

Have you screened your seasonal employees?



The strategic decision to make use of seasonal employment, a type of temporary employment that companies use to bolster their workforce during busy seasons and periods of heightened demand, brings with it a mix of increased benefits and potential risks.

As the calendar transitions to December and January, sectors such as hospitality and retail take a prominent position, experiencing a surge in activity synonymous with the festive season. Simultaneously, as other industries conclude their annual operations, the imperative for temporary staff becomes evident.

Vetting and screening seasonal employees are essential for many reasons, including workplace safety, reputation maintenance, legal compliance, and creating a secure work environment. These processes contribute to financial efficiency by minimising turnover costs, emphasising their integral role in responsible and strategic workforce management, even in temporary employment scenarios.

The 2022 Background Screening Index (BSI) report released by Managed Integrity Evaluation (MIE), Southern Africa's largest background screening and vetting company, found that more candidates were embellishing their qualifications and experience as employment became more difficult to find.

The report further found that criminal verification within MIE was the most requested check. When conducted on a regular basis, these verifications can possibly prevent employee misconduct.

The informal nature of seasonal employees, often described as "holiday help," is pivotal in employment dynamics. Despite often designing the temporary engagements meticulously, failure to adequately screen

and vet seasonal workers can result in severe consequences for a business.

It jeopardises workplace safety by risking the security of both the workforce and the physical environment. Additionally, the company's reputation is at risk, as inadequately screened workers may tarnish its image and credibility with customers. Thorough screening processes are indispensable for mitigating these risks and maintaining a secure and reputable business environment.

Seasonal jobs offer a unique dynamic for both employers and employees, fostering a sense of community and support within the workforce. In an evolving work landscape that increasingly embraces non-traditional arrangements, such as part-time and flexible schedules, seasonal employment is gaining prominence in what is now recognised as a side-hustle economy.

For employers, the advantages include broader access to talent, particularly for individuals who prefer part-time or flexible work arrangements. This opens up the talent pool to working parents, teachers, professionals, students, and business owners who may not commit to full-time roles. The employment of seasonal, part-time, or temporary staff also reduces overall labour costs, as these workers typically earn somewhat less and do not require benefits.

The shorter tenure of seasonal employment contributes to increased morale, as employees remain in higher spirits during the excitement of a new job without facing the challenges of a prolonged honeymoon phase. However, the constant need to scout for talent brings an element of unpredictability to staffing, presenting both exciting opportunities and potential frustrations.

On the flip side, employees engaging in seasonal work gain several benefits. Seasonal roles provide an avenue to diversify skills and experiences, acting as valuable resume builders and networking opportunities. These positions also offer flexibility, although it may vary across industries.

While some temporary workers trade low pay and benefits for a flexible schedule, others, such as those in retail during the holiday season, might find themselves working overtime, nights, weekends, and through the holidays. Additionally, for those in competitive industries, starting as a seasonal employee could pave the way for future full-time roles, as the experience and skills gained often translate well to other positions.

For businesses to truly maximise the potential of this staffing strategy, the implementation of essential checkpoints such as expert vetting and screening, clear communication, comprehensive training, legal compliance, transparent performance expectations, and opportunities for transition are essential.