

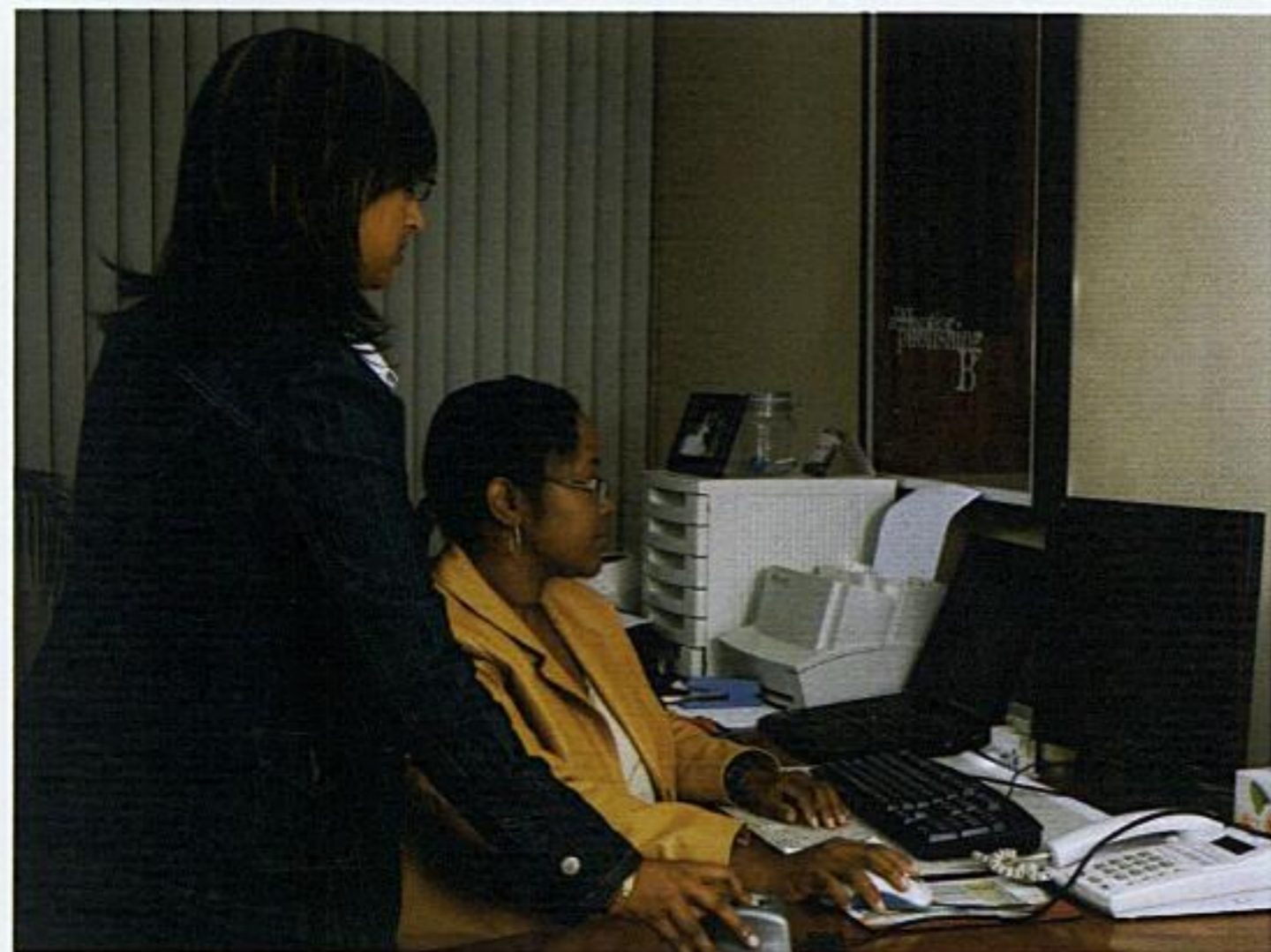
New SAPS electronic fingerprinting

The South African Police Service (SAPS) is phasing out its manual name clearance criminal check system and will shortly be moving to an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) based on electronic fingerprint scans, which will be used to establish the existence of a criminal record. This will change the way that HR departments handle criminal checks of individuals for employment purposes.

Previously HR departments used the name clearance database in a process based on a manual system whereby SAPS officials checked names and ID numbers against the Criminal Records Centre database. If a question mark was raised in this process, candidates were asked to have their fingerprints taken on paper at a police station to confirm a criminal record.

This manual process required substantial SAPS resources beyond the core role of police officers. As a result, SAPS has been moving to a single system of digitally scanned fingerprints linked to an automated criminal database, called AFISwitch, in a project that has been running for close to three years in conjunction with leading biometrics company, Ideco Group Limited.

The implications of AFISwitch for HR departments is that they will no longer be constrained by the restrictions of the name clearance



database; and that criminal checks will be initiated via electronic fingerprint readers. The basic search principles remain the same: consent is required before a check can be initiated and is still based on ten fingerprints.

Previously a criminal record check could take many weeks to complete. With AFISwitch, HR departments wanting to run criminal checks will have scanners on site with the added advantage that through a system such as LexisNexis RefCheck they can have a complete, accurate electronic report e-mailed to their desk within 48 hours. This single report includes criminal checks, academic record checks, credit checks, drivers licence checks and the like.

In a country where crime and fraud are prevalent, and with a SAPS criminal database of over seven million records, these systems can play a vital role in helping organisations ensure that they make sound appointments, and that all the necessary checks are fast, accurate, discreet and easy to commission.

RefCheck provides one central point to type in the details of existing and potential employees and to have all the necessary personal information verified as quickly and accurately as possible. Using a tool such as RefCheck, which can be accessed anywhere via the Web, makes in-house screening viable for large corporates and enables them to have control over their recruitment process.

RefCheck is the only ISO9001 approved system of its kind in South Africa. It is also far more cost-effective for companies to use the RefCheck system than to do the verification themselves as they pay only for the required checks and there is no membership or support fee. RefCheck is used by over 1 000 leading organisations including recruitment companies, corporate HR departments, government and small businesses. RefCheck also services top online recruitment portals such as Career Junction and P-Net.

As a one-stop shop for all HR employee verification services, LexisNexis provides full training on the new RefCheck system, and distributes the scanners required for in-office fingerprinting. **PD**