

Background screening cos get a fillip post 26/11

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Last year's terrorist attacks in Mumbai seems to have given a fillip to background screening companies in India that have stepped up hiring in order to cater to the increase in demand for their services.

Moreover, verification agencies are also seeing interest from small enterprises, hospitals and educational intuitions, which have traditionally seen background screening and checking of employees as additional cost and not as an investment in ensuring safety.

First Advantage, the largest background verification agency in the country, has added over 300 new customers in the last one year alone, according to Mr Ashish Dehade, Managing Director, West Asia. To service the new customers, First Advantage expects to almost double its headcount in India to 1,200 by this year-end as against 600 exactly a year ago.

“Corporates have realised that no building, institution or hotel is safe from terrorist attacks. And they have realised that background checks could be a first line of defence against potential attacks,” he said.

Employee screening, considered critical in emerging markets due to lack of criminal databases, involves hiring an external agency to conduct personal and background checks.

It may be recalled that in the aftermath of the attacks at the Taj Mahal Hotel, media reports indicated involvement of two employees in the Housekeeping Department of the hotel. Though the company later denied the report, the entire chain of events seems to have been taken up seriously by the Indian industry.

Says Ms Nipa Modi, CEO of CRP HR Services, “Last year around the same time we did not have a single customer (for background screening) in the hospitality sector. Now, we have four hospitality chains who have signed up with us.”

Stepping up hiring

In the last three months alone, CRP HR Services has increased its employee base by 10-15 per cent. It now has about 550 employees on its rolls. Earlier, companies would only conduct checks on new hires. Now, they are conducting random checks, not only on their employees but also on the temporary staff who would be on the payroll of third party companies.

Outlining the importance of background screening, Mr TV Mohandas Pai, Member of the board of Infosys Technologies, said: “There have been disturbing reports of people grouping up and sympathising with the perpetrators of violence and hence background screening of staff becomes very crucial.”

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