TRUST ID

PUTTING THE TRUST BACK INTO BUSINESS

How combining people, process and technology can put the trust back into your business.

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Trust is the foundation on which the personal and business relationships that underpin success are built.

It helps to create strong, open relationships within organisations, with customers, with suppliers, and within the wider business ecosystem.

As a HR professional with responsibility for ensuring that you bring the right personnel into your business, you will have a well-developed instinct as to the trustworthiness of people. The good news is that most of the time your instinct will be right. But with the growth of more diverse workforces and more flexible ways of working, everyone's ability to make judgements about the trustworthiness of potential employees is being stretched far beyond the limits that intuition alone can cope with. At the same time, making the right judgement is more important than ever.

The number of people using fake identity documents to illegally gain employment is growing, increasing the risk to business of insider fraud and of fines running into the tens of thousands. The consequences of making the wrong call and employing someone who has no right to work in the UK, or who is using a fake identity can, therefore, be very serious for your business, your employees, your customers, and your reputation.

When people and technology combine, however, you can ensure that fraudsters can't gain employment with you using fake identity documents, enabling you to put the trust back into your business.

A new employment landscape

In 2016, the Immigration Act was reinforced and strengthened and there is now less flexibility to allow for mitigating circumstances when imposing fines on organisations found to have employed staff who presented false documentation.

Figures published in 2023[1] highlight that in a single quarter (April-June 2023) over £1 million of fines were levied on businesses in South East England. In February 2024, the maximum fine per illegal worker will rise to £60,000. But the consequences of employing someone using false documentation can be much more far reaching than simply being fined.

Insider fraud is not a subject many organisations are keen to discuss, but that doesn't mean it isn't a major problem. For the first time since 2012, dishonest actions by staff were the most common type of fraud. Often impulsive and opportunistic, insider fraud can include anything from stealing cash or manipulating third party accounts, to stealing any sort of valuable, saleable equipment such as power tools or laptop computers.

Damaging though insider fraud always is, its consequences are compounded when the employee responsible turns out to have presented fake identity documents. Police investigations may be compromised as it can prove very difficult to trace an individual who has gained employment using a false identity. It's also possible that insurance cover may be invalidated if inadequate checks were made by an employer prior to employing someone who goes on to commit insider fraud. In addition, the losses arising from the fraud itself may only be the tip of the iceberg as it can also lead to a loss of productivity, of reputation and of trust in the employer amongst other employees.

Modern Slavery

Modern Slavery is also a growing issue, with the number of people identified as victims rising year on year. It refers to situations where a person's freedom has been taken away so that they can be exploited. This is done by way of threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power and deception. Whilst over 10,000 people are referred to authorities annually, the real number of people estimated to have been trafficked into or around the UK and trapped in slavery is estimated to be much higher.

One method used by traffickers is to withhold their victims' identity documents once they arrive in the UK and replace them with fraudulent documents. These are then used to gain employment in legitimate work, as well as masking their true nationality and gaining access to benefits. Making appropriate checks on these documents is therefore critical to help tackle Modern Slavery.

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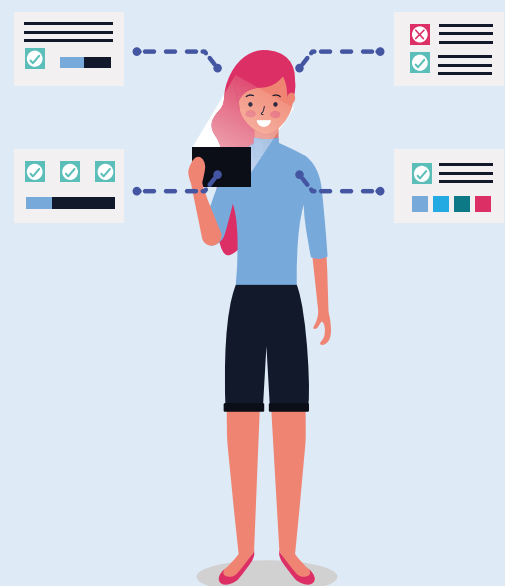
1   The Home Office website

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An increasingly prevalent problem

At TrustID, our figures show that there has been an overall increase in counterfeit documents referred to our helpdesk team between 2018 and 2023. In 2023, we identified fake ID documents purporting to represent 40 different nationalities. We continue to see the highest proportion of fake documents from those sectors which traditionally have high staff turnover and lower pay. Of the fake documents found in 2023, over 20% came from customers in the restaurant / hospitality sector, more than anywhere else in our customer base.
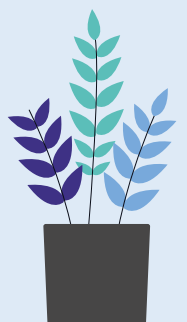
Acknowledging the issue

It might seem obvious, but the first line of defence for any organisation is to recognise that there is a problem in the first place. Many businesses are either not aware that identity fraud exists, or if they are aware, they assume it's unlikely to affect them. The truth, however, is that a significant amount of crime in the private business sector is committed by people working under false identities. But the responsibility for ensuring that all employees are who they say they are extends beyond simply avoiding fines and fraud. In some sectors, employers also have a duty of care towards vulnerable people, so ensuring all staff are legitimate is fundamental to the safety of these people.

Not just a problem for big business

Businesses of every size and in every sector are at risk from identity fraud, but smaller businesses in particular can be vulnerable as they don't necessarily have the physical resources to check potential employees' identities thoroughly. Smaller businesses may also be more likely to employ people on a casual basis, without realising the risks they are running by not carrying out effective identity checks.

All businesses, of whatever size, also need to be sure that they are only using trusted suppliers and service providers. Key areas for concern include, for example, using a delivery business, particularly if drivers are entrusted to transport high value goods, or a cleaning company which has access to your premises after-hours. These are just two of the many entry points that fraudsters may attempt to use to get into the supply chains of organisations and commit fraud or theft.

The goal – quick and accurate detection

Having acknowledged the issue, the next step is to understand what you are looking for when it comes to fake identity documents. It has been suggested that we are in the middle of an identity fraud epidemic . Between 2001 and 2016 the number of lost or stolen documents in circulation reportedly doubled, while at the same time there was a dramatic increase in seizures of fraudulent passports at UK border control. In 2016, the number of fraudulent identity documents confiscated at the border hit a 5 year high, although it is likely that many of the fake documents used for illegal working were acquired in the UK by people who arrived in the country with legitimate documents. The reality is that it is not possible to know whether any specific fake document derived from inside or outside the UK, only that our experience at TrustID accords with the general consensus that the number is increasing.

The challenge for an employer, therefore, is to quickly and accurately detect the difference between the vast majority of documents that are genuine, and fake and doctored versions.

The central role of HR

HR is the best place to build a good defence against identity fraud, given its role in the recruitment and monitoring of staff. It has the capability, and responsibility, to create the necessary policies and procedures to ensure an effective vetting process. In addition, it is HR that can most effectively communicate the importance of the issue across the whole organisation, explaining how prevalent it is, and the importance of stopping it. And HR is ideally placed to ensure that everyone is adequately trained to carry out their role in a verification process.

By creating an effective vetting process, you will create a virtuous circle. As news spreads that you are using effective identity scanning, it will act as a deterrent for those who may try to use false documents to obtain employment with you. So while you can never afford to let your guard down, a really effective solution will lead to a decrease, not an increase, in the number of forged documents or attempts at identity fraud directed at your organisation over time.

A holistic approach

By creating a wider culture of understanding and responsibility from the top down, rather than focusing on tick box compliance, everyone in the workforce can be made aware of the role they play and the responsibility they have to protect the business from identity theft and fraud.

By taking away the burden from an individual to make a judgement, a well-defined process supported by appropriate technology will remove the possibility of error and at the same time remove the equally damaging possibility of unintentional discrimination. HR can ensure that individuals on the front line are equipped with the necessary soft skills to manage what can be a very delicate situation, as no one wants to wrongly accuse someone of identity fraud. As an employer, it will also enable you to fulfil your responsibility to ensure that all your employment policies are consistent, transparent and non-discriminatory.

By taking a holistic, company wide view, you will be able to ensure all your stakeholders can trust that all your employees are who they say they are, and offer a greater level of protection against insider fraud.

The key issues facing all organisations

✔ Increasingly organisations, but especially those involved in hospitality, retail, healthcare, and construction, are employing a diverse workforce, often across multiple sites, and including part time, seasonal and sometimes casual workers. Many also face the challenge of ensuring the legitimacy of sub-contractors and agency employees

✔ Many employers, those in facilities management for example, supply staff who operate on other companies' sites, delivering services such as cleaning, security and catering contracts, and need to be sure of the identity of all these individuals

✔ The recruitment sector has a growing need to speed up the on-boarding of new employees while also making identity checks more consistent. This sector needs to comply with UK legislation that requires all candidates be fully entitled to work, but at the same time, effective identity checking can deliver a huge competitive advantage, improving client relations, and giving peace of mind to everyone involved in the process by protecting both the recruiters' reputation and that of their clients

✔ The Immigration Act 2016 makes it easier to prosecute any employers who deliberately 'turn a blind eye' to employing illegal workers and sanctions on those found to be employing illegal workers are now tougher than ever

Identity Fraud – the facts

✔ Identity fraud is the abuse of personal data to impersonate an innocent party and/or the creation of a fictitious entity to open a new account, obtain a product or service, or gain employment

✔ It is linked to numerous crime areas including fraud, migrant smuggling, property crime and money laundering

✔ Document fraud is expected to be one of fastest growing crime areas over the coming years

✔ The number of lost and stolen documents in circulation is significantly growing and regional conflict allows criminal groups to more easily obtain blank documents from those areas

✔ A single fraudulent document can be used repeatedly to support different criminal activities

People and Technology – the Optimum Solution

By combining knowledge and skills with technology, you can create a screening process that will efficiently and accurately identify counterfeit documents presented as proof of identity without the need for extensive, and expensive, document verification training.

Creating a consistency approach

With so many different sorts of forged documents in circulation, technology can create a consistent platform on which to build a successful verification process. With the ability to confirm the veracity of a document in seconds to a much higher level than sight alone, technology can quickly highlight potential problems, before automatically storing copies of documents, enabling the original to be returned, and a full audit trail to be created.

The human dimension

While technology can quickly and accurately judge the veracity of a document, it cannot sensitively handle difficult situations. It's imperative therefore, that if a document is flagged as suspicious, staff are equipped to deal with what can be a very embarrassing situation. The person proffering the document may, after all, be innocent and it's important not to unduly cause them distress or concern, but equally it's vital that any potential criminal investigation shouldn't be compromised.

Experiences from the front line

Accepting documents in confidence

Since implementing the TrustID scanner, Firstcall Healthcare Services have come across several fraudulent documents. One candidate presented a passport which, with just a manual inspection, may previously have allowed them to proceed to the next step in the recruitment process.

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At first glance, the document looked OK, but the scanner revealed the photo on the passport chip was a male whilst the candidate presenting it was female! It's quite scary to think that if we were just relying on our own intuition, we could have missed that...

Jill Roberts,
Training and Compliance Manager

Robust recruitment of staff

TrustID cloud-based identity verification gives the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust a robust, centralised ID and right to work pre-employment check which supports remote recruitment across their sites and scales as new customers are brought under the remit of the shared service team. Candidates can upload identity documents at a time to suit them and the Trust can reduce the time taken to hire new recruits in order to support the vital patient care.

"

It's given us an easy but secure way to obtain identity documents remotely. With TrustID's validity checks in place, we protect ourselves from fraudulent documentation.

Sylwia Misko, Shared Recruitment & Service Development Manager

What we do

At TrustID, we offer fast, accurate and auditable validation of documents used to support identity. Our solutions are easy to use in the office, on the move, or in remote locations. You can electronically validate identity documents using a scanner, smartphone or web-portal, saving you time and giving you the confidence that you know who you are working with while also offering protection for your staff and your customers.

By checking visible and non-visible security features, our ID verification solutions highlight potential problems with documents, and automatically store a copy of all documents submitted so that the original can be returned. Streamlining the verification process, it removes the need for your employees to have expert knowledge of the huge array of documents that can be submitted to prove identity.

Offering speed and consistency of information across numerous departments/sites, TrustID checks are superior to the naked eye and easy to interpret. The scanning process creates an auditable copy of authenticated documents, ensures compliance with legislation and brings peace of mind to you and your clients. And with low implementation costs, it quickly delivers substantial benefits and is the first step in the creation of an effective identity validation process.

The benefits to you

✔ Eliminating bias from the system

✔ Dramatically improving the quality and quantity of identity checks that you can perform

✔ Giving you confidence that prospective employees are who they say they are

✔ Providing complete visibility of document scans across your entire organisation

✔ Driving consistently compliant recruitment, no matter where or how you onboard applicants.

✔ Making everyone an expert

✔ Providing you with a simple pass or fail on every document, eliminating any grey areas
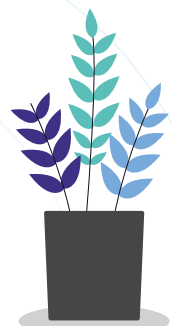
To find out more visit www.trustid.co.uk or call 0118 466 0822

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