business partners.

"So what we are actually doing apart from verifying certificates is do business with foreigners who want to do business with Nigerians, especially, with the kind of image we have. People want to get into business partnership but they also want to find out if their partners actually have the company or do the kind of business they claimed," he said.

He added that from the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), the firm find out who are the directors and shareholders of such company to ensure that the company's address used in the partnership business is correct

and actual or if the company is registered.

According to him, the firm could also find out about the authorised share capital of the company, as such would give the business owners peace of mind by ensuring that businesses are done only with the right persons.

There are also insurance benefits attached to such services. "For instance, if you have a staff that will be handling cash and there are absconds with the cash, if you go to insurance to make claims, even though you have insured the person, one of the ways they can even deflate your claims is by asking if you did due diligence on the staff before employing him," he explained.

Ensuring that such preemptive actions are done helps in the process of getting the insurance claims, he said.

According to him, because of kidnapping, people need to do background checks on their domestic staff. "You need to find out if the person you want to employ actually needs the job and that he is not a scam. You know, it was when I worked in the bank that I realised that sometimes, there are syndicates who work themselves to the banks. They are employed and then they make away with money from the bank," he said.

Therefore, there is need to verify people that a company is employing. He said, "Drivers can move away with your vehicle, domestic staff can move away with your money, they can even kidnap our children by collaborating with outside kidnappers. It's all about ensuring that you are employing the right person, you are doing business with the right person. Making sure they are diligent and putting everything in proper perspectives. So, even if anything goes wrong, you will know that at your own end, you have done all that you need to do."

### Implications of inaction

Oyorhigo said the lack of background checks has made it easy for some banks to employ people of questionable characters, who come in with the intention of defrauding the banks. That he said, explains the rising cases of internal frauds in many of the banks. "The fact that some people with questionable characters are engaged by banks to work as staff, that is why we have also discovered that internal fraud has been on the rise," he said.

He said finding out a prospective employee's past will expose if such a person does not have a record that could affect the job's operation.

He said somebody who could forge National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) certificate or call up letter could forge any document or alter records if he or she is employed by a company.

He said the interviewees should be told that the information they are supplying will be subjected verification



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According to him, the discrete check is when an employer wants to read in between the lines the things that does not exist. "For instance, there are some things that a prospective employee may not tell you because, maybe you did not ask.

"If you want to employ an accountant and then you ask him how much he was earning formerly and he said N 2.5 million per annum, but if you say, I will give you N3 million, because you want to be a good employer and be accepted.

"However, if you go back to his former employer discover that he was earning N1.5 million. That is dishonest! What this simply means is that if he has an opportunity to make away with your money, he certainly will do."

He recalled the problem with the legislators sometime ago over issues like age falsification. He said these were small issues which could easily be detected if proper checks were done.

"You need to be sure that they are okay, so, somebody who can lie about his previous salary can also twist documents. Some people can be good at their jobs but in terms of integrity, cash management, financial integrity, they may be lacking.

"I think the one that is usually common is that a company wants to hire a prospective employee and he is being asked how much he earned previously, in majority of the cases, one will always beef up his earnings especially, if you are coming from a background where you earned small. We know how much the pay is in every sector, and then, the person is thinking you can give him an edge in negotiation if he tells you the actual amount. Also, with that actual amount, the employers may not even engage him again," he said.

He said many think that such lies will help them, or they will want to

say it's part of negotiation but let's turn the table around.

"If you are the employer and you now asked the prospective employee how much he is earning and he said I am earning this amount, and you get to know later that what he said was not what he was actually earning, how will you feel? What will be your reaction? So when you think of it from that perspective, you will realise that what we are trying to do is to bring absolute integrity in business environment, so that when this person says it is 'A', it is 'A', he said.

He added that there was nothing wrong with a prospective employee saying no, this was what I was earning before, and this is my worth presently.

"Now, if something happens tomorrow, and they say this guy has embezzled money, if for instance, the guy who is the owner of the business, does the background check and found out that what he said was exactly what it was, and if tomorrow, the guy was accused, even if it was true that he did it, the owner of the business would say no, because the guy told the company the truth about his previous earning, though, it was too small," he said.

On the other way round, he said if the owners of the business discovered that you lied about your previous salary, and something happens, that may also serve as a benchmark to say it is possible you committed the offence because while he was coming into the company, he told a lie.

On the firm's products and services, he said, the products are endless. "For instance, if your daughter wants to get married, and she brings a boy to the house who you are not too comfortable with, even if he says he works with XYZ company or in a business finance, or into buying and selling, and you say okay, what do you sell? Even if he says I sell spare parts, and you are not comfortable, you can decide

to do background check.

"Also, if you are the young man who wants to get married, and your fiancée is coming to visit you with one small boy or girl, and you said 'who is this?' and she said that it is the last born in their family, and you went abroad to discover that it was the child she had while she was in secondary school, but didn't tell you. That will reduce the level of trust you are going to have for her or for him when you later get married. It may even make the marriage not to work. So, you can check anything or anybody before you go ahead with marriage or business.

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According to him, if an employer wants to employ somebody, probably a driver, that will be driving a 3000 litre fuel capacity trailer, part of the security will be to sign and check people that will stand as guarantors. If a proper check is not carried out on the guarantors and the driver absconds with the fuel and you now go and arrest the guarantor only to discover that it was somebody who scarcely support himself financially that is the guarantor.

He said, "If that happens, the goods are gone because he cannot identify you. What we do is that the guarantor himself will be verified in terms of worth, reputation in the society, and whether he is aware that he is standing in for someone as a guarantor because there are people who just fill in somebody's name without the person being notified, especially, as reference you put a call through and the person being used as a guarantor says I don't know that he put my name there although, he is my aunt's daughter or son. So does the guarantor know that he is being used as a guarantor? Can the guarantor stand for the person? But once he says Yes! I am aware, I signed this form! That is a form of security and it also serves as check, because, such a person will be very careful in the way he handles things or the way he does his job."

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