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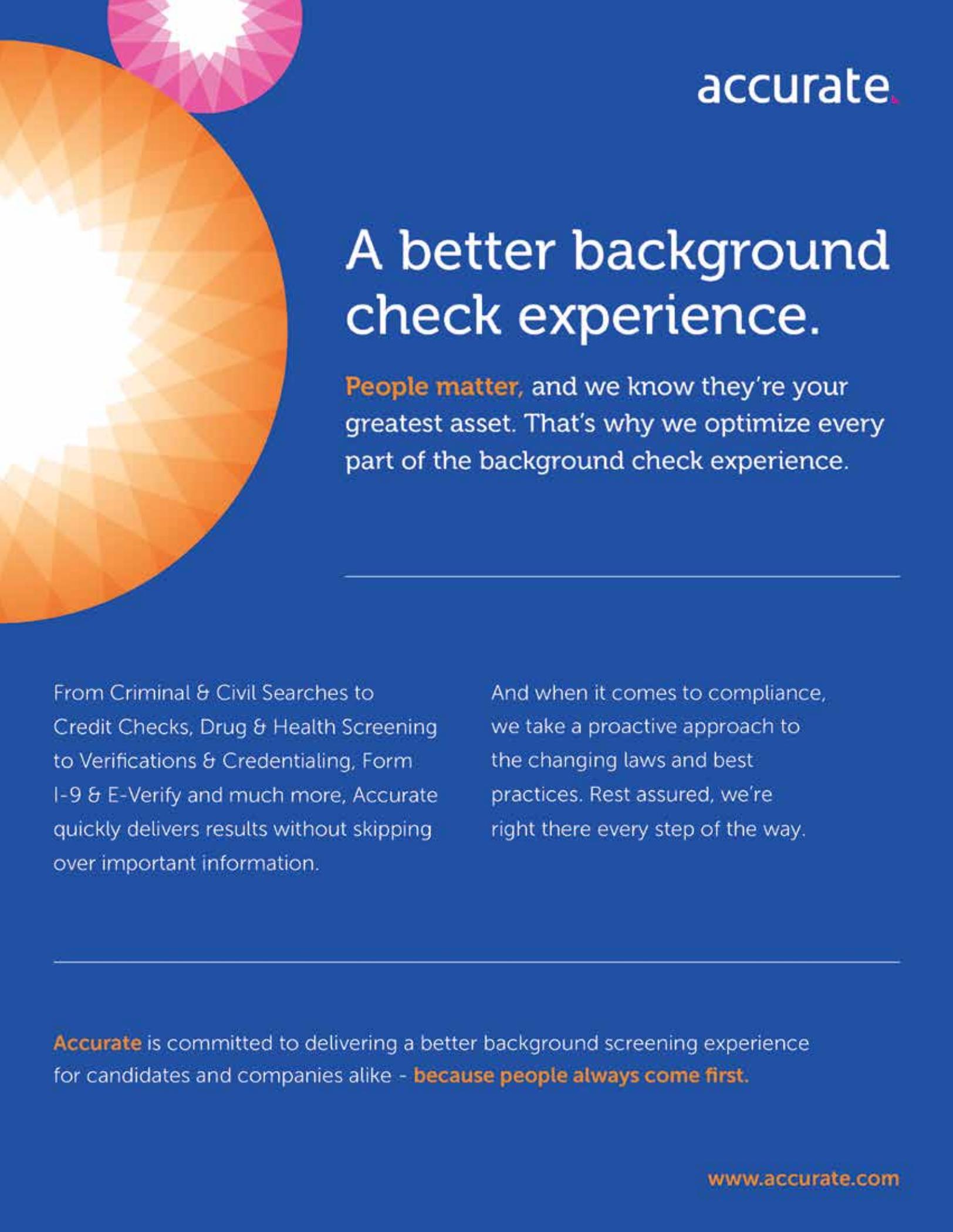
# 2020 IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE IN **BACKGROUND SCREENING:**

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# About Us:

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Stop Bad Hires

PreemploymentDirectory.com is the most comprehensive web based directory of firms in the background screening industry. It is designed to make it easy for organizations to quickly find a screening company to meet their needs.

The Directory is an essential resource for Human Resources and Hiring Managers looking to find a background screening firm to meet their needs.

The Directory is also a valuable tool for background screening firms seeking suppliers to meet their needs.

The Directory consists of several sections to quickly guide organizations to a company that will serve them best:



- The U. S. Domestic Section includes background screening firms (CRAs) listed by the location of their headquarters on a State by State basis.
- The International Section includes firms that conduct background screening on candidates who have lived, worked or been educated in a country other than the U.S. These firms are listed by country.
- The Supplier/Provider section and Vendor Showcase features firms that provide services to the background screening industry. These firms are listed by categories such as courthouse researchers, software providers, etc.



**In addition, we are the leading publisher for the background screening industry. Available Publications include:**

- The Background Buzz. The award-winning and leading online newsletter for professional background screeners.
- The Global Background Screener, an award-winning e-magazine for the worldwide background screening industry.
- 2020-21 Annual Background Screening Industry Resource Guide
- 2020-21 Annual Suppliers to the Background Screening Industry Buyers Guide
- In Search of Excellence in Background Screening: Best Practices Insights from Accredited Background Screening firms
- Kicking Glass: Women Thrive in Leadership Roles in the Background Screening Industry

# PBSA ACCREDITATION

## THE BACKGROUND SCREENING AGENCY ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

### ACCREDITATION OVERVIEW



The Professional Background Screening Association offers an accreditation program for Consumer Reporting Agencies (CRAs) in the U.S. Governed by a **strict and thorough** set of professional standards of specified requirements and measurements, the Background Screening Agency Accreditation Program (BSAAP) has become a **widely recognized seal of achievement** that brings recognition to background screening organizations.

### SIX AREAS OF ACCREDITATION

Accredited CRAs have made a commitment to uphold and deliver the highest level of industry standards in these areas:

Information  
Security

Legal &  
Compliance

Client  
Education

Researcher &  
Data Standards

Verificaton  
Services

Business  
Practices

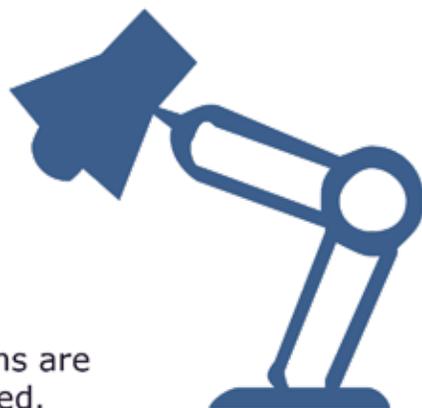


### AUDITS AND EXPIRATION

To become accredited, consumer reporting agencies must pass a **rigorous onsite audit**, conducted by an **independent auditing firm**, of its policies and procedures as they relate to the six critical areas.

After three years, a **surveillance audit** is conducted to ensure accredited consumer reporting agencies are **maintaining their commitment** to deliver the highest level of industry standards.

Accreditation lasts for a period of **five years**, after which time firms are required to recomplete the process if they wish to remain accredited.



\*Expansion outside the USA coming soon



## **Top Questions HR Managers Ask About PBSA's Accreditation Program**

*By Derek Hinton, CEO, CRAZoom and W. Barry Nixon, CEO, PreemploymentDirectory.com*

The Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA) formerly the National Association for Professional Background Screeners, offers an accreditation program for US background screening firms. For US employment screening firms, being PBSA Accredited is akin to having the 'Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval' – but PBSA Accreditation is much harder to achieve.

The accreditation process includes a written protocol that addresses 68 different specific practices that address information security, legal and compliance, client education, researcher and data standards (primarily criminal record practices) verification service standards, and general business practices. To earn the accreditation a firm must demonstrate initial and ongoing compliance with the accreditation standard as prepared by the Background Screening Credentialing Council (BSCC). Compliance is demonstrated through rigorous desk and on-site audits, all of which are completed by an independent third-party auditor. Firms must document each of their policies and processes as required in each of the areas within the Standard and demonstrate on-site tangible compliance with their policies to the auditor. More information can be found on the PBSA website at: <https://thepbsa.org/accreditation/accreditation-overview/>

**Here's some of the top questions HR Managers ask:**

### **1.Does a background screening firm simply pay a fee to become accredited or is there a qualification process?**

There's both. There is a fee for the application of \$5000 for PBSA members, \$7500 for non-PBSA members. This fee includes application fee, desk review, and one day of on-site audit. Auditor travel (transportation, lodging, per diem) for on-site audit is separate and is paid directly by the agency applying for accreditation. In short, employment screening agencies pay for the right to have all their processes reviewed (the desk audit) and then the actual onsite audit so that they may be considered for accreditation.

There are additional fees for the 3-year interim audit after initial accreditation.

### **2.Once accredited, is a firm accredited for life or do they have to prove they continue to be in compliance with accreditation requirements over time?**

There is no life accreditation. There is an interim 3-year audit of all policies and procedures. Five years after the initial audit (2 years after the interim audit) the employment screener must re-do the initial desk audit and onsite audit.

### **3.How long does it take an employment screening firm to attain PBSA Accreditation?**

Without assistance, it has been estimated that the process of achieving accreditation is a 2500-3500-hour job. Six months is a rule of thumb from start to finish.

### **4.What is the difference between the PBSA FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act) certifications and PBSA Accreditation?**

PBSA FCRA certification is an individual certification for a single employee, whether this certification is basic or advanced. The certification is earned by taking an exam.

PBSA Accreditation is a company accreditation. It is achieved by documentation of all policies and procedures and an onsite audit of the firm by an independent auditing agency to ensure the standards are met and policies and procedures are being followed.

Certification is individual. Accreditation applies to the entire entity and goes well beyond FCRA knowledge. One of the goals of accreditation is for employment screening firms to "institutionalize" the policies, procedures and knowledge

of compliance and best practices so that when an employer experiences employee turnover the knowledge does not go out the door with the employee.

**5.Of the total number of employment screening firms in the United States, what percentage of them are PBSA Accredited?**

There are roughly 2000 firms in the United States that provide some level of employment screening. Of these 2000 firms, roughly 400 are members of PBSA. Of these 400 US employment screening firms, roughly 120 are PBSA Accredited.

**6.How have the criteria changed in picking a background screening partner over the years?**

In the not too distant past, HR Managers requested employment screening reports by fax, mail or telephone. “Electronic transmission” was the innovation that drastically reduced turnaround time—not a new way to get Covid-19..

Availability of different information was a factor. Did the employment screener offer credit reports, criminal records and driving records? Pricing was not standardized, and customer service and personalized services varied greatly.

Turnaround times, availability of information sources and pricing do not differ as much as in the “early days.” So,

HR Managers are looking for integration with their applicant tracking systems, that the employment screening firm is legally compliant and puts accurate information at a premium.

PBSA Accreditation is increasingly important to HR Managers as it is an independent audit of the employment screener’s policies and procedures and affirms that the firm is using established industry standards.

**7.Has the PBSA Accreditation program changed since the program was introduced in 2009 to keep up with evolving interpretation of laws, legal decisions, new laws, technology advancements and new industry practices?**

In 2018 there was a major revision of the accreditation program and its requirements. The new standard has ten new clauses and most of the existing clauses were amended in some fashion, with new (more stringent) criteria to demonstrate adherence to the standard.

PBSA reviewed industry trends and danger areas and addressed those areas for the current legal and regulatory environment. New clauses address compliance and policy and procedure with law and regulation, staying up with changing law and regulation, disclosure and authorizations, full consumer file disclosure policy, automated searches, reappearance of inaccurate information, quality analysis, document control (not just destruction and retention) and ethics reporting.

**8.If accreditation is so beneficial why have I seen accredited companies get sued or fined by the FTC, CFPB and/or EEOC?**

While rare, this has happened.

In some cases, paying the fine was cheaper than fighting the charges and the ensuing legal expenses.

In other situations, the screening company got caught off guard because they had not updated their policies and practices to keep up with the changing times and new legal interpretations from case decisions. Compliance steps no one had heard of 10 years ago are now de-facto required even though the main law that governs employment screening (The Fair Credit Reporting Act) has not substantially changed since 2012.

In other cases, it’s been a case of the employment screener ‘slamming the barn door shut after the horses have skittered to pasture’--the employment screener made mistakes and decided to get accredited to improve their processes as the case worked through the bureaucracy or court. So, at the time of the alleged or actual infraction, the employment screener was not accredited or had even started the process.

And, finally, situations have arisen where a firm may have had compliant policies and procedures in place, but, human error led to a mistake.

**9.PBSA Accreditation is good for the employment screening firms, but what exactly does it do to help HR Managers?**

PBSA accreditation benefits HR managers because employment screeners must have policies and procedures and demonstrate compliance with those policies and procedures that protect employer clients. Most of the 68 clauses of the standard provide benefit to the employer. Employee confidentiality, education, password protocol, employee screening, data protection, truth in advertising, vendor vetting, quality analysis, consumer disputes, legal compliance,

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jurisdictional knowledge, minimal errors and omissions insurance are all directly addressed and most of the other clauses afford protection to HR Managers as well.

Accreditation provides the following benefits to HR Managers:

- Reduces the risk of exposing sensitive and personal identifiable information
- Provides specific expertise to help navigate the myriad of evolving legal issues
- Educates client about current and emerging compliance issues
- Informs clients about industry trends
- If sued, HR Managers can prove they used 'best in class' due diligence in choosing their firm

The PBSA Accreditation program requires employment screeners to designate individuals who are responsible for Federal Consumer Reporting law, State Consumer Reporting law, Federal and State Driver Privacy Protection, and how all employees must be informed and educated on all applicable law and regulation associated with providing information for employment purposes. Individuals who are designated as responsible in some of these areas must hold PBSA FCRA advanced certification or a Juris Doctorate.

### **10. Are more employers requiring a background screening firm to be accredited before they will even consider them?**

Yes, as more employers are becoming familiar with the PBSA Accreditation program more of them are basing their decision on accreditation status.

The question HR Managers used to ask is "what professional associations do you belong to"? This later changed to "Are you a member of NAPBS (Now PBSA)?" Now the question has become "Are you PBSA Accredited?" Once that qualification is confirmed, then the discussion on pricing, turnaround time, customer service, integrations and product package offerings can begin.

Additionally, employment screeners are increasingly being asked by current clients if they are PBSA Accredited.

## 11. Why aren't all employment screening firms PBSA Accredited?

There are several reasons. Cost is a major factor. Time and manpower to complete the task is another factor. Some companies don't do what is required. Some companies may do what is required, but don't believe their existing or new clients will care about their accreditation status.

The rate at which employment screening agencies are becoming accredited is accelerating. Most un-accredited agencies see the writing on the wall and have plans to start, or complete the process of becoming accredited.

If you have a question that you would like answered about the PBSA Accreditation program please contact Derek Hinton at [Derekh@crazoom.com](mailto:Derekh@crazoom.com).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Derek Hinton began his career with a CRA in 1984 and is President of CRAzoom, a company that has assisted many CRAs become PBSA Accredited, and CrimApollo, a criminal record assessment and EEOC compliance service.



W. Barry Nixon, is the COO of PreemploymentDirectory.com, the leading background screening information portal on the worldwide web. He co-authored Background Screening Investigations: Managing Hiring Risk from a HR and Security Perspective and is the publisher of The Background Buzz, The Global Background Screener, and the Annual Background Screening Industry Resource Guide.



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## “Who Is Protecting You? Background Screening Best Practices!”

Background Screening is a necessity in today’s world. It’s non-negotiable. A thorough screening policy will not only help protect your organization and the people within it, but it will safeguard your organization against any legal action that might be taken should an offender slip through your ranks. In fact, over 50% of hiring managers said they have witnessed a lie on a resume.

However, not all screening policies are created equal! Implementing and maintaining a background screening policy will not only protect your organization but allow you to maintain truly qualified employees to grow your business.

For a standard best practice screening policy, your process must include:

- Comply with all federal, state and local laws pertaining to background screening: In the ever-changing world of compliance it is critical to partner with a reputable third-party screening company that educates and updates your organization based on strict federal, state and local laws that change constantly.

Critical key components for compliance requires:

- 1) A signed authorization and disclosure form obtained from each candidate PRIOR to conducting a background screen is required by law. It is best practice (required in several states) to conduct the background screen after a conditional offer has been made.
  - 2) Your organization to protect the privacy of the candidates personal identifying information and background screen results.
  - 3) Consistent hiring decision matrix (with individualized assessment) that aligns with the candidate’s job description
  - 4) A compliant adverse action process that includes the following steps when rejecting a candidate:
    - a. Pre-adverse action letter, Summary of Rights and a Consumer Copy provided to the candidate.
    - b. Reasonable time for the candidate to respond or dispute the adverse background screen results.
    - c. Final adverse action letter with hiring decision provided to the candidate.
- A consistent approach to screen all candidates: All screenings are not created equal. It is important to understand the screenings ran, level of coverage, accuracy and cost. Once you understand the difference between screening levels:

What screenings will be ran for specific positions?

How often will you screen your employees?

Having a thorough background screening policy and partner is essential to the hiring process to ensure your organization is hiring well qualified employees.

Partnering with a PBSA reputable third-party company will allow you to streamline your screening process with quick, compliant and affordable screening solutions that reduce risk to your organization.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Shield Screening is a national PBSA accredited background and drug screening company that provides quick, easy and customizable screening solutions to clients nationwide. We take a hands-on approach to crafting customized solutions that provide our clients with quick and accurate information they need to on-board and maintain solid, well qualified employees.



## Top 5 Qualities to Look for in a Background Screening Company in 2020

*By Christine Cunneen, CEO, Hire Image*

It's a new decade, bringing with it a time for a fresh look at background screening. With each passing year, there are ever-changing needs, laws, and technology. However, something that hasn't changed, albeit more important than ever, is the value of thorough background screenings. We are all familiar with the questions on many employers' minds concerning accuracy, turnaround time, and cost. And, while these are all legitimate factors to consider, what about the company that is providing these services? What do they stand for? What are their values? What can they offer you and your applicants?

These are the top five qualities to look for in finding a trusted background screening provider, and partner:

- 1. Accreditation.** When a company is accredited by the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA), it demonstrates a commitment to adhering to strict guidelines in six critical areas: Consumer Protection; Legal Compliance; Client Education; Researcher and Data Product Standards; Verification Service Standards; and General Business Practices. A company that values these standards also values integrity and dependability. It should be noted that currently only 121 consumer reporting agencies are accredited.
- 2. Compliance Focus.** All screenings provided by a background screening company must comply with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and applicable state and local regulations. To help ensure compliance, some companies also require their operational staff to have an FCRA certificate. Additionally, companies should have their forms and screening systems regularly reviewed by industry specialized attorneys and provide continuing compliance education opportunities to its clients.
- 3. Exceptional Customer Support.** Does the company demonstrate the 'human touch' in everything from customer support to the reviewing of records? Human touch means live phone answering, a US-based team, dedicated account representatives, and the thorough review of returned records before reaching a client. It also means flexibility and customization, as needed, to meet the client's needs and preferences. These are the people you will work with day in and day out—make sure you trust them ... and like them.
- 4. Technology & Integrations.** Ensuring the company you will work with has a secure, online portal and offers advanced technology features, such as electronic consent forms is more important than ever. Seamless integrations are also vital in ensuring the candidate experience is positive and easy to navigate.
- 5. Security & Privacy.** The importance of security and privacy cannot be stressed enough. Companies must have a secure network designed to safeguard confidential information from internal and external threats. Another question to ask—is the company EU-U.S. Privacy Shield Framework Certified? In order to achieve certification status, the company has certified its continued compliance with data protection requirements during the transferring of personal data.

While there are many important factors in choosing a background screening company, the five listed above will tell you a great deal, not only about the company, but about the people behind it and what they stand for. In 2020, isn't it time to get back to people, relationships, and values—not only for background screening, but for our businesses in general?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Christine Cunneen, CEO of Hire Image, a woman-owned LLC, is past chair of PBSA and serves on the board of RI-SHRM. Hire Image is 100% US-based, nationally accredited, EU-US Privacy Shield certified, and requires all operational staff to maintain an FCRA certificate.

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## **Not Sure Your Background Screening Provider is Giving you the Service You Deserve? Here are 5 Things You Should Ask Yourself:**

When using a service provider it can be difficult to determine whether they are providing the level of service you deserve. You may not have anything to compare it to except your gut feeling saying you should be getting more.

The next time you interact with your service provider, ask yourself the following questions. This should give you a good idea about the service being provided and validate your instincts.

### **1. When there is a problem or you have a question, how easy is it to get a real person on the phone or to answer an email?**

Odds are you're knee deep in Human Resources responsibilities and the thought of spending another minute on a background screening issue makes you queasy, so you reach out to your provider via email... Which they don't answer, ever.

And when you call your background screening provider what do you get? An automated phone message. So you wait through the options.

*To speak with a Sales representative, press 1.*

*To reach a Customer Support agent, press 2.*

*You press 2...*

*To reach our Billing department, press 3.*

*You press 2... harder.*

*If you would like to speak with an Operator, press 0, or press 9 to repeat the available options.*

*You press 2 with such force you're afraid the phone will break...*

*Goodbye.*

GRRRRRR!! The anger. The unnecessary run around. Sound familiar?

Your background screening service provider should not be hiding from you and when you finally do get ahold of another human being they should be solving your issues and not trying to apply broad strokes that likely aren't effective.

### **2. Does the person who responds to your problem or question understand your business?**

We've all spoken to a brick wall without realizing it. A brick wall isn't always literally a brick wall. Sometimes it's a person who has no idea what is going on and will never be able to help. We don't go into the conversation expecting a brick wall but when it happens, you'll know it. It's like hitting a brick wall.

Without a knowledgeable service provider it's difficult to feel confident with your hiring decisions. They should have a deep knowledge of your industry and understand the importance of selecting the correct person. They should make you feel like you are their only customer and are getting a customized experience.

### **3. Is there anything about your experience that feels like it's customized just for you?**

When working with a background screening service provider you want to feel like they are working specifically for you. The last thing you want is to feel like you just went through a fast food drive thru and ordered the #6 — the exact same thing as the 3 people in front of you and millions of others throughout the day.

Since each organization is different and all have individual needs it's important to have products and solutions that will add value and help save you time. You need customized service that works for you before you even realize you needed it.

### **4. Do you ever receive proactive communication from your provider alerting you to news or changes that could be important to you?**

Technology changes daily. Your phone was probably outdated the moment you bought it, if not before. That dance move you keep busting out at every wedding reception you go to? We're sorry, but it's outdated too. Your collection of grunge flannel? Surprisingly in fashion but we don't expect that to hang around too long.



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Background screening processes and technology are no different and since you have more pressing matters than keeping up to date on the latest background screening news, it's important to have a service provider that will do the research for you and even teach you a thing or two in the process.

**5. Are you provided training and resources that are designed to ensure your success when using the screening services and getting the most value possible from your program?**

You didn't design and develop background screening services so why should you be expected to know how to use them without assistance? If your service provider was adding value to your organization, they most likely would be giving you ongoing background screening training and resources.

These resources allow you and your organization to stay at the forefront of the background screening industry without wasting valuable time that should be spent elsewhere.

Did you say 'no' to any of the above questions?

If you answered 'No' or you're not sure to any of the questions above, it might be time to re-evaluate your current background screening provider and see if you can do better. Background screening is a vital component of any hiring and on-boarding process, and it's essential you get it right and are comfortable with the service you receive.

**ABOUT THE  
AUTHOR:**



IntelliCorp provides a comprehensive view of your candidate with quality, compliant background screening services. NAPBS accredited, the company offers mobile-friendly applicant portals, strong data, FCRA training and compliance guidance, ATS/HRIS integrations and outstanding U.S. based customer service. Our uniqueness is the value of the "entire package" you receive when conducting background screening with IntelliCorp. This encompasses our products, service and consumer report we deliver to you. In 2018, our customers helped us achieve the number one ranking on HRO Today magazine's Baker's Dozen list of the top 13 midsize-program screening providers, and the top spot on the quality of service list.



# BEST PRACTICE

## **Best Practice Guide to Choosing a Background Screening Partner**

*By Robert Capwell, Chief Knowledge Officer, EBI*

The crucial task of selecting a trustworthy background screening partner can be a difficult one, and options continue to grow as the industry expands and technology evolves. Your background screening partner is a key component of your talent screening and selection process, so finding the right partner with the right fit for your screening program is paramount. That partner should support your hiring process by delivering timely, accurate, and compliant information of the highest quality while delivering industry leading customer service.

This guide was created as a best practice resource to help you make this big decision.

### **Expertise and Length of Experience**

The background screening profession has evolved dramatically over the past three decades. Some of the biggest changes are in the legal landscape, technology, and service offerings. You need a partner that is experienced and exhibits a long-standing reputation in the field. Conduct some online research and look for evidence of thought-leadership over time. A knowledgeable screening firm will share information and resources directly on their site by publishing white papers, articles and blogs. In addition, conduct research on the firm's leadership team, this will provide solid insight into the expertise of the firm's executive management team.

### **Industry Involvement and Credentials**

Industry related associations represent the nucleus of education, best practice, advocacy, and industry governance. The background screening industry is no different. The Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA) is the global voice and guiding association of the screening industry. Association involvement provides critical resources to stay current with the ever-changing legislative landscape, compliance mandates, best practice techniques and new solutions. PBSA members better understand information privacy and security, advancements in screening technology and available resources. In addition, the association fosters certification programs for members to test and show their knowledge of Federal Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) compliance.

Companies prove their commitment to industry best practices and standards by becoming accredited. Only a small number of companies are accredited through the PBSA Background Screening Agency Accreditation Program. Accredited firms demonstrate their diligence and dedication to their clients through solid performance in crucial areas such as information security, legal compliance, client education, researcher and data standards, verification standards and overall business practices. Each is vetted thoroughly by an independent auditor before receiving the accreditation badge of excellence. A commitment to accreditation is a pledge to the background screening industry and ensures employers receive the highest quality of information while serving the best interests of candidates through privacy and compliance.

### **Service Capabilities and Your Customized Needs**

The benefits and risk reduction strategies demanded of a background screening program are unique to each employer. Company size, structure, industry, and job description are all key factors that play into the decision-making process. Trying to fit every screening program into the same mold will not work. You need to rely on a screening partner that can walk you through all of the options. Custom packages that are specific to a particular job function will provide the best benefit and value for your program. HR professionals who oversee several decentralized locations can leverage automation to receive consistent screening while ensuring compliance with company policy, as well as state and federal laws.

Employers hiring internationally will require a partner that has an in-depth knowledge of international screening protocols. Consolidating services such as background screening, drug testing, occupational health screening solutions, E-Verify and paperless I-9 compliance requirements can save time and money. The use of multiple software platforms, managing multiple vendors, and reconciling several invoices is not an efficient use of your time. A one-stop solution partner can consolidate management reporting, provide for a consistent program review and provide opportunities for additional savings based on consolidated volume.

## **Technology that Supports Business Optimization and Your Onboarding Process**

Your background screening program should fit strategically within your hiring and onboarding process -- not be held at the mercy and convenience of your screening partner. A seamless integration with your provider can optimize your hiring process and save you considerable data-entry and processing time. Leveraging the use of a self-serve applicant kiosk or electronic candidate portal can make the application process integrated, virtual and candidate friendly.

A seamless integration with your screening partner can securely route candidate data, paperless forms, and an e-signature process from your applicant tracking system through to your screening partner and back to an HRIS system. Compliance can be achieved virtually too with the use of service specific disclosures, federal, state and internationally required notifications and forms. All can be served up automatically as needed and then executed using an electronic mouse signature technology. A paperless storage environment makes it easy to retrieve information and maintain proper compliance.

## **Client Onboarding, Training, and Program Reviews**

The day you sign the contract with your new provider shouldn't be the last time you hear from them. Establish the process for onboarding, training, and program review upfront to ensure a smooth transition. Also, outline how you will measure the success of your screening program.

Background screening technology platforms can be very customizable these days. Once you determine what you need, you can start setting the parameters to fit your needs. It is essential to decide who is authorized to request and review screening results. For multi-location users, this piece is paramount to ensure legal compliance and proper setup for management administration and review.

Training is an integral part of the onboarding process. Be sure that your provider offers customized live training to address specific training needs and questions before the program starts. Ongoing training should also be available for future users and insist that your partner provides resource material and training documentation for future reference. Discuss the option of scheduled program reviews. The success of your screening program should be benchmarked and measured on an ongoing basis. Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) upfront and measure them on a periodic basis to track performance. Management reporting and subsequent reviews are great measures to determine program success.

## **Approach and Structure to Account Management and Customer Service**

Customer support is a key component of a successful screening program. The level of support varies from company to company. You should have a firm understanding of the support team working with you and how they gauge your satisfaction. Will you be assigned an individual account representative, and is there a support team working with them for strategic account administration? In addition, you should ask about the structure of their customer service team, off-hours support and the use of overseas call centers to make sure they meet your specific support needs.

## **Quality Management and Customer Satisfaction**

Background screening firms concerned with quality and customer satisfaction take strategic measures to incorporate a quality management system into their core operating principles. A successful quality management system will include documented procedures and training for each business function. The firm should be measuring specific inputs and outputs as they relate to each function within the process. Benchmarking and measurements around timeliness, accuracy, compliance and your satisfaction should be measured and reviewed on a constant basis. This is used to gauge quality and your level of overall satisfaction as a basis for continual improvement. Decide what quality and overall satisfaction means to you and what key performance indicators will be used to measure your program's success. A background screening firm dedicated to quality will have a comprehensive program already in place. The customer service team should continually seek your feedback and act on that information to increase overall quality and your satisfaction.

## **Data Privacy, Security and Business Continuity**

The background screening process involves the processing, handling, and storage of a candidate's sensitive information. The concern over data privacy and protecting personally identifiable information (PII) is real in today's landscape of growing identity theft. Background screening firms that are focused on data security incorporate strict measures in all facets of

information security. Be sure your trusted screening partner already has a security policy, information security procedures and training, documented procedures to deal with security incidents, access control policies and risk mitigation strategies to ensure business continuity.

Legislation concerning data privacy is ever-changing and must be monitored for constant compliance. Be sure your provider has a solid grasp of both international and domestic data privacy and security. A concerned partner will follow the Privacy Shield Framework to comply with the European Union and Swiss Commission's Directive on Data Protection. In addition, concerned partners will not offshore sensitive client and candidate data overseas. Once sensitive data leaves the United States, there are no guarantees of data protection or secured access to PII. No employer wants to be burdened with the liabilities of an applicant's data being mishandled.

### **Responsible Use of Database Information**

Criminal record searchers are available in a variety of government and privately held electronic databases. This information can be alluring to employers that want to save money and time. This type of information is a critical research tool; however it should never be used as a sole source of data to conduct a criminal background check.

The quality of a criminal records database will vary from source to source with no guarantees of data quality or even significant identifiers to match your candidate. Responsible background screeners verify criminal records data from the original reporting court to ensure current and reportable information within the legal guidelines of the FCRA and state law. Using unverified data to make a hiring decision can create additional liabilities for employers and a very unpleasant candidate experience.

### **Compliance Resources and Support**

Legal compliance within the background screening industry is ever-changing and opens up potential liability for employers if not followed closely. The FCRA, state local, and international laws must be followed for proper compliance. Your background screening provider should be your resource for a compliant screening program.

Your partner should provide documentation such as compliant authorization and disclosure forms along with state compliance notifications and resources.

Laws can differ county to county, state to state and even country to country. Your partner should provide resources and guidance to make sure your program is compliant at all times. Be sure to speak with your representative about how the company will provide mandatory compliance information and how legal changes will be maintained and communicated. Your provider should have a compliance team that is focused on current compliance protocols and keep their pulse on ever-changing legislation that could affect your screening program.

### **Conclusion**

Conducting proper due diligence on your potential screening partner, and addressing the topics provided within this guide, will ensure that the provider you choose has the capabilities and expertise to handle your customized needs. A suitable partner will understand quality, information security and have the technology to optimize your program. Establishing a relationship based on specific measurements of mutual success will establish a program that is seamless, cost-effective, efficient, and compliant.

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Robert Capwell is a leading expert in the background screening industry with over 30 years of experience. He is Chief Knowledge Officer at EBI, Inc. and serves on the Board of Directors for the Professional Background Screening Association (PBSA).

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