

Top Background Screening Trends

In years past, background screening typically consisted of a basic criminal background check and sometimes drug testing. But more employers today are using new methods and technologies to enhance their screening processes and obtain a more complete picture of their job candidates. These practices not only lead to greater confidence when making hiring decisions, but also improved efficiency and money savings.

With 2021 just starting, many workplaces are still experiencing disruptions caused by the pandemic. This is just one of the reasons HR professionals should understand background screening trends, so that they can optimize their programs while maintaining compliance with all of the federal, state and local guidelines.

Below we discuss three important background screening trends that are particularly helpful in today's environment, plus two other trends that are currently being phased out.

Continuing Trends in Background Screening

Freelancers & Gig Workers

The number of freelancers and gig workers is increasing as companies have been forced to lay off or furlough employees due to the pandemic. Employers have greater flexibility if they're facing uncertainty by hiring contractors to work on an as-needed basis. Even though they are not full-time employees, contractors still pose a risk if they have access to confidential or sensitive information.

No matter how many hours a week gig workers contribute, they should undergo a thorough background check. More HR professionals are recognizing this and are requiring gig workers to submit to a comprehensive background check.

Current Employees

Most companies conduct background checks on candidates before finalizing their hiring decision – 94% according to the 2020 Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA) annual report. To add an additional layer of security, an increasing number of companies are implementing continuous screening programs.

While pre-employment screening is vitally important to minimize the risks of hiring someone unsuitable for the position, continuous screening of current employees provides an extra level of security against potential risks to the organization, other employees, and customers.

We recommend that companies institute continuous criminal background checks among current employees to augment their existing pre-employment screening programs.

How Technology is Being Used

Technology is improving the efficiency of the recruitment and hiring process. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and candidates' use of mobile apps to submit job applications from their smartphones helps also streamline the ordering of background checks, candidates signing

authorizations and other documents, and employers viewing completed background check reports.

When background screening providers integrate with an ATS, we streamline the order process, eliminate duplicate data entry, improve data integrity, and ultimately increase the speed of report delivery. From ordering the background check to viewing the completed report, employers using an integrated ATS – background screening process, can manage their screening programs from their ATS.

Candidates' use of mobile devices also improves the candidate experience because they are able to electronically sign background check authorization forms from whenever and wherever they are. Additionally, candidates' involvement in the screening process can reduce their potential apprehension by increasing transparency about the entire process.

Trends Being Phased Out

Questions About Salary History

Many states have enacted laws that prohibit companies from requesting candidates provide their salary history as part of the screening process. At one time, it was one of the more commonly asked questions of candidates, but it became highly criticized for highlighting the pay disparities that exist between men and women.

Lawmakers reason that knowing applicants' salary histories is one way of maintaining the disparity in income between the genders and legislation will over time eliminate the pay gap. Studies in 2020 showed that women earn 81¢ for every \$1 that men earn. When salary history is unknown, candidates are on an equal footing for being offered the position.

Criminal History Having a Negative Impact

The objective of Ban the Box regulations is to allow candidates with a criminal history to be on an equal footing with other applicants. Ban the Box promotes employers to remove the question about criminal history from their job application and to ensure that when background checks are conducted that past criminal convictions relate to the position applied to. The policy behind this movement is that candidates with a criminal history are more likely to recidivate if they cannot gain suitable employment.

Employers are better served by considering a candidate's criminal background later in the hiring process. This way they can look at background check report in the context of everything else they've learned about the candidate. The hiring team can then make a more informed decision based on a full picture of the candidate and related to the position they applied to.

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