

Using accurate forensic intelligence to combat serial and organised crime in South Africa

"When constructing any kind of civil or criminal case against an individual or corporation, it is imperative that all the evidence that is to be presented in a court of law be one hundred per cent accurate and verifiable," says Sameer Kumandan, Managing Director of [SearchWorks](#), South Africa's largest and most innovative data aggregation platform. "False or inaccurate evidence can lead to the dismissal of charges and the release of dangerous criminals."

Lack of forensic capacity in SA

It is no secret in South Africa that the capacity of the police service and their forensics departments are severely constrained, and that the burden of securing the convictions of criminals responsible for crimes ranging from murder and fraud to rhino poaching is a heavy one. Police resources are limited and gathering evidence and compiling detailed information relating to a case is time consuming.

For some people, bypassing the SAPS and resorting to the use of the services of a private investigator to make a case is an option, but ultimately investigators must also navigate the myriad of sources of personal and corporate records and information to put together an accurate dossier for their client.

Many instances of criminal activity have been uncovered in South Africa by our extremely active and respected body of investigative journalists who have done excellent work in exposing the criminal activities of politicians, high-ranking government officials, white collar workers and even captains of industry.

One-stop shop for data

The police, private security and investigation agencies and journalists all rely on a vast range of websites, government departments, archives and other sources to research facts and figures. SearchWorks removes the long, tedious hours and leg work, and is a single 'one-stop shop' for accurate and up-to-date data, which is increasingly in demand by forensic investigators.

"SearchWorks' access to a vast range of data sites from company registration and company director listings, property and vehicle ownership, qualification verification, tracking of bank accounts and criminal record searches is an invaluable tool for the

forensics sector and means ultimately that there is nowhere for criminals to hide,” said Kumandan.

Uncovering the truth

SearchWorks is a single search and vetting source of many data sites, enabling deep dive forensic searches that can follow paper trails that criminals believe they have covered. “Fronting, trusts and bank accounts whose signatories are connected and even related, names on property deeds whose value far exceeds an individual’s means all tell a great many stories and can reveal the truth behind claims of innocence,” adds Kumandan.

He says SearchWorks is one of the most valuable tools that the forensics sector, and by extension investigative journalists, can utilise in their quest to uncover critical information relating to criminals who have caused financial and reputational damage to companies and the country. They are even able to perform criminal background checks without alerting suspects.

“Sadly, we know that theft, embezzlement and fraud are endemic in South Africa. From the acts of common criminals to the complexity of corporate crime, SearchWorks can assist in tracking the instigators, and even find the hiding places of ill-gotten gains,” asserts Kumandan.

Forensic investigations that lead to convictions

SearchWorks has contributed to the successful capture and prosecution of a number of criminals. This includes providing data to the SAPS that enabled them to put together cellphone mapping reports of a rhino poacher who was recently handed down a 28-year sentence for hunting and poaching rhinos in KwaZulu-Natal.

Said Kumandan, “We were also able to provide credit bureau records in accordance with section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act, at no charge to the SAPS, and were only too pleased to be able to assist them in this regard.”

SearchWorks is able to discover a lot with only a little information using their sophisticated but easy-to-use search platform. The data they are able to provide is accurate, verified, up-to-date and complete.

“SearchWorks’ capabilities bring immense value to the forensics sector, resulting in effective investigations and the criminal justice system being able to fulfil its duties, which is to find and successfully prosecute criminals,” said Kumandan.

SearchWorks prides itself on its exceptional reputation and being a leader in the data industry. Users include public and private sector entities across many industries to whom it provides an invaluable service.

Ends.