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# Implementing an Enterprise-Wide Background Screening Solution

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Once primarily the tool of the federal government for hiring operatives and other high security personnel, background screening is now prevalent in an array of industries among companies who recognize the value of getting the whole story about a prospective employee. In a world of falsified resumes, employee crime, security risks, ineffective employees and negligent hiring lawsuits, pre-employment background screening should be considered a best practices rule of the hiring process, rather than an exception to it.

The risks to companies today are too high to allow even one bad hire. A thorough background screen is one of the only ways to avoid making a costly mistake and to know for certain whether that ideal applicant has a phony or a criminal lurking within.

According to a recent Business 21 Publishing survey, nearly two-thirds of companies engage an outside firm to perform their background screening services. With all of the laws and regulations governing applicant screening, it's easy to see why outsourcing to a background screening company is becoming a popular option for employers. While employers can implement and maintain a successful screening program, hiring an outside firm gives your screening program the benefit of access to a professional, well-trained staff of industry experts that can conduct your searches with greater accuracy and thoroughness.

## Best Practices for Applicant Screening

As one the nation's leading providers of background screening solutions, InfoMart often recommends that our clients tailor their screens to fit the position an applicant is applying for. This could be accomplished by adding additional screens according to job description or position within the organization. A general recommendation is outlined below:

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## All Employees

- National Social Security Search (NSSS)
- Criminal Search (jurisdictions identified through the NSSS)
- Multi-State Criminal Search (database search that can identify criminal records in jurisdictions outside the applicant's residence)
- Multi-State Sex Offender Search
- Patriot Act/Government Watch List Scan

InfoMart recommends this combination of services as an initial search to identify jurisdictions and criminal records. This search will provide you with basic criminal search results and is the minimal recommended screen for all employees. It is an inexpensive way to give a good snap shot of the candidate and provides the best value for your money.

## Expanded/Management

- National Social Security Search (NSSS)
- Criminal Search (as identified through the NSSS or resume, up to 7 years)
- Multi-State Criminal Search
- Multi-State Sex Offender Search
- Patriot Act/Government Watch List Scan
- Previous Employment (last 3 positions or 10 years)
- Education Verification (highest degree earned)
- Credit History
- Motor Vehicle Report
- Drug Testing

This management package is a thorough search that will provide you with a broadened profile of the candidate's personal history. InfoMart clients find that their average hiring cost and turnover rate is greatly reduced while productivity and longevity is increased. This recommendation is a must for corporate positions as well as most management positions. Services such as the motor vehicle report or credit history can be removed if it is not relevant to the position.

Additional services are available to tailor your background screen even further. Verifying professional licenses, contacting personal references and performing pre-employment assessment evaluations can all help identify the best possible candidate.

To ensure the success of your pre-employment screening and the integrity of your workforce, consider the following:

- ▶ **Select the right services.** When it comes to background screening, there are a number of searches that can be conducted, but not every one makes sense in every situation. To maximize your time and cost savings, use searches such as credit history reports, motor vehicle records and professional license verifications only for positions where having such information about an applicant is vital and relevant. However, for criminal searches, it is best to conduct a thorough search on every applicant. Given the way criminal history information is housed

Suppose your applicant has lived their entire life in Georgia, but while on vacation committed a robbery in Texas. By searching only the jurisdictions listed on his resume or identified by the NSSS, the crime would not be discovered.

The Multi-State Criminal Search contains records from jurisdictions across the US, including Texas. By utilizing this additional search, records would be discovered that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

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in courthouses and databases, using all the tools available to you – such as single jurisdiction searches, a National Social Security Search, a Multi-State Criminal History Search and a Multi-State Sex Offender Search – will allow you to get the whole story on every applicant. Relying on a simple database search or searching records in a single jurisdiction can seriously jeopardize the safety of your workforce.

- ▶ **Maintain compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) with proper disclosure and release forms.** The FCRA is the central law that regulates the practice of background screening. Provisions within the Act require that employers notify applicants that a background check will be performed for employment purposes and that the applicant agrees to the search. The notice must be a separate and conspicuous document – even if it is part of an employment application packet – and should be signed by the applicant. In addition, employers must immediately notify the applicant if information uncovered in the search may result in a negative employment decision. Before making a negative employment decision, you are required to send a pre-adverse action letter notifying the applicant of the pending decision and how they can dispute the information in question. With the pre-adverse action letter, employers must enclose a copy of the applicant’s search results and a copy of the FTC’s “Summary of Your Rights Under the FCRA” brochure. If you still wish to deny an applicant employment, you must send an adverse action letter within a reasonable period of time.
- ▶ **Apply hiring criteria uniformly.** A company that has multiple locations should select a screening program that can be easily and uniformly applied enterprise-wide. Following this practice has a number of benefits, among them an easily-managed, streamlined screening process and consistency in screening across the organization. By implementing a pre-employment background screening program processed by an outside firm, companies can standardize their hiring criteria and eliminate unfair hiring practices. All applicants are held to the same standards, thus reducing the risk of negligent hiring.
- ▶ **Make screening a part of your total applicant hiring process.** In recent years, technology has helped to simplify and speed up the process of obtaining information on prospective employees. By integrating a screening program with your HRIS or applicant tracking system, you create a seamless hiring process that can quickly and easily be implemented enterprise-wide. With most integrated solutions, screening results can be submitted and returned according to your specifications. Results can be delivered to hiring managers at each location or to the HR department at the corporate office.

### **FCRA Compliance**

At InfoMart, we realize that providing our clients with accurate, detailed profiles and rapid turnaround doesn’t do our clients – or ourselves – any good if our practices are not 100 percent legal. Therefore, keeping ourselves apprised of and in compliance with all federal and state legislation applicable to our business is an ongoing priority.

InfoMart’s web-based application, *WebASAP*, helps users stay in compliance with the FCRA, ADA, DPPA, and more stringent state laws by automatically producing state-specific adverse action documentation. This enables our clients to be confident that the data provided by InfoMart will always be compliant with federal, state and local laws and regulations.

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## Customization is the Key

While performing thorough background checks is a best hiring practice regardless of your business or industry, background screening programs are not one-size-fits-all. The program and services that would best serve a small courier company with one location vary greatly from that which would best meet the needs of a multi-billion dollar shipping corporation with a global presence.

When designing a background screening program, the size and structure of your organization are two of the most important factors to consider. Not all companies are the same, after all, so the screening programs that serve them shouldn't be either.

## Conclusion

In today's business environment, background screening is an essential part of the hiring process for employers concerned about the safety of their workforce, clients and shareholders. While creating a successful program may be more challenging for a large corporation than a small business, it is by no means an elusive goal. The most direct way to achieve screening solution success is to outsource your screening needs to a background screening company that can customize services and follow best practices with an enterprise-wide implementation in mind.

## About InfoMart

Founded in 1989, InfoMart is one of the nation's premier applicant screening companies, providing a full suite of services including criminal histories, credit and driving records, drug testing and verifications of education and previous employment. The company prides itself on its dedication to customer service, technology solutions, and accurate information reporting. For more information about InfoMart, please visit [www.infomart-usa.com](http://www.infomart-usa.com) or call (770) 984-2727.

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