



# Make Sure Your Background Screening Program Has Value

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## **Make Sure Your Background Screening Program Has Value**

By Todd Carpenter, President, IntelliCorp Records, Inc.

If you ask yourself what's the most important thing a screening provider can offer, it may be somewhat difficult to name a single attribute. Instead, you probably would name common items such as compliance, price, accuracy, turnaround times, and of course, customer service. To put it in context, when it comes to background screening value is far more than just the report. It's a combination of multiple elements working in tandem to provide you with a positive experience and confidence in your hiring process.

Therefore, it's important that you understand what it takes to create a successful and meaningful background screening program that is legally compliant and provides real value – not just a report.

### **Compliance**

Think about it. Compliance, along with privacy and security should be givens, especially if you're using a reputable company. Of course, a major part of why organizations conduct background checks is to avoid risk. It's why quality background screening providers make compliance a priority, for both their organization and for you.

Make sure your screening provider is an expert in federal, state and local laws that impact the employment screening process, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). Moreover, they should offer you the most recent disclosure, authorization, pre-adverse and adverse action forms that take in account specific state or local jurisdictional requirements. It's always recommended that you consult with your legal counsel prior to using any forms.

### **Price**

The adage of you get what you pay for can apply to background screening. Is the lowest price really the best? It can be a challenge to work within budget constraints to perform the proper due diligence on your applicants. However, do you understand what you're getting in a search for the price you pay? It's wise to compare providers and their products and services when evaluating your background screening program – and be sure to compare apples to apples.

Learn if your screening provider is searching multiple sources of data to compile a complete report on your candidate. Sometimes, less expensive and cursory background checks are missing key data which can be concerning. Background checks are a key component of the hiring process and bring significant value, much more so than the cost of conducting them. How much are they worth to your organization? The lowest price may not be your best solution especially when other services are offered.

### **Quality Data/Accuracy**

The information received in a background check report is about a real person, and the decision-making process that follows can impact the candidate, your employees, as well as your organization. Because it's a crucial step in the hiring lifecycle, you need the most up-to-date information on your candidate to make a fair and compliant evaluation.

Database searches do not contain all criminal record information for every individual across the county. A true nationwide database simply doesn't exist, so gaps in information occur. Quality providers use a database only as a component and look to other sources to help ensure a thorough search for records. Additionally, the method of applying FCRA rules should be based on where the candidate lives or works, not the jurisdiction the record came from. This way, you can be confident that a compliant search has been performed, which provides you with additional value and increased assurance when making hiring and recruiting decisions.

### **Turnaround Times**

Time is of the essence and turnaround times must be fast. You, as the customer, depend on it. When there are excellent candidates, it's important to get them through the recruiting process quickly so they

don't leave and go elsewhere. However, a background check should not sacrifice quality and compliance for speed. It can be a fine balancing act for your screening provider, and sometimes patience is a virtue.

There are over 3,000 counties or county equivalents in the United States. The amount of time it takes to obtain search results varies greatly from county to county (from minutes to weeks). Automation and other innovation can help, but turnaround times for background checks can vary greatly depending on many factors. Provisions to keep in mind: the components of the screen, data source availability, information supplied for the background check, and other circumstances such as court closures, holidays and clerk only criminal searches.

### **Customer Service**

But the overarching component that surrounds your screening program just may be customer service. You deserve great customer service, right? Many people think that customer service begins and ends with a phone call when you need a question answered or problem solved. While superior customer service can vary from company to company, it starts behind the scenes before you even thought of picking up the phone, sending an email, or initiating a live chat. And it doesn't end after the conversation is over. It's about the overall "end-to-end experience" you receive from your background screening provider.

Information is power, and another good measure of expert customer service is keeping you informed on legislative issues, industry trends and product offerings via mediums such as monthly newsletters, blog posts, alerts/announcements and emails. It's also about having access to sample forms, reference guides, how-to manuals and compliance information to help you achieve screening standards. The more knowledge you have the better chance your program will be successful.

Ask yourself some of the following questions. Is the provider's staff in-house (not offshored)? Are employees FCRA certified and trained with extensive product line and industry knowledge? Are they caring? Do they provide complimentary training sessions on their system, products and compliance? Does your background screening provider ask for your feedback through surveys or offer beta testing opportunities? The answer to these may lead you to the thought that perhaps the greatest value to you is your screening provider's customer service.

### **Overall Value**

What is of most importance from a background screening provider will vary from organization to organization. While all the items above are important components of a meaningful background screening program, the whole of the sum of your relationship with your provider should be greater than the sum of its parts. This is the overall value.

Take a moment to think about your overall experience with your background screening provider and make sure it provides more value than just a report.

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